

Teaching the Conflicts
Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle*

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Abstract

I read Neal Town Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle* to interrogate what types of links they make to US countercultural writing, postmodern discourse in American culture, and perceived uninterrogated links to the term America itself in images of modern progressive liberalism. Postmodernist readings of literary texts came under increasing public scrutiny in intellectual debates of the 80s and 90s. My analysis is to situate and reconsider these fictions within debates happening in the North American academy at this time and the more recent one concerning the demise of poststructuralism in the humanities. Linking together works of Sean McCann, Michael Szalay, John Guillory and Mark McGurl I locate *Cryptonomicon* as constitutive of the postwar drift from the modernist aesthetic yet simultaneously developing within Sacvan Bercovitch's model of dissensus. Through reference to McGurl's work in particular, my thesis will offer the first sustained critical reading of *Cryptonomicon* relevant to the University's new teaching standards of diversity and research excellence. Through Lauren Berlant's concept of an intimate public I argue *The Baroque Cycle* develops a richly aesthetic form of criticism that challenges the consensus view of culturally affirming alternatives to American sociopolitical and economic life. In addition, each chapter charts specific aspects of the impact of European critical theories that presided over the marriage of intellectualism and professionalism in the North American academy. More specifically, and throwing particular focus on resistances to theory and canon change, I discuss how the politics of the classroom developed within the literary culture wars brought with it a renewed emphasis on what postwar professors taught in the classroom.

Dedication

To my parents

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge John Beck and Jess Edwards's generosity for giving me the time to express myself in the viva. I would also like to repay a debt of gratitude to Stacy Gillis who set me on the road to my PhD. I would also like to pay my respect to Newcastle University for making it possible for me to obtain my doctorate. Finally, I would like to thank Shelia Roberts for her support and help over the years.

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Introduction. Rethinking Twentieth Century Literary Theory in Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle*

My thesis has three chapters and two main objectives. The first objective is to reappraise a mode of ambiguity in Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon* (1999) and *The Baroque Cycle's* (2005) styles of writing. I will argue this mode, when reconsidered as a form of postmodernist experimentalism, invokes the 1990s new Americanist concerns about the cultural studies debates on the coercive aspects of assimilation in the formative stages of US literary canon formation. In my first reading, I will review critically *Cryptonomicon's* writing and the links it makes to these concerns. This reading will take into account the specialised discourse community that became heavily involved in the mid to latter twentieth-century New Left and postmodernist critiques on the course of empire. When read through Sacvan Bercovitch's key 1990s literary influences on the new Americanist Studies, this will also offer the opportunity to reappraise certain conditions that reflect the contemporary shift in attitude away from the postmodern culture-critique of ideology. I will argue that the anti-institutional political excesses of the New Left and the critical Left vocabulary that fuelled and stimulated the mid-1960s to the late 70s and early 80s public and academic debate on the coercive aspects of assimilation and cold war consensus politics have been replaced in the last twenty years in the US literary academy by a discussion on how the art impulse and the social instinct are reciprocally related to nourishing institutional norms. This reading offers the opportunity to reappraise how national politics is intimately related to literary production in the US. My thesis will take into account a wide range of views concerning these debates. This will include Mark McGurl's recent book *The Program Era* (2009). In his book McGurl examines the academic relations between the postmodern-postructural claims on art and the postwar practices of the US system of higher education. Like John Dewey before him, McGurl argues that these practices when connected to the art impulse are also connected to the social instinct. McGurl ushers in a new era of progressive debate. His relationship between the postwar practices of higher education and a heightened respect for difference has provided much needed support and stimulation for the development of the graduate student's personal growth in the modern changeover to a postindustrial economy. My aim is to interrogate the links between Stephenson's writing on the transformative potential held in postwar literary theory and cultural studies and McGurl's asking questions about "where does the individual's recognition of the value of literary experience come from."¹ These two different but interrelated sets of readings offer the opportunity to explore further *Cryptonomicon's* uses of a dominant postwar experimental mode of criticism.

¹ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 63.

McGurl's reading of *Cryptonomicon* shows how its writing can relate to nourishing institutional norms. His reading also shows how its writing can bring back an elitist aesthetic discourse tied to the aesthetic inventory of interwar literary modernism. *Cryptonomicon's* conceptually troubling and politically flawed uses of the critical Left vocabulary when connected to the romantic conception of genius, as we shall see, helps to destroy the gestures that can link white progressives to a racial ideology in its own right. McGurl's pure collegiate piece of work, reading *Cryptonomicon* through the dialectic of the creative writing classroom, is, at best, brief; however, his dialectic can prove to be the most important in current debates when reviewing themes taken up by postmodernist authors from the mid to latter twentieth-century. Whether *Cryptonomicon* is, or, is not, affirming of a postmodernist text is not the final judgment I shall make on its experimentalism. As we shall see in chapter one, its uses of a mode of ambiguity can place it in alignment with the essentialist drift in what McGurl calls the "anti-bourgeois bourgeois aesthetic we call modernism."² From this viewpoint, I will take *Cryptonomicon's* writing as at least partially connected to the postwar experimental impulses involved in the postmodernist acts of deconstruction. In its continuing resistances to a group of post-Vietnam university academics in the storyline we will also see, however, that when holding simultaneity of meaning in the modern leftist and liberal versions of what I take to be its ideology critique of US expansionist ethics it can also offer the opportunity to reappraise Sacvan Bercovitch's way of understanding the importance of ideology in the shaping of the US. The second objective of the thesis is to tie my first two accounts on the humanities arts theory movement from interwar literary modernism to the poststructuralist use of language to Bercovitch's renewed attention and the scrutiny he paid on the latter twentieth-century forms of politicised culture-critique in the American university.³

In chapter three I will review a mode of ambiguity in Neal Stephenson's three volumes of *The Baroque Cycle*. This offers the opportunity to reappraise a separate sphere of influence for the uses of the postwar modes of experimentalism. A debate that centres in these novels, I want to argue, lifts the concerns about the coercive aspects of assimilation and the projects of cultural diversity in the US out of a dialogue, or, more correctly, dialogism with their European critical counterparts.⁴ I

² See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 66.

³ In the 1990s a group of new Americanist revisited debates about assimilation and the projects of cultural diversity. The first wave of the now not so new Americanists were ousted from their dominant positions and practices in the American university by a movement that looked to reinsert literary historical discussion into the practices that were being projected back on nineteenth-century texts. This renewed debate about art and ideology and the American Renaissance canon signalled the beginning of the end of the deconstructionist and poststructuralist legacies as the predominant methodologies for textual and historical appraisal for the graduate student.

⁴ It is not my point to argue that many of the debates stemming from the anti-institutional political excesses of the 1960s and the projects of cultural diversity in the US were further fuelled by the entrance into the American academy of the French poetics of Barthes, Todorov, Derrida and more belatedly de Man and Foucault respectively. French poetics or

will offer this reading, for the practical uses of literary theory and for the study of literary history, through a reappraisal of Bercovitch's mid-1980s to mid-1990s reconstructing of the American literary humanist tradition. His gathering together of twenty-one Americanist Studies scholars, as we shall see, formed a powerful literary-historical consensus. This consensus replaced the dominant literary paradigm of cultural studies and deconstructive attitudes towards art and expression in the antebellum era. What were also replaced were the intellectual commitments to the categories of gender and or identity, race, and above all culture in the contemporary public sphere. Bercovitch attempted to make a virtue out of the incommensurability of discourse that was building up in the American university. Critics like John Guillory and Gerald Graff, albeit from differing scholarly standpoints, followed suit. However, as we shall see, not all university professors took kindly to a reworking of the recent insights gained from European critical theory. The movement away from the interwar and pre-1960s literary historical critiques of art to the postmodern culture critiques of identity and race were now being reargued in terms of a homogenizing nativist impulse. Art and expression that contributes to the continuous formation of the individual was now considered as deeply enmeshed in the American cultural identity. The politicised acts of the deconstructionist and poststructuralist uses of language in cultural studies no longer offered the only deconstructive account of the comprehensive ideal of the representative American.

It is important to note that in the 1990s cultural studies were coming under increasing scrutiny from both inside and outside the literary academy. From the inside, they stood accused of forming idealised disciplinary enclosures. From the outside, the radical attempts to politicise semiotic accounts of the cultural field was seen to have overburdened the traditional American identity. Bercovitch attempted to bridge these conflicting demands turning the outside in and inside out showing how the art impulse was connected to the social instinct, and vice versa. Bercovitch saw that with the differences in subject position now being defined as a new marker for achieving cultural difference, and with no real way of changing or affecting these consensus alternative perspectives were needed to regain radical initiatives in teaching and scholarship. Rather than stand outside his new consensus (or its practices) but also not to follow uncritically in the acts of deconstruction he identified the American selfhood as identity in progress. His studies into early American literature showed that American cultural diversity to be held in the basic recognition of a common pattern. Any profitable study of difference for Bercovitch, and for the new Americanist, from now on should be held in this recognition. His journey into the complex rhetorical structures that he argued constituted the meaning of America had profound consequences for the

theory as it came to be known replaced the dominant literary humanist approach in the academy. It is also not my case to argue either that the New Criticism was not devoid of theory. My point to make is that French theory changed the critical landscape in the literary humanities. I will locate the four primary texts in this post-1960s movement of humanities arts theory.

deconstructionist readings of the textual identity. As we shall see, Bercovitch's readings held divergent implications for the postmodernist-poststructuralist themes of difference that were routinely being projected back in acts of deconstructions on the nineteenth-century classical works of American Literature.

Lauren Berlant invokes concerns about Bercovitch's devising of a new rationale for the textual and historical study of literary deconstructions. His ends, reconsidered for the successful achievement of social integration (hence his concern for appreciation), blamed the cultural studies approaches to rhetoric for having given up on what he saw was criticism's social imperative. Bercovitch saw how the revolutionary potential in American rhetoric had been abandoned in the superficial postmodern synthesis and politicised culture-critique on much of the adversarial criticism in the US. The spontaneous philosophy of postmodernism's discursive bloc, to borrow a phrase from John Guillory, was not where criticism's social imperative lay. This imperative, Bercovitch argued, lay in an integrated narrative and alongside a changeable, volatile historical condition. This narrative and this alternative perspective on the truth of history (which would not be its meaninglessness) would bring about what he saw would be the ends of successful socialisation in a changed industrial climate. The ambivalences that American critics had previously defined as erupting into the text when surrounding the aspects of assimilation, for Bercovitch, was not in any way a form of surrender or a pathology in need of cure but rather the continuous creation needed for the successful uses of that particular culture's symbology. If one could achieve this success (writing cleverly in more dramatic and compelling ways and to keep on writing cleverly in more compelling and dramatic ways) one had ultimately formed with the basis of a new revolutionary consensus.

Bercovitch showed how dissent and being wedded to the American ideology were interdependent and commensurable. As he argues, the freedom to act in history is a function of consensus. To step outside this consensus was, in short, to achieve no recognisable aims for citizenship, prosperity, piety, progress, and futurity.⁵ Bercovitch looked to make a virtue out of the period he named dissensus, seeing the flowering of a new aesthetic ideology.⁶ McGurl's criticism offers an example of Bercovitch's integrative narrative. This narrative works for the coming together of the art impulse and ideological restriction.⁷ McGurl's writing on feedback, which transforms actions into

⁵ The second and the third of these aims conflate the importance and interdependence of secular and spiritual matters in the US, and could offer an account of Stephenson's writing as a whole.

⁶ Bercovitch's notion of ideological restriction and its relation to literature will be dealt with through this introductory section.

⁷ I would call this academic relationship with the Puritan rhetoric as schizophrenic single-mindedness. This, I want to argue, is the notion that we shuttle between agency and structure. For one example of a titanic struggle that entails this relentless psychic strain see McGurl, *The Program Era*, 67. For the actual nature of the origin of this struggle see Bercovitch's concept of the "auto-machia," *The Puritan Origins*, 15-25.

meaningful experiences and back again, in real time, contributes to the continuous formations of rhetoric and social action (history for Bercovitch was rhetoric and fact entwined) that constitute the American individual, who is the sum of these experiences.⁸ Bercovitch's dual cultural work on art and ideology became a prominent feature for the study of classical American literature. As we shall come to see in chapter two, attempts to achieve America came in all forms and from all angles in the US during the late 1980s to mid 1990s. The practices of theory, especially those connected with the works of the deconstructionists, in short, was being consigned to a disparate left wing maverick group - wholly alien and wholly other - not only by right wing Christian conservative demagogues but also by Bercovitch.⁹ Unlike Matthiessen and Spiller's consensus on the art and expression of an earlier age, the deconstructionist attitude was to divide rather than offer coherency for the nation. Both cohering and dividing in Bercovitch's narrative re-vision for a national reimagining amounted to the same thing. Showing how this was so Bercovitch argued would result in the achievement of contemporary criticism's social imperative.¹⁰

The women's culture concept that I invoke in chapter three will set out a challenge to the nativist varieties of co-optation and varieties of dissent that constitutes the new meaning in the Americanist strands of cultural criticism. To illustrate this challenge I will read the emergence of a women's culture concept in *The Baroque Cycle's* three volumes, as held in Bercovitch's recognition of a common pattern, and as an affective imaginary phenomenon. This will allow me to pace Berlant's critical concept of a women's culture.

The transformative potential held in Berlant's cultural work - a paradigmatic appeal for a female complaint genre with a host of paradigmatic female complainers - offers itself to Bercovitch's semiotic paradigm of what I will consider is his American male discontent. Both of these arguments make claims for their particular culture's symbology, and for their particular culture's partial and contradictory interests. Berlant offers a women's culture concept along what Paul Giles argues is dangerous fault line to reflect her notion of publics. Bercovitch, more in the mold of Habermas, believes in a singular American public sphere that traverses this boundary. However, this is space also with conflicting demands and holding partial and contradictory interests. Berlant's female

⁸ Rhetorically, if not for a long time in fact, America, for Bercovitch, was open to all people who covenanted to keep the American faith. He proceeds to argue the American Dream (future, hope, prosperity, piety, continual progression, and openness) can be reclaimed at least rhetorically by all those that keep the American faith.

⁹ Conflating these two together forms somewhat of an unholy alliance in the context of American cultural criticism, however, both, stood to accuse the critical Left vocabulary for exacerbating the differences between history and the dream.

¹⁰ In chapter three I will argue how Bercovitch's model of understanding was to gain greater force as it was to achieve recognisable aims for social reintegration in what the political scientist Michael Sandel called "our culture of extremes." Postmodernist criticism (and the theory function) in the US had, at this time, become largely unintelligible to the American public.

complaint genre paces Bercovitch's male complaint genre (male and genre as equitable to the notion of one homogenous and singular national and integrated public in a singular homogenous public sphere). She saw his search for an affirming integrated narrative, "a deliberately transitional form of nationalism," as both necessary and urgent. Berlant saw quicker than most how the American right had invariably won out in the 1990s debates about culture and transformative spaces held in her notion of publics.¹¹ Searching for a female complaint genre that also offered itself in an integrated narrative would not be made further unintelligible to the American public. Debates over culture wars and the literary academy's attempts to politicise the cultural field were pressing down on pluralist concerns. Making a virtue out of this type of dissensus, for Berlant, was always something of a double-edged sword, and she plays this new great man game with deliberate unease. It is her vexed narrative through which I will recognise the emergence of a women's culture concept in the three volumes of *The Baroque Cycle*.

The resistances that form from a women's culture collective in *The Baroque Cycle* are held against the seventeenth-century Bourbon and newly emerging Anglo-Dutch colonial State rule. In the formal mode, the female characters, in the paradigmatic aspects of the female complainer, resist the replacement of the story's setting out one set of ruling elites being chaster than the other. Looking at the sociocultural and political content of the world picture painted by *The Baroque Cycle* the new Anglo-Dutch monarchy attempt to carry women's female lived experiences (of their private existences) through the new influences of power and technology. This brings into view the old humanist and cultural custodian argument about placing reigns on progress and technology. A waiting-in-the-wings elite in their new roles as Britain's Royal successors now anoint old world power and ruling class positions around the world through the pressures they place on Sir Isaac Newton's revolutionary seventeenth-century theorems on natural philosophy. His position, suggestively symbolically laden with the ideological restriction held in Bercovitch's common pattern, is suspect. Although he is patronized by the leading and radical progressive thinker British Whig parliamentarian Roger Comstock, Newton's occultist behaviors in his pursuits for Solomon's lost gold is to taint his exemplary becoming warden of the Royal Mint as well as The Royal Society's most preeminent natural philosopher.

The Baroque Cycle offers its experimentalism to achieve the social imperative by reintegrating in formal or generic terms the lived experiences of the female characters, and their fictional (i.e. not public) worlds with the real abstractions of economic science and political dynamics as the feudal

¹¹ The Christian conservative right became the best at showing discontent with liberalism and in short hijacked the vocabulary of the left and its mobilisation of populist movements from the realm of culture while at the same time arguing how cultural decline had ruined the American dream.

corporation interlocks with Britain's banking debt system. This approach, which offers a radical feminine sentimental culture fully enmeshed in the physical world but also isolated from it, I want to argue, invokes the ruination of the deconstructive initiative as it is led by the academics in *Cryptonomicon*. These figures, especially angry feminist and poststructural critic Charlene, have completely divorced the deconstructive initiative from any real world consequences. As we shall see, the novel blames these figure's passive acceptances of historical power (more immediately at the hands of the Yale professor Dr. Kivistik) at the formation of another Anglo-Dutch pact. This time it is Roosevelt and Churchill who are the cultural custodians that set the conditions for progress and technology in America's backyards. *The Baroque Cycle* or *Cryptonomicon's* returns to the deconstructive initiative with fuller awareness (what others have argued is the salvaging of poststructuralism yet again for the left), on the aspects of the impartiality of history, whether this is universally held (as in Newton's revolutionary theorems), or university led by *Cryptonomicon's* academics and their new means of technological persuasion in language, offer the deconstructive method to show how real change (i.e. progress through technology) can turn into something like the routinisation of change. This is largely when confronted by the old world conflating of the feudal corporation with modern industrialisation processes and institutionalising impulses as one system simply begets another.

The themes of the standardisation of the academics in lieu of what *The Baroque Cycle* recognizes are the uses the old world put to new technology becomes more evident when placed alongside the fictional Eliza's attempts to liberate minority groups from the feudal modes of dominance and oppression. On a visit to Bridewell Palace she has cause to examine the work of the ex-prostitute Hannah Spates. Hannah is put to work as part of the new middle class reform methods taking place in Britain's modern State transformation. Opening onto these questions of moral reform, and how the public intellectual is never far away from such guidance, we see how Hannah has been brought out of her life of drudgery, toil and degradation in the old male feudal corporation only to be dominated by another group of male's in the newly emerging industrial one. Juxtaposing one atrocity with another (i.e. the movement within the feudal corporation to the industrial one) is a mode of experimentalism that affirms Stephenson's writing to Richard Rorty's critical left tagging. Rorty argued that Stephenson's 1992 book *Snow Crash* followed the literary left position in their approaches to deconstructions. Rorty's is a convincing assertion. In Hannah's case the truth of history is up for grabs. What is wrong for Stephenson in *The Baroque Cycle* is that traditional history especially the old world history when pretending to be above politics "prevents people from creating the openly political history they need, a history endowed by them with a meaning for

which they alone are fully responsible.”¹² I will salvage this point especially in relation to *The Baroque Cycle* and *Cryptonomicon*'s concerns for their female characters. This begs the question is Stephenson a feminist? We will come to see in what further experimental ways *The Baroque Cycle* and *Cryptonomicon*'s self-reflexive acts of deconstructions (of the self) manifest when the novel attempts to elude authorial control. This is more suspect when attempts are made to escape the clutches and influences lay solely at the foot of the old world, its legacies, its past, and even its previous literary productions.¹³ *The Baroque Cycle* and *Cryptonomicon*'s contrasting readings of Newton's proof-texts as a way to understand voluntarism, universalism and progress in US history is offered within an alternative vision when placed alongside Bercovitch's proof-texts of radical rhetorical and political continuity and cultural change.

A focus of my thesis is to reappraise the 1990s new Americanist notion that the British ruling class system formed in liberation (from the old class structure) is different from the American middle class structure formed in liberalism. This reading will also take into account Bercovitch's way of understanding an American literary tradition begun by the early New Englander Puritan settlers, and how the subversive doctrine of individualism was co-opted into the Puritan rhetoric. In the routinisation of change, the old world Bourbon dynasty morphs into the British Hanoverian parliamentary one. This is just as dynastic just as perverse and just as ruling. In the Puritan rhetoric and approach *The Baroque Cycle*'s deconstructions resist the processes of European modernization and invoke speculatively: 'the expression of a particular utopian consciousness developed within the premises of liberal culture. It carries the profoundly destabilising energies released by that culture in its formative stage.' Because these resistances are mainly offered through *The Baroque Cycle*'s formal appraisals of female characteristics I want to argue for Dewey's approach to the art impulse and his claim that it is connected to the social instinct. This reading invokes Berlant's now materialist search to find the art impulse for her female complaint genre through a genealogy of entertainments in the US. Fashioning a diverse range of female experiences through and from the mainstream media's fetishising of the family/commodity form, I want to argue, poses a counterclaim to Bercovitch's recalling all discontent in the expansion of his one dimensional/multidimensional seventeenth-century social, cultural, and ritualistic literary paradigm, which Berlant argues usually returns women's culture to debates centred on books. *The Baroque Cycle* is a book, however, I will invoke parallels between it and Berlant's tying regimes of truth to

¹² See Walter Benn Michaels, "Is There a Politics of Interpretation?" 250.

¹³ Newton's proof-text *principia* is considered alongside the work of Leibniz or the later creative formations of Turing and Whitehead. *The Baroque Cycle* castigates Newton as "having done no creative work since 93." We are told he now spends most of his time "rehashing new versions of old books." *Cryptonomicon* condemns Newton's *principia* for not being strictly mathematics. Newton's failure to make full use of the calculus technology is something *The Baroque Cycle* implies allows the old world order to get to grips with the New Science that was currently destroying the Bourbon Dynasty.

their respective seventeenth and the twentieth-century institutional domains, where disciplinary nationalisms recall all dissent, however obliquely, into something like a rite of ideological consent. *The Baroque Cycle* and Berlant's attempts to break out of Bercovitch's confines of a particular cultural symbology, however, also offer the modes that offer the opportunity to reappraise allegiances to Bercovitch's call for a nativist way of understanding the rhetoric of the dominant culture of the US. Interrogating what uses the forms of experimentalism are put to in *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle*'s critical reappraisals of that dominant culture's rhetoric will offer the opportunity to reappraise deconstructive alignments and the intellectual commitments, albeit from differing scholarly viewpoints and perspectives, to offer alternative narrative re-visions on the continuous formations of posthistorical discourse and identity politics in the American university.¹⁴

I will locate *Cryptonomicon*'s critiques of the cold war consensus politics emerging out of the data gathering methods in World War Two in the simultaneity of meaning that converts the novel into an act of deconstruction.¹⁵ This will give a contemporary reading of the US literary landscape, as well as offering a twenty-first century literary critique of intentionalism, and on the novels' reaffirming a double meaning within contemporary approaches to literature. In literary deconstructions standardised distinctions are lost for an emerging epistemology. This scenario is used to overcome the violent history of racist politics by other, literary means.¹⁶ To illustrate such overcoming, the Deleuzian idioms of becoming or being offer politicised acts of interpretation. The event in history

¹⁴ Although Stephenson uses the term posthistorical in *Cryptonomicon*'s condemnations of a sterile academic cultural politics this term is never fully explained. And because *Cryptonomicon* I want to argue is responding to what it sees is the failure of the critical left's social imperative or at least its reification in the American university it is worthwhile elaborating the term posthistorical is favoured by Walter Benn Michaels. Michaels criticises literary theorists' redescription of difference of opinion as difference in subject-position. The valorisation of identity makes the subject-position primary. It is not my argument to give an account of Michaels's sophisticated antitheory argument on identity politics, however where possible I will flag up its uses in my readings of the primary texts and the critical formations that I attach to my readings. For two ways of understanding how *Cryptonomicon* adheres to two readings and two very different ways of separating identity politics from the political acts, and critical reappraisals of the deconstructionists see Walter Benn Michaels "The Shape of the Signifier," and Mark McGurl, "The Program Era: Pluralisms of Postwar American Fiction." Hereafter abbreviated Pluralisms of Postwar American Fiction.

¹⁵ For a simple and concise summary of criticism's social imperative for deconstruction Michaels writes "an author can never succeed in determining the meaning of a text; every text participates in a code that necessarily eludes authorial control." See Walter Benn Michaels, "Against Theory 2: Hermeneutics and Deconstruction, 50. Hereafter abbreviated "Against Theory 2."

¹⁶ The violent racist politics phrase is something that I borrow from McGurl. As we shall see, it is useful for a having a reading of Stephenson's writing. McGurl uses this term primarily to condemn the white supremacist Forrest Asa Carter for abusing the postwar practices of higher education that played and ambivalent but central part in countercultural writing. Through McGurl's reading we will see how *Cryptonomicon*'s anti-racist epistemological pluralism is similarly accused of destroying the gestures that link together the higher educational progressive acts of individual reform and postwar literary experience that, in turn, promoted the liberal ideals of cultural pluralism and diversity. We will see how *Cryptonomicon* destroys these gestures by fusing the anti-intellectual political excesses of the 1960s with textual performances of vocal authenticity of the 1970s and 80s. Also rather than become involved in competing claims to the current rhetorical historicizing of politicised acts of interpretation in the postwar period and in American literature McGurl follows in the act of what Michaels calls "creative supplementing." See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 119-121. See also Mark McGurl, "Learning from *Little Tree*," 250. See Walter Benn Michaels, "Against Theory 2," 53.

becomes undecidable and no routes to the meaning of truth can be found. Rather than offer *readerly* or *writerly* expressive versions of literary theory to read *Cryptonomicon* or *The Baroque Cycle's* postmodernist engagements with history (in which Neal Stephenson the author becomes a mere paper author contributing to his work as text) I will offer these novels' acts of deconstruction within the new Americanist Studies and their approaches to the literary historical study on antebellum era topics. This will offer the opportunity to reappraise Bercovitch's renewed sense of aesthetic judgement on the claims of the art novel, sentimental or otherwise, in the antebellum era. When reviewed alongside his renewed sense of the postmodern modes of indeterminate analysis and synthetic judgement Stephenson's fictions become operable in Bercovitch's paradigmatic analyses of the American Puritan imaginary. As we shall see, this shift in focus moved attention away from the sociopolitical content of art's meaning in the antebellum era to how the art-impulse in America offers a ritualistic form of writerly satisfaction.¹⁷

In Bercovitch's conflating of the pluralist imaginary and ideological restriction a meaningful form of social albeit co-opted criticism can be found.¹⁸ Bercovitch's dual cultural work on art and ideology offer the revised understandings of the academic relations between literature and society, art and culture, rhetoric and social action. His renewed appreciations of the seventeenth-century New England imagination, in what I will reconsider is a classical sociological reflection, changed the way many cultural studies advocates chose to approach their separate areas of study on antebellum era topics. Held within the current twentieth century theories of language and their focuses on rhetoric was the historical fact that dissensus thinking was simultaneously nourished by that culture's particular symbology as well as in continuous flight from it. His newly found and profoundly destabilising energies on the subversive elements of the art impulse moved the focus of attention away from the sectarian and self-reflexive methodologies of European critical theory and the rhetorical teaching strategies of de Man and towards the art of moral ambiguation in the literary strategies of Nathaniel Hawthorne. It is an aim of this thesis to follow directly Bercovitch's critical route to the period he named dissensus and the ritualistic forms of dissensus thinking. Following this process will alter the perspectives on the readings of the four primary novels, and will offer the opportunity to reappraise the 1990s postmodernist acts of deconstruction and a liberal methodology that was intent on erasing all differences.

¹⁷ Bercovitch wrote that classical American literature stood as amplifications of the figural import of the colony and testament to the culture's sustained and sustaining vitality. See *The Puritan Origins*.

¹⁸ Bercovitch showed how classical American art and ideology were reciprocally related. He also showed how art was also reciprocally related to nourishing institutional norms. This useful comment on art and institutions provides relevant information when reviewing McGurl's analysis on the intimate relations between art and the postwar institution. I deal with McGurl's reading throughout my entire thesis and attempt to show its relevance in more ways than one to Bercovitch's way of understanding art and expression in the American Renaissance, and how McGurl offers new directions in literary scholarship in the American university insofar as these new directions are considered endemic to American contexts.

Under the heading “Postmodernity or Nativist Viewpoint” chapter one will offer a number of competing viewpoints on how to read *Cryptonomicon*’s literary critiques of intentionalism. Foregrounding this chapter is the novel art impulse in America. This is connected to the social instinct. *Cryptonomicon*’s novel art attempts to free itself from aspects of what can best be illustrated by Pierre Bourdieu’s critiques of social distinction, in which social subjects were classified by their classifications. In *Cryptonomicon*’s sociocultural alignments it plays around with the experimental mode, and lays out the ground for a critical reappraisal of the influences of French theory, such as the academic uses of Bourdieu’s sociological method. The academics classifications of American Randy, as they attempt to turn aspects of Bourdieu’s understanding of classification into a post-Marxist counterclaim on the dominant hegemony of the US, and the traditional political frameworks used to combat a pervasive military economic power structure, have reified in the American university. The novel jokingly turns the academics’ views on the American global hegemony, now ludicrously set out in their “major interdisciplinary conference “War as Text,” into something of a parlour game (fuelled by empty “distinctions”) for the cultural elite. Beyond *Cryptonomicon*’s jibes on academia, the academics, and the literary marketplace, Rorty argued that this type of academic left was something the oligarchy in America always dreamed of. Reconsidered in a classical pragmatic mode of criticism the academics talk on “the Spectacle” (51) make no difference to Randy’s previously held store of opinions, about himself or about others, or, “the other.” In the classical mode of pragmatism William James argued that a difference that made no difference was no difference. In this classical vein, Rorty argued that left liberal academics that attempted to teach the average or the working class American how to recognise otherness would face a stiff revolt. Rorty, a conversational experimentalist, held the belief that values were only dropped when new ones had successfully redescribed the old ones. The academics in *Cryptonomicon* have not been so successful in their redescrptions, and we see how their attempts to get Randy to recognise “otherness,” from their politically enlightened middle class views on oppressed or minority cultures falls on deaf ears. *Cryptonomicon*, similar to Rorty, sees how the New or critical Left taking over from the old progressive left has botched the job. This is when coming to what they believe is a successful form of social integration for all Americans including your average white one like Randy.

Considered from the standpoint of Rorty’s position on the proletarianisation of the American bourgeois, or even McGurl’s schizophrenic single-mindedness on a version of modernism he calls lower-middle-class-modernism, *Cryptonomicon*, I want to argue, returns to previous literary

productions to offer its postmodernist concerns about a white racist, nationalist hegemony.¹⁹ Feeling a little bit left out of the academic's powers of persuasion and their implications of how the technocrat is now embedded in Randy's white male subject position the novel in attempts to distance itself from these attacks and associations presents the white male Anglo-Saxon patriarchs Roosevelt and Churchill in the wartime storyline as not typical Americans but the spokespersons for the dominant elite.²⁰ *Cryptonomicon's* writing believes a form of white male supremacy, imposing command and violence wherever it goes, is now inherent in the dominant American Superpower. However, its writing also believes that this imposition now covertly exists in the normative communicative forms of the elitist educational field of US based cultural criticism. *Cryptonomicon* attacks the institution for allowing what it sees is a spurious and more aggressive form of cultural pluralism (and the stories it now tells to America) to exist in the now becoming idealised interdisciplinary enclosures of literary study. The novel sets out to show how the public intellectual has reified in these debates. The academic's liberally enlightened views on the dominant super or transnational class in the US and the progressive aspects of technology have stalled as they have linked their debates on the dynamic interaction amongst social networking sites and groups from their privileged positions in the American university to worthless views about the Internet.

Cryptonomicon attacks the fictional Yale School establishment in the storyline (telling stories) for allowing such views to be held by the young liberal American art student. The establishment that is set out to protect the young in America *Cryptonomicon's* writing believes is falling woefully short in its ethic of civic duty. The university, in short, is unable to guard the American way (voluntarism, universalism, progress) from bouts of elitism, narcissism, and classicism now brought forward in the sectarian methodologies of the academics. Like Rorty, Stephenson ambivalently portrays that the American project is benign and sets people out in good faith to show this. It is, instead, institutions that are perverse. In a politics of bad faith the institutionalising impulses hide an ethic of aggression that is now being transmitted in America through the young liberal academics. The common sense for this discourse community is to transmit their dubious

¹⁹ See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 66-67.

²⁰ McGurl argues how *Cryptonomicon's* writing has to slip itself into the style of the other to offer this critique. From this position of other narration McGurl argues how *Cryptonomicon's* writing ultimately destroys the gestures that link white progressives and seemingly a white retrogressive like Stephenson to a racial ideology in its own right. Do we really have to take Stephenson slipping into a mode of other narration so seriously? Possibly, however, we can also see McGurl defending a progressive educational act in the institution that offers itself as a creative supplementing on the questions of American identity and the projects of cultural diversity but also in a reading of *Cryptonomicon* offers this creative formation on American selfhood as the condition of argument. This condition may be intentional as the replacement of disagreement for a difference in subject position was seen to have caused many problems for critical thinkers on the left. The point being that behind McGurl's reading of *Cryptonomicon* is the dependence of the narrative on argument, which as Jonathon Culler writes in another context, can offer the narrative as turning back on itself to efface the order of the event. This, in turn, can obliterate what Rorty calls telling stories and denigrate into inquiry, into arguments. America, in short, needs something, as Jane Tompkins once said, to argue (war) about in order to perpetuate itself.

research methods and latest versions of epistemological pluralism, and their almost lunatic disbelief in physical reality, to a wider non-academic audience.²¹ To get its point across that America from its beginning was neither murderous nor foul (but the world's fairest hope) *Cryptonomicon's* writing places Charlene's research methods alongside other dubious research data gathering enterprises coming out of the military industrial complex during World War Two.²² (A wartime code breaker Commander Schoen in *Cryptonomicon* is shown as becoming particularly deranged as he has to put his mathematical skills to work in hunting down and killing as many people as he can. It is these types of murderous abstractions that mirror both sets of public intellectuals in the novel's storyline. In both sets of cases psychic dissonances ensue as the intellectuals become attached to their research methods but as consequence alienated from their respective environments). In both contexts, we begin to see how *Cryptonomicon's* concerns about the old world traditional humanist argument on issues of progress and technology is fed through the practices of theory conjoined to the American postwar system of higher education and its projects of cultural diversity.

Returning to Dewey's notion of the art impulse as beneficial to the child's development in the processes of industrial modernisation, for Randy this art impulse is no longer connected to the social instinct for the ends of successful socialisation, or for something that can foster, in relation to his Epiphyte Corps Group, the mutual interdependence of the future labour force or citizenry.²³ *Cryptonomicon's* concern, I want to argue, raises the twenty-first century concerns about the

²¹ As I will attempt to show in chapter two *Cryptonomicon* does not so much as offer itself in the postmodern discursive bloc that John Guillory railed against for its colonizing of scientific views on social constructions but rather attempts to put different views on social reality that provides an alternative vision of philosophical discourse.

²² The public intellectual in *Cryptonomicon's* contemporary and wartime stories answer to specific institutional needs. Following what can be considered are the anti-institutional political excesses of the 1960s, an increasingly specialised technical discourse trains a group of wartime academic military personnel to prepare for a techno-managerial role rather than a public intellectual. When taking a line of thought borrowed from John Guillory's socioanalysis of the Yale School culture, this offers a mode of critical reflection in which to examine *Cryptonomicon's* conflating of the dubious institutional uses put to the World War Two and the contemporary Yale School intellectuals. The intellectuals' offer traditional humanist arguments on uses put to new technologies. This offers the novel in terms of the conflicts of the faculties between the sciences and the humanities. It is not an intention to offer a full account of how *Cryptonomicon* involves itself in this debate. However, in chapter two I will argue that its views on social construction return to the nineteenth-century's realist promise of a conflict free and integrated world. This is in marked contrast to the latter twentieth century's literary theorists' views on social construction, which the novel believes is a "social [con]struct," and which *Cryptonomicon* views as not much use in motivating actions. I want to argue, *Cryptonomicon's* writing still believes in an ultimate reality to be had, and this makes it a looser baggier style of writing in the postwar experimental mode in terms of a writing held in the postmodern discursive bloc. See *Cryptonomicon*, 76-77. See also Christopher Newfield, "The Value of Nonscience," 512, and John Guillory, *Cultural Capital*. See also John Guillory, "The Sokal Affair."

²³ McGurl expressively opposes *Cryptonomicon's* attacks on the way post-1960s graduate students were informed by the teachings of literary theory for the successful ends of socialisation in the US. This debate hinges on what *Cryptonomicon* and McGurl see is the best way to inform the young in order for their successful social reintegration into a postindustrial economy. Is it through reading books like *Cryptonomicon*, or going to university and reading works of criticism like McGurl's? If we take this one step further we can see how *Cryptonomicon* sides with Rorty in the sense of holding an ambivalent patriotism. Rorty wrote "the residual left and the academic left is the difference between those who read books like Thomas Geoghegan's *Which Side Are You On?* [...] and people who read Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. The latter is an equally brilliant book, but it operates too high to encourage any particular political initiative. See Rorty, *Achieving our Country*.

politics of access to university institutions. This is now more pressing than the politics of representation carried on within these institutions that were dominant throughout the latter stages of the twentieth century. Using his contemporary notion of feedback McGurl attempts to respond to this new concern in real time Taking a step back from McGurl's approach and taking a step towards a perspective from Rorty it is perhaps best not to see these writers and thinkers as holding views on subjects of common concern, which McGurl implicitly does and which Stephenson implicitly condemns academics for, but rather to "think of [their] philosophy in other ways-in particular, as a matter of telling stories-stories about why we talk as we do and how we might avoid continuing to talk that way."²⁴ To save *Cryptonomicon* from McGurl's critique in a story telling way can form the bases not of a productive argument but the ends for the successful coming together of difference. This can be a way to foster the mutual interdependence of the future labour force and citizenry without argument or disagreement.

The conflating of a general empiricism with a thematic novelty to attack the business and military institutions can further tie *Cryptonomicon's* writing to the aesthetic or Derridean essential drift in modernist literature. In this drift the author lost the ability to control his or her willing acts of interpretation. This loss of authorial control became a political act in itself. Rorty criticised *Snow Crash* for taking this type of attitude. The main criticism for Rorty was that Stephenson's textual politics ultimately fails to argue for his views against the views of others. For taking what Rorty called a spectatorial left attitude towards politics and literature Stephenson was critically maligned. Rorty argues how this approach replaced the Deweyan participatory pragmatic left and its approach to politics and literature. Using McGurl's analysis on Dewey's aspects of child-centred educational philosophy and the progressive aspects of learning, which fed into a modern American industrial society he writes: "Dewey theorised that mere activity in the world does not count as authentic experience until it is connected with the return wave of consequences that load mere flux with significance." This type of feedback loop McGurl writes mobilised curiosity for the successful ends of socialisation.²⁵ Rorty's belief, on the other hand, was that Stephenson's "incurable knowingness," a term he uses for Stephenson's relinquishing of any possible views on objective claims to truth, had helped to destroy these types of progressive reform movements and educational acts. Books like *Snow Crash* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) played up to the politics of representation and identity conducted within the 1960s postwar institution. Because these books, for Rorty, were seen to add very little for the successful ends of American socialisation he argued that their failure was to liberate narrative from the dependence on argument, and at the same time to offer nothing on Dewey's "return wave of consequences that load mere flux with

²⁴ I borrow this phrase from Michaels, See "A Reply to Richard Rorty: What is Pragmatism?" 471.

²⁵ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 86-88.

significance.” Rorty ultimately saw these novels’ as degenerating into inquiry, into an exchange of arguments that when placed alongside a discourse community attempting to branch out of their respective disciplinary enclosures would find their projects did not have the legitimacy of a unified political theory. As we shall see, however, the return wave of consequences that draws on a mode of ambiguity in *Cryptonomicon*, what Rorty would argue is its mere flux, is loaded with newfound significances for telling stories albeit in the confines of the none transcendent hermeneutics of the Puritan American identity.

As the academic left taught Americans how to recognise otherness Rorty argued this discourse community without the status of a political project would secede to a bottom-up style of populist revolt.²⁶ In the 1990s a bottom up populist revolt was organised by such groups as the Christian conservative right who stood against the American liberal and cosmopolitan middle classes. This revolt was formed against the literary academy. Rorty attempted to close the distance between the critical left and a wave of populism and mounting pressure forming against the liberals from the East and West coast. The mainstream media was heavily collusive in shackling the views of liberal attitudes and the politics of difference, or identity, or of recognition with religious right wing fundamentalists. This, as we shall see, was not only highly irresponsible but was also alienating the heartland voters, who rather than vote liberal on testy subjects such as the pro-life debate abased themselves before the throne of big business.²⁷ Thomas Frank argues this was rather than vote for the *latte* drinking liberal with their know-it-all methods and cosmopolitan class attitudes towards American art and culture in a time when Frank argues *values mattered most*. I will deal with Frank’s expose on the culture wars in chapter two. *Cryptonomicon* can find itself shackled to these debates on issues of art, American culture and Middle American family values. In American culture wars Rorty writes, “Nobody is setting up a program in unemployed studies, homeless studies, or trailer park studies because the unemployed, the homeless and residents of trailer parks are not other in the relevant sense.” Instead of offering a know-it-all criticism Rorty devised his way of telling stories at the same time as keeping theory intact. This was on the basis of a narrative, or what he calls a conversation, with no claims to know.

²⁶ This populist assault proved largely to be correct if one actually took to believing that what the school transmitted was the politicised acts of deconstruction and not simply the politics of the school culture. I will deal with this aspect of the 1990s school culture and the effects the determining apparatuses had on theory through the work of John Guillory. McGurl chose not to get involved in “the so-called culture wars of the 1980s and 90s, in which the mass media took a brief interest in the “scandal of differentiation.” See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 56.

²⁷ If one wants to take a closer look into issues raised in *Cryptonomicon* on war, the death penalty or even aspects of forced sterilisation, the academics in the novel that come to watch Charlene’s war as text conference come from places like Berkley, Paris, and Heidelberg. The choice of Heidelberg may be apt as it was a NSDAP University involved in Nazi eugenics and forced sterilisations.

As we shall see, McGurl's reading of *Cryptonomicon* takes up Rorty's story in part.²⁸ He criticises *Cryptonomicon's* crude populist uses of the experimental mode tied to the academic or literary left. Like Rorty, McGurl wants to return to the waves of progressivism tied to the educational reform of the postwar experience, and of literary production in this period. McGurl's return, I will argue, is loaded with new significances in an attempt to turn the flux of a failed critical left's approach to literature, politics and society into a meaningful act of social, artistic, educational, and economic reform. This, however, hinges on an argument. McGurl wants to extricate *Cryptonomicon's* social imperative from the progressive acts of educational self-development, as he sees its critiques on the institution of the university as destroying the progressive acts that channelled the socialisation aspects of American assimilation into a heightened respect for cultural difference. These acts, which taught American university students to recognise otherness, are something McGurl argues should not be attacked, turned back or repealed. McGurl wants to offer an alternative perspective, a re-vision, to show how this was a very successful educational developmental program in what he calls "the second wave of progressivism in its suburban phase."²⁹ He also wants to show that these feedback processes, with the art impulse and therefore the social instinct, inextricably linked to the respective projects of cultural diversity and multiculturalism in the university, have become conceptually troubling and politically flawed when in the wrong hands.³⁰

Cryptonomicon's attacks on the wartime and the contemporary institution of Yale and on a predominantly white nationalist elitist educational field allow me to trace its concerns to a legacy of anti-institutional criticism in the US. Richard Ohmann's pioneering research in the 1970s made concrete many of the New Left's objectives on the cold war university, as a Research and Development laboratory. As I have tried to show this type of criticism of the university as the research and development centre for the cold war laboratory become very different in McGurl's socioanalysis of how art, and the consequent claims on art, interacts with institutional norms and how these are loaded with new significances each time they form feedback processes and come into

²⁸ McGurl actually takes a position to stop arguments falling back into debates about moral incrimination.

²⁹ See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 88.

³⁰ McGurl argues the US system of higher education offered the substitution of a heightened respect for difference for the progressive aspects of Deweyan assimilation as part of an ongoing strategy for the successful democratisation of the art impulse. Dewey saw how this impulse was connected to the child's social instinct of self-expression. He "envisioned a thorough democratisation of the romantic conception of genius" that would mobilise curiosity for the ends of successful socialisation in America. McGurl argues the forward reaching plans of postwar progressive educators in the second wave of progressivism would not form benefits for the old modern American industrial society but for the emerging postindustrial economy. Dewey's implementations of child-centred progressive education are imagined first as benefits to modern American industrial society. For McGurl, *Cryptonomicon's* wrongheadedness is that it fails to recognise that cultural diversity was not a true reflection of difference per se but the ends for the successful mobilising of curiosity and the art impulse. When connected with the social instinct in the young this would form the successful ends for socialisation in the information, creative and experience economy. McGurl offers a damning indictment of *Cryptonomicon* when it takes its postmodern discursiveness to the internal workings of the American middle classes and the progressive aspects of higher educational reform.

contact with their environment. McGurl's systems theory approach, as I will demonstrate in chapter two, stops short of involvement in its third developmental stage. McGurl, in short rather than continually offer processes of self-reflexivity that would see the definite shift into a postmodern society holds a sociological reflection up to the feedback processes, where the first impulse is reflected back and forth over and over again. The third stage is more recognisable and identifiable with the works of Katherine Hayles. McGurl argues how second order feedback processes are useful to show how the art impulse returns to the university. These returns for McGurl manifest directly through the creative writing classroom. McGurl takes issue with many of the thorny debates written about the creative writing school, mainly targeted for "producing a standardised aesthetic, a corporate literary style." Calling on his second wave of progressivism he binds together a distinctly national migrant, free-enterprising project in the university. This stands against the reductive anti-institutional political excesses of the 1960s that McGurl argues forced an imaginary politics on the progressive aspects of educational reform. Implicitly tied to McGurl's critique of *Cryptonomicon's* attacks on the postwar practices of higher education is to show how the art impulse in America is reciprocally related to nourishing institutional norms. Combining the creative writing classroom with the postwar practices of higher education, McGurl demonstrates how this act (of educational reform) offers a deep substantiation of American nationalist culture loaded with new significance and meaning through which to found new alignments with the American university and American culture. As Patricia Waugh writes in another context this use of creative writing is a crafty reading of postwar literary theory. We will come to see how McGurl's nationalistic expression is deeply radical in affirming the processes of the potentially subversive doctrine of individualism but also just as deeply tautological in terms of how these profoundly destabilising energies ratify embedded political structures of assent at the same time.

Cryptonomicon's fusion of the New Left's imaginary with Ohmann's pioneering research on the postwar American university for McGurl exacerbates the differences between history and the dream. Although this type of representation offered the opportunity for the minority writer in the US to answer back to the dominant nationalist hegemony (i.e. the openly political history they needed for a history to be endowed by them) *Cryptonomicon's* allegiances to racial otherness now stands accused by McGurl. McGurl feels the time is right to take back the current laudable objective of affirming cultural diversity. His analysis of *Cryptonomicon* offers the opportunity to engage with how we (as university students or at least those trained in contemporary Americanist Studies in the university) should now respond to postmodernist authors responding to themes of authenticity and cultural diversity in the US. His reading of *Cryptonomicon* also offers the opportunity to engage with certain weariness in the US surrounding the project of exposing and demystifying the

ideological forces at work in art and culture. Viewing *Cryptonomicon* through these concerns offers a critical lens through which to reappraise the contemporary discipline of textual and historical criticism of the US and the twenty-first century substitution of disagreement or argument for language shored up by a politics of difference.

Cryptonomicon's formal attempts to politicise its acts of interpretation manifests two mutually antagonistic outlooks. Its overtly deconstructionist one I have so far covered. Holding simultaneity of meaning, *Cryptonomicon* also presents challenges to Robert Spiller and F.O. Matthiessen's consensus formations. I borrow a reading of their positions from Bercovitch's mid-1980s standpoint of reconstructing classical American literary history. Bercovitch, in particular, looked to take "American Renaissance terms out of the realm of cultural schizophrenia that was a legacy of the old consensus and to relocate it firmly in history."³¹ This would enforce a sort of liminal interior dialogue that in effect would reinforce the mainstream culture.³² Politicised acts of interpretation holding out the subversive elements of art and expression in American literary history came under renewed processes of interpretive pressure through Bercovitch's paradigmatic reappraisals of ideological restriction in American Renaissance literary forms. Tying Bercovitch's reading to the declining social and bonding capital in the US that was formed partly out of the extreme response to a history of US criticism collusive with a history of veiled white racism connects my reading of *Cryptonomicon* to the issues that emerged as a result of the perceived social bias inherent in US literary canon formation. The pervasive influence of a dominant white hegemony that was seen to underlie national politics was also seen to pervade the consensus of opinion coming out of the cold war.

A deconstructive thread can run throughout my entire readings of Stephenson's fictional attacks on the seventeenth-century, World War Two, and Cold War institutions. This offers collusions with his writing with the revisionist interventions into the US canon. Others have argued manifestations of *Cryptonomicon's* understandings of code make the literary critique of intentionalism into the posthistoricist valorisation of identity.³³ This is where arguable beliefs are replaced for conflicts over subject position. These politicised acts of interpretation when considered in the postmodern discursive bloc were used to interrogate the cold war legacies and their underlying virulent forms of white racism and masculine forms of social aggression.³⁴ As I have tried to show, acts of

³¹ Bercovitch, "The Problem of Ideology," 642.

³² Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, 204-205.

³³ See McGurl, "Pluralisms of Postwar American Fiction," 124.

³⁴ For the understanding of a discursive bloc in postmodernism Guillory argues "the scandal of the Sokal hoax was marked [...] by confusion between the discursive bloc of postmodernism and the field of science studies." See Guillory, "The Sokal Affair," 473-474.

deconstruction as a way and means of interpreting political liberalism and liberal racism have been superseded in the US by the 1990s new Americanist Studies ways of approaching and thinking on the issues of literature, race, cultural identity and cultural history. Bercovitch's discovery of history, as rhetoric and fact entwined, in young American literature rejected in advance any possible grounds for the conversion of dissent (whether expressed implicitly by literary works or explicitly by political groups) into the bases for actual social change. He looked to make a virtue out of the period of dissensus, and believed that underwriting his critical project was the current rewriting of the terms for the successful social reintegration of US literary scholarship. Politics in the guise of epistemology at the time had come to seem ludicrous in the public sphere, and Bercovitch's reconstructing of American literary history was seen by many as a positive step forward for the reclaiming of criticism's social imperative, and the breaking of the ties placed on US literary criticism by the acts of deconstruction.³⁵

Cryptonomicon's rewriting of American literary history, as we shall see, is somewhat shackled to the mainstream media's polemical views and its way of portraying the 1990s liberal academics' almost "lunatic disbelief in the physical world."³⁶ Bercovitch sidesteps this argument. His aim for the successful reintegration of literary theory was to show how its achievement lay not in the politicised acts of deconstruction but in the social imperative. This was not the way many postmodern professors believed that their politicised acts of interpretation should re-enter the social fields of public debate. However, Bercovitch's way of making it new rejuvenated the cultural field in a dissensus thinking that taught literary historians, cultural critics and theorists alike to cohere, unify, or integrate their reading methods rather than divide, defer or disseminate. We will see in chapter one some of those that followed the search for alternative perspectives, and an integrated narrative that would regain radical initiatives in teaching and scholarship and some of those who did not. Bercovitch's critique of authorial intentionality stood in directly oppositional terms to the poststructuralists and deconstructionists that had directly separated the author's intention from the meaning of the text. In turn, they used this one-dimensional technique to lift the veil of oppression from arguable beliefs.³⁷ These beliefs although previously challenged from many angles, as Andrew Dubois argues, "the New Criticism was not devoid of theory," were used to promote the works of classical canonised authors as the expressions of an age. Rather than offer the poststructural celebration of indeterminacy in writing, as the representative American self embedded in these

³⁵ Guillory argues how this antirealist agenda had become unsustainable in the public sphere. See Guillory, "The Sokal Affair," 506.

³⁶ Guillory, "The Sokal Affair," 474.

³⁷ Although Berlant argues for her notion of publics Bercovitch's public with conflicting demands is a more rigorous approach to the pluralist method of writing. To engage with this method one has to develop what Bercovitch calls schizophrenic single-mindedness.

masterworks became rerouted from meaning and wedded to the American ideology as a system in the service of evil, Bercovitch argued for more consideration of what he saw was the American identity continually in progress.

In short, Bercovitch did not look to step outside of practice to liberate the narrative from argument to challenge beliefs, as Rorty had tried to do, but stepped metaphorically inside criticism to show that the American individualism of a wilder kind was also the product of a belief system. Dissensus thinking, then as now, for Bercovitch, offered the American writer the re-cognition of the successful forms for social reintegration. Whether one took to accepting in a period of dissensus what he called was the coming together of the American form and the American way was entirely of one's own self-cognition. However he warns

For though in some sense, certainly, a work of art transcends its time though it may be transhistorical or transcultural or even transcanonical it can no more transcend ideology than an artist's mind can transcend psychology; and it may even be that writers who translate political attitudes into universal ideals are just as implicated as the others in the social order and, in the long run, are perhaps more useful in perpetuating it.³⁸

Postmodern identarian politics and the history of US criticism up until the antebellum period now took an important turn in Bercovitch's newly found significances in terms of the American self as the embodiment of prophetic universal design. Bercovitch showed that dissent, which was at once radical and embedded in structures of political continuity, in American literary cultural criticism once firmly planted in history would tell a new story of America. This would tell stories from the viewpoint of a narrative that would partially liberate that culture from the dependence on argument. On the other hand, it would reload mere flux with significance "intensifying the feedback loop that transforms actions [Bercovitch's creative writing] into meaningful experiences [that] contribute to the continuous formation of the individual who is the sum of those experiences."³⁹ Assimilation as the aversion of difference now found new internal routes to meaning and intention that, in turn, would renew the projects of cultural diversity in the American university.

The Nurture of Contemporary Cultural Criticism

Having established *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle's* writing with a recourse to a discourse of difference but also offering the opportunity to reappraise new directions taken in literary scholarship in the US I invoke the heralding of the possibilities and the problems in Bercovitch's nativist calls for the return to the traditional horizon of achieving an authentic American identity and voice. Bercovitch's way of understanding the visionary and symbolic power of the American

³⁸ Bercovitch, "The Problem of Ideology," 639.

³⁹ See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 86 for my particular reshaping of his critical formation.

Puritan imagination was decisive inasmuch as it signalled perceptively the beginning of the end of the dominant sectarian methodologies of deconstruction and poststructuralism. New ways and means of interpreting literary texts were sought that were more expressive of their age. Bercovitch offered his rationale for an integrated curriculum through his earlier studies on a nativist form of imaginary passed down through the Puritan vision, language and thought. This would halt the emerging postmodern epistemological pluralism and antirealist literary consensus currently forming their idealised interdisciplinary enclosures around Americanist Studies contexts. Bercovitch's campaign for dissensus took on new impetus in the constructing of the massive eight volume tome of the new *Cambridge History*, and offers an enlivening argument through which to engage with *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle*'s attempts to administer a certain kind of fictional imperfect postmodern justice on seventeenth and twentieth century environments. We will see how these texts can simultaneously resolve and exacerbate the conflicts inherent in the comprehensive ideal of the representative American self.

It is currently beyond the scope of my thesis to fully account for how my primary texts lay out in thematic terms the critical formulations that would do justice to the critical ground covered in Bercovitch's *The Puritan Origins to The Rites of Assent*. However, what I will demonstrate is that Stephenson's novels can be implicated in Bercovitch's reconstructing of American literary history through the readings of Nathaniel Hawthorne's uses of a mode of ambiguity. Hawthorne's literary strategy rather than highlight the betrayal of an irresolvable object illustrates the demands for radical social change within structures of political continuity. This literary strategy was not contradictory. It, in other words, achieved the parameters for successful social reintegration tactics by reflecting the expression of a particular utopian consciousness developed within the premises of that liberal culture. It is also not possible to examine fully the implications of McGurl's critique of *Cryptonomicon* through the creative writing school acting as both structure and agent, and its tying together the postwar themes of difference and projects of cultural diversity for the mutual interdependence of the future labour force and citizenry. I will however draw on McGurl's notions of feedback processes to show that *Cryptonomicon*'s critique of the (Yale) school culture offers the opportunity to re-examine what McGurl means when he argues the niche fiction of the post-1960s American literary marketplace now reinstates violent racist politics by other, literary means. Whether it is right that McGurl should arrive at this conclusion for Stephenson's writing is not the overall argument I attempt to make. What can be answered is McGurl's criticism stands as a way in which Americanist Studies students can now interrelate and more importantly form a new consensus for the successful reintegration of criticism's social imperative (in which they can modify their behaviours to illuminate one or more paths ahead) with a world that was painted previously by

a neoliberal worldview of difference that bears little resemblance to the world McGurl argues graduate students currently live in.

Returns to a nativist national symbolic held in Berlant's project with the unfinished business of sentimentality in American culture informs my reading of *The Baroque Cycle's* style of crossover writing. In McGurl's notion of feedback this would be to recalibrate behaviour in a context that makes it emotionally resonant. The movement from synthetic modes of indeterminate analysis does not mean that to jettison the idea of posthistoricist judgements means the jettisoning of the idea of having a material textual politics of interpretation in the institution. It merely seems that in response to the current logic university critics have to make their political acts of interpretation on national politics, or ethnic or migrant writing or the conflicts inherent in the very meaning of free-enterprise and the further incursions of consumerism into the academy more convincing, as Amy Hungerford aptly points out and in a world McGurl argues has many other things to attend to. *The Baroque Cycle* holds up an elaborately performative I am in this context to offer a reflection of how Berlant self-reflexively changes her acts of interpretation as not something chosen or free at their point of contact with the physical world but something deeply enmeshed in the physical world.

Bercovitch's resistances to eclectic students of American culture's "bricolage approach" (what he calls "those vacillating combinations of sectarian methodologies") offers the opportunity to reappraise the historicising of deconstructionist and poststructural formalisms in the American university. What Bercovitch calls his cultural close reading of an American community allows me to interrogate *Cryptonomicon's* critiques on the postwar literary subjectivism but also why *its* irreconcilable yet hopeful double allegiance to theoretical speculation and practical power is not born out of the allegiance of either jettisoning or deconstructing the canon.⁴⁰ As we shall see, *Cryptonomicon* offers its own form of postmodern scepticism and ideological criticism on the wartime expansionist legacies and cold war literary subjectivism. However, the inability of the new historicist themes of power or the deconstructive legacies to offer a framework for literary value is implicitly criticised. Seeing both problems and possibilities in *Cryptonomicon's* deconstructionist writing technique, *The Baroque Cycle's* treatment of women's individual self-development, I want to argue, moves out of the latter twentieth-century debates on politicised acts of interpretation.

⁴⁰ The notion of an American community is very important in *Cryptonomicon*. A mode of ambiguity surrounding the notion of community can be expressive of Derrida's elegiac lament for de Man. However, as Bercovitch recounts in another context when placed in a larger rhetorical mode of analysis *Cryptonomicon's* community offers an understanding in terms of Danforth's strategy which is characteristic of the American jeremiad throughout the seventeenth century. Bercovitch argues this is first, a precedent from Scripture that sets out the communal norms (27); then, a series of condemnations that details the actual state of the community (at the same time insinuating the covenantal promises that ensure success); and finally a prophetic vision that unveils the promises, announces the good things to come, and explains away the gap between fact and ideal.

Women in particular in *The Baroque Cycle*, as we shall see, prefer not to get with Bercovitch's homogenous offering for women's individual or collective identities. As an irresolvable object their contradictory positions, as we shall see, stand in isolation. However, as we shall also see their ways of interpreting injustices in regimes of truth are never the results of free political choices.

Dissensus

Because much of the aesthetic dimension had been lost in the successive movements of literary theory, Bercovitch's rejuvenating of aesthetic judgement and the social instinct connected to the art of appreciation offered renewed scholarship (with due regard for intellectual rigour) on the integrated perspective through which to approach his sweeping vision of the textual America.⁴¹ His journey into the complex rhetorical structures that constituted meaning in America saw the retrieval of a Puritan vision and language for the Americanist scholar of American literary history. Only demanding that their analyses should be offered in terms of an integrative perspective on art and ideology he believed his calling could revitalise a society caught between the clashing inscriptions of postmodern theory. Bercovitch writes

That implicit and insidious problem is the central concern of this paper, and it may be well to begin with a general definition. I mean by ideology the ground and texture of consensus. In its narrowest sense, this may be a consensus of a marginal or maverick group. In the broad sense in which I use the term here (in conjunction with the term "America"), ideology is the system of interlinked ideas, symbols, and beliefs by which a culture-any culture-seeks to justify and perpetuate itself; the web of rhetoric, ritual, and assumption through which society coerces, persuades, and coheres. So considered, ideology is basically conservative; but it is not therefore static or simply repressive. As Raymond Williams points out, ideology evolves through conflict, and even when a certain ideology achieves dominance it still finds itself contending to one degree or another with the ideologies of residual and emergent cultures within the society-contending, that is, with alternative and oppositional forms that reflect the course of historical development. In this process, ideology functions best through voluntary acquiescence, when the network of ideas through which the culture justifies itself is internalized rather than imposed, and embraced by society at large as a system of belief. Under these conditions, which Antonio Gramsci described as "hegemony," the very terms of cultural restriction become a source of creative release: they serve to incite the imagination, to unleash the energies of reform, to encourage diversity and accommodate change-all this, while directing the rights of diversity into a rite of cultural assent.⁴²

Coupled with his figurative analysis of the errand embedded in the early ideal of American literature and how it, in turn, ratified embedded structures of political assent Bercovitch draws out protest and turns it into a rite of ideological assent. His search for an integrated perspective on ideology and the aesthetic to take to the canonised classical tradition (American as Canon and

⁴¹ Literary theory moved from its concerns with the materiality of the signifier during the 70s and early 80s to its commitments with race, gender and culture in the late 80s and 90s. See Michaels, "The Shape of the Signifier," 274.

⁴² Bercovitch, "The Problem of Ideology," 635.

Context) provides a centrally important theme for my reading of *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle*'s destabilising energies, even more so when tackling the latter twentieth century commitment to personhood through the categories of race, gender and above all culture.⁴³

Highlighting significant concerns about the deconstructive strands of poststructuralism and cultural studies approaches to literature, and how the postmodernist author and the cultural critic was responding to the themes of inauthenticity and diversity in the postwar period offers the opportunity to reappraise a distinct challenge to the lasting legacies of the white monocultural nationalist hegemony in the US. Bercovitch showed how the rhetoric of the dominant culture of the US was passed down through a dominant form of Puritan rhetoric, which found proximity in the language and thought of diverse figures throughout history such as Cotton Mather, Martin Luther King, and Ronald Reagan. McGurl's argument offers what I want to argue is another supplement or creative re-reading on Bercovitch's contributions to the continuous formation of the American individual.⁴⁴ McGurl, however, offers a dialectical reading to supplement Bercovitch's rhetorical undecidability of the representative American, and to offer what he argues is "the symptom of a more generally reflexive modernity embedded in this American confusion."⁴⁵ The creative writing classroom for McGurl acts as the purest form of nationalistic symbolic expression for the feedback process. This symbolic association adheres to his way of understanding the university as the axial institution of a postindustrial economy. This conflating offers the newest form of dissensus thinking for transmitting Bercovitch's liberal pluralist cultural dynamic. *Cryptonomicon*'s writing style when developed through these differing but interrelated viewpoints on the technologies of culture and language in and by which literature (and the American textual identity) comes into being (either rhetorical or dialectical) reflect on how cultural studies attitudes brought forward to tackle the problems of racial prejudice and social bias in the formation of the US literary canon (that contributes to the continuous formation of the individual who is the sum of these experiences) have

⁴³ Bercovitch offered an ingenious way to move beyond postmodern relativisms and the inability of identity politics to pose resolutions to disagreements. He offered consensus first in America by ideology. Although this precluded all forms of oppositional criticism leaving America with only itself to quarrel about in terms of a reflective ideological mimesis, ideology, of course, (in the Marxist sense) was based on disagreement i.e. a difference of opinion not a difference based on conflicts on subject-position. Bercovitch's integrative reading of early and classical American literature, which offered proof texts that reflected a changeable volatile historical condition, solves the postmodernist problem of identity politics, or in Michaels's terms the posthistoricist inability to form disagreements based upon a reading of proof texts that offered ambivalence through a non-integrative "permanent diversity within the semantic field." This debate arises in *Cryptonomicon*, as Randy confronts the academics with a frank exchange of views. "It wasn't being told they were wrong that offended them, though -it was the underlying assumption that a person *could* be right or wrong about *anything*," 80.

⁴⁴ None transcendent hermeneutics of Puritan American identity the "auto-machia" are for Bercovitch now best described as a genre and what he calls the auto-American-biography. I mention this only because we can see how Berlant offered her reconstructing of her individual powerlessness against the power of the state and other institutional forms from a women's culture collective in responses to what can arguably be reconsidered as Bercovitch's male complaint genre.

⁴⁵ See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 367.

reified in the public sphere to allow a persistent white monocultural nationalist identity to reappear in the postwar university environment. McGurl, in particular, sees how *Cryptonomicon*'s claims on art is now offering in systemic terms feedback process that is reifying the profoundly destabilising energies released by that culture in its formative phase. McGurl takes up Bercovitch's perspective to view how art is reciprocally related to nourishing institutional norms and how these energies are currently reorganising the university with greater internal differentiation. Institutional norms, for McGurl as for others, count as a form of ideological restriction but also hold a reflection of a system and a culture ingeniously geared to the production of variety. Rather than project this inside-outside alignment as an indomitable force or external other McGurl offers a feedback process for Bercovitch's regime of disciplinary individualism supplying the ways and means of individuality from without to offer it as a deep expression of that nationalist culture within, and which he argues seems for now to be holding educational institutions together fairly well.⁴⁶

The School Culture

Showing how the demands for radical social change through Nathaniel Hawthorne's art of moral ambiguation were complicitous with a more pervasive cultural ritual that ratified embedded structures of political assent, this allows me to reappraise John Guillory's work on the determining apparatuses of the school culture. At the time of the publishing of his highly influential *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (1993) the literary academy was fuelled by the liberal methodology intent on erasing all differences. Not acting as politicised acts of interpretation in the deconstructionist sense *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle* offer reconsiderations on the school culture and its regime of capital distribution in the 1990s. As I have shown Bercovitch interpreted away the divisive acts of US literary interpretation by showing how those acts were not the results of free political choices. Guillory similarly saw how deconstructions were not the results of free political choices but were a symptom rather than reflexive of the internal political and institutional conditioning effects of literary criticism. Guillory's work carried on the work of Bourdieu arguing how literary distinctions were being given on merit on the uses of theory that were at the same time being mistakenly identified. He argued that by denying that the terms distinction and merit and the uses of classification, which were regarded as no longer operating in the school culture, the graduate's failure to recognise the value of literary experience and where it

⁴⁶ From a sociological perspective a feedback loop involves four distinct stages. First comes the data: A behaviour must be measured, captured, and stored. This is the evidence stage. Second, the information must be relayed to the individual, not in the raw-data form in which it was captured but in a context that makes it emotionally resonant. This is the relevance stage. But even compelling information is useless if we don't know what to make of it, so we need a third stage: consequence. The information must illuminate one or more paths ahead. And finally, the fourth stage: action. There must be a clear moment when the individual can recalibrate a behaviour, make a choice, and act. Then that action is measured, and the feedback loop can run once more, every action stimulating new behaviours that inch us closer to our goals. See McGurl, *The Program Era*, x; 407.

came from had lead them to being co-opted into a wider social and economic transformation. It might be said that *The Baroque Cycle* offers a weird allegory on this transformation when reconsidered in terms of Bercovitch's paradoxes of dissent. Guillory argued theory with its oblique purpose of forming a rapprochement of the old school culture was something that theory itself could not solve. The higher your level of technical abstraction the higher the merit granted and so forth.⁴⁷ The most interesting point about the debate for Guillory was how literariness and the cycle of distinction, merit, and classification would reappear in an otherwise changed more streamlined, more technologically efficient (efficient meaning the downsizing and "technobureaucratic restructuring" of the contemporary tenured academic labour force) university environment.⁴⁸ In the terms of modern industrial transformational processes and in response to the distributing and regulating access to a new form of the cultural capital we call literature Guillory posed the question what came after theory.⁴⁹

Cultural capital distribution in the 1990s was largely distinguished through Guillory's highly influential work on the school culture and literary canon formation. Working on Bourdieu's analysis that the literary academy was a closed and autonomous system Guillory argued the school's historical function as in the past as in the present was to distribute and regulate access to the cultural capital we call literature. For Guillory, the necessary critical work done on persisting social problems in the US had reified in the university as empty distinctions were now alienating the student from the literary functions and intellectual commitments unique to criticism's social imperative.⁵⁰ The fact that students could no longer achieve this imperative was largely due to the

⁴⁷ Paul de Man argued how there could be a science of literature that did not necessarily revert to logic. The university elite in this aspect were playing into the hands of the older cultural elite (where science meant America). Thus classical rhetoric and its supposed failure as a twentieth century theory of language were being deployed in classical ways. Following Bercovitch Guillory looked to take back the school's story from the determining apparatuses of the school. The current school story in terms of deconstructions (discourse of value et cetera) and the individual's role in these practices and these conditions failed to recognise in an even more basic sense where does the recognition of the value of literary experience come from. Using Bercovitch to illustrate further this claiming back of rhetoric in the American university he argued "a good deal of adversarial criticism was wrongheaded or superficial, or both-wrongheaded, because it assumed that to expose the hard facts was to dispel the claims of rhetoric; and superficial, because it failed to account for the very premises of the rhetoric it had set out to expose. Hence my concern with appreciation." As I have tried to argue, Bercovitch's reclaimed the individual's story back from the larger technobureaucratic restructuring of the university not by directing further dissent at further incursions of consumerism or the like but by re-narrativising the claims on art and the classical forms of rhetoric. See Bercovitch, "The End of American Puritan Rhetoric," 171.

⁴⁸ See *Cultural Capital*, xii.

⁴⁹ Following Bercovitch, McGurl's more rigorous historicist reappraisal of postwar literary productions asks not what comes after theory but where does or did the individual's recognition of the value of literary experience come from.

⁵⁰ Bill Readings argued against Guillory's attacks on the school culture to move the debates on culture towards the University of Excellence. The problem according to Readings was that the stakes of the university's functioning was no longer essentially ideological because they are no longer tied to the self-reproduction of the nation state. Therefore to reinstate a debate about the university's role in the wider non-academic terrain with relation to how it operates in culture i.e. the University of Culture was to bring back into the university markers of cultural capital that would reinstate both the organicist tradition and the feudal corporation. Guillory took the opposing view and saw how it was critics like Readings that had allowed the university to reify the literary functions and intellectual commitments of academic critics and criticism. Guillory looked not to do away with political acts of interpretation per se in the forms of deconstructive or rhetorical readings of the text but to reinstate the theory function. This aim he argued had been lost in the conflating

limits set upon it by the deconstructive legacy and the dismantling of successive notions of nature as art, or beauty as art, or the truth of art. In short, aesthetic judgment had been lost as those ideologues that undertook to seek out regimes of truth saw the sociological reproduction of art as only complicit with acts of political oppression, even torture.⁵¹ Guillory's analyses on the direction taken by the university as an institution challenged the dominant postmodernist views held on social construction.⁵² A lack or inability to reclaim criticism's social imperative for the graduate student he argued had been caused through the inability of liberal arts students to see past their severances from art. This had caused blindness's to how the technobureaucratic organisation of intellectual life fit with both the rise to prominence of the theory canon and the academic superstar. Theory, in short, was an interim solution to the problem of specialisation in a newly developing post-industrial economy, and as such the problems of theory were not the problems theory could fix. On deconstructions Guillory argued

While the term deconstruction encloses the work of de Man and Derrida within a set of generalised theoretical motifs and procedures, it does so only in the practice of literary criticism. This fact has ensured the consequence that Derridean philosophy is largely transmitted to literary critics through the lens of his reception in the immediate context of de Man's critical writing. It is through de Man's work that the term deconstruction is disseminated, as the name of a school of criticism.⁵³

How the determining apparatuses affected the views taken from the theory canon (i.e. the individual's recognition of where does the value of literary experience come from) Guillory argued was a more pressing concern than the alluring slabs of postmodernist theory that sat on the literary syllabus: the sort of thing that at the time was the staple of introductory graduate courses in method. Guillory attempted to take the school's story back from the technobureaucratic restructuring of the organisation of the intellectual life of the critic, "where canonical development of literary theory

of postmodern and science studies views on social construction. See Guillory, *The Sokal Affair*. Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 178.

⁵¹ Guillory affirms Bercovitch's analyses on art and ideology as he argues how the reductionist claims on the claims of art had lost sight of art's more intimate relations with the practices of higher education. What the academics missed was that their reductive ideological claims on art were actually part of much larger process of art and ideology working in tandem. Ideology in other words became not the key to see through art to its sociopolitical content but rather to explain the meaning of art.

⁵² Guillory largely rails against the specifics of high-tech knowledge being linked to postmodern epistemology. The ensuing debates surrounding the technical aspects of discourse, for Guillory, were erroneous in principle. He looked to restore the theory function into the politics about literature in what Christopher Newfield calls the nineteenth-century realist promise. I will argue in chapter two that *Cryptonomicon* can draw parallels with this resetting of the theory function back to an original high-tech format. For the debates between Guillory and Newfield see, "The Value of Nonscience," and Guillory's response, "The Name of Science, The Name of Politics."

⁵³ Readings argued how Guillory erred between deconstruction as such and its institutionalisation in the American academy. It is possible to see here how Guillory does not err as much as Readings believed. It is also possible to see McGurl's updating of this analysis on the institutionalising of individualism by replacing individuality and institutionality for their classical sociological correlates agency and structure. This takes the literary debate out of the latter twentieth-century's uses of quasi-leftist social theory of Foucault to a more reflective classical sociological orientation. See Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 371, and Readings, review of *Cultural Capital* by John Guillory. See also McGurl, "Ordinary Doom."

answered to specific institutional needs.”⁵⁴ The most important aspect of this debate for Guillory was what came after theory in a reshaped university environment. Thus what became doubly important was not primarily to solve the problem of an alienated, divided and disempowered labour force and contemporary citizenry but to reinstate the theory function in the professional literary critics’ tackling of social issues. The idea was not to do away with theory altogether but to give up its invocation of the name of the political. In sum, Guillory argued if the literary academy were to reappropriate the humanities, that is, to take back the authority to define cultural capital embodied in its curriculum of study it would have to devise a rationale for an integrated curriculum of textual and historical study exceeding the current laudable objective of affirming cultural diversity.⁵⁵

Although not condemning the institutional aspects of the school culture or literary theory per se, which also he did, Guillory proffered a socioanalysis internally driven to reflect the school’s strategies of internal differentiation that would mark its reuniting with the real classical abstractions of economic science and political dynamics.⁵⁶ Guillory sought to implicate the whole school culture in the refunctioning of techne or craft in the social domain, and how theory was more productively read when considered reflective (classical) rather than reflexive (perhaps postmodern) of the restless promiscuity of commodity exchange.⁵⁷ What the school transmitted in terms of political and

⁵⁴ Guillory further argued that the increasingly specialised technical discourse trained graduate students to prepare for a techno-managerial role rather than a public intellectual See Readings, review of *Cultural Capital*.

⁵⁵ Guillory implies that the American university had ostensibly been taken over by pervasive forces of capital. He remarks that what came with the canon of theory was a discourse of mastery. Does this imply that Guillory saw that the university system had been taken over by foreign ruling elites? Who was it from that Guillory was attempting to take back the school story and more importantly the American (science) story back from. Rather than offer the notion that America is controlled by other ruling foreign powers namely the old world cultural elites of Europe and Britain, which I argue is a property in the four novels of Neal Stephenson’s I read in this thesis, Guillory’s confusion is best thought of as the “American confusion” of Bercovitch and McGurl, in which a regime of disciplinary individualism, supplying the ways and means of individuality from without, constantly mistakes itself as the occasion for an individualism of a wilder kind. See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 367.

⁵⁶ This reuniting has to take into account McGurl’s way of understanding that there has been no such shift to a postmodern society but simply the intensification of capitalism, greed, lust for money and power et cetera created in a more generally reflexive modernity. This reuniting is proving to be a fruitful combination in the twenty-first century environment not only for the resurgence of modernist studies but also to tackle the greedy corporations and big bonuses that are increasingly marked for their absorption into bankrupt institutions. McGurl marks out his territory on the growing concern that institutions left to their own devices make for problematically institutional subjectivities. In a positive light he illustrates how the practices of higher education have had a more salutary effect in the creation of institutional subjectivities and how these have been exemplary in his examinations of postwar literary production. The creation of institutional subjectivities in a system ingeniously geared to the production of variety for McGurl is a highpoint of the university understood as the axial institution of a postindustrial economy and provides a reflective lens through which to review political anti-institutional excesses of the 1960s. See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 366-368.

⁵⁷ Bercovitch’s understanding of how contemporary cultural work was ideological mimesis and Stanley Fish’s notion that theory was just another form of critical practice, placing together these distinctive forms of expression alongside Guillory’s is to show how theory formed a conundrum. First, posthistoricist theory looked not to stand outside practice to govern practice from without. Second, theory was implicated in its refunctioning in the whole economic order and thus theory was a symptom of something which theory’s emergence could not solve. Finally, if theory was implicated at the moment of reception in the whole socioeconomic order then it was a form of ideological mimesis, using Bercovitch’s terms at once in flight from society but also in a constant engagement with it. Therefore, the subversive elements many critics attached to forms of literature, which were excluded from the canon in terms of social bias, were not subversive but actually ratified embedded structures of political assent. The problem was how to make academics see that their substitutions of posthistoricist identities for arguable beliefs were, as Bercovitch argued, “works of

cultural achievement in the debate over canon concerns, and its attacks on artistic expression, was, for Guillory, the politics mainly of the school culture. He argued because of the direction taken by the university as an institution this had effectively formed the abandonment of the literary functions and intellectual commitments set by the previous achievements of criticism's social imperative.⁵⁸ Guillory having no way of answering his own question to what came after theory (seeing how the school at the time of the early 1990s was still handing out merits of distinction (posts) for those that professed cultural work taken from the poststructural strands of deconstruction and when reading seriously the new canonical works of Barth, Pynchon or Powers) decided to return to critical prophecy in the past this time to restore the complex relations between the academic, the political, the scientific, and the economic concerns exemplified in 18th century moral philosophy.⁵⁹ The functioning of a supposedly singular charisma to reproducible technical rigour is a contradiction that runs throughout my reading of *Cryptonomicon*, and presses concerns about postmodernist styles of writing and the homogenisation effects of theory on critical language.⁶⁰

White Philosophy in Cryptonomicon

Using Gordon and Newfield's understanding of white philosophy, *Cryptonomicon's* "white backlash against affirmative action or unabating white anxiety about the presence of social and political actors who insist on the continuing significance of racism," becomes a conceptual error for McGurl when he addresses the problem of its handling a history of veiled white racism in the US.⁶¹ McGurl's reading of *Cryptonomicon's* identifications with a white national cultural identity (insofar as Bercovitch argued American identity was a cultural identity) becomes a problem, as we shall see, of education and a problem not of the politics of culture. McGurl takes it upon himself to take back

ideological mimesis, at once implicated in the society they resist, capable of overcoming the forces that compel their complicity, and nourished by the culture they often seem to subvert." The new period of theory, then, was at once a flight from persisting social problems but also a constant engagement with these problems. Theory's terms of dissent had embodied a ritual form of assent, which in turn lead to consensus by ideology. Authority, in this sense, was interpreted away at the same time in which it re-emerged. What had been lost in this critical formulation were art's intimate relations with ideology. The terms of this new revolutionary consensus in a changeable volatile historical condition changed the shape of Americanist Studies in the US when dealing with American Literary History. See Guillory, *Cultural Capital*. Fish in Knapp and Michaels, "What is Pragmatism," 466. Bercovitch, "The Problem of Ideology," 642.

⁵⁸ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 79-81.

⁵⁹ As we can see with hindsight Guillory's work was to raise the profile for the individual's recognition of the value of literary experience and where it came from.

⁶⁰ Rather than empower the contemporary alienated citizenry represented through main fictional protagonist Randy in *Cryptonomicon* theory, as for Guillory as for Randy, is so much shadowboxing as it fit with the technobureaucratic restructuring of the organisation of intellectual life. *Cryptonomicon* offers the opportunity to reappraise Guillory's concerns about art as a "socially constructed discourse." Fledgling deconstructionist critic Charlene in the novel is expressive only in that she mimics master theorist and "fiftyish Yale professor Dr. G.E.B. Kivistik." She is a young liberal arts student that offers a suspect demonology of technology. Her role proves to be detrimental to UNIX hacker boyfriend Randy. In sum, she is trained to prepare for a techno-managerial role rather than a public intellectual, and offers the view of how the disciples of de Man whose tendency to mimic the master fits in with the technobureaucratic organisation of intellectual life linking to a supposedly singular charisma to reproducible technical rigor. See *Cryptonomicon* for how it also sees art had been lost in postwar ideology critique. (77)

⁶¹ See Gordon and Newfield, "White Philosophy," 739.

the themes of marginalisation, power, and the magnification of discipleship as they are now structured in American pluralist markets (in the postmodern discursive blocking) arguing how *Cryptonomicon*'s speculative allegiance to racial otherness is only superficial, and white writers like Stephenson "have been most likely to assert the privilege of other-narration [...] [while] minority writers [...] have typically been asked to slot themselves into a single ethnos."⁶² McGurl attempts to reclaim certain racial tenets of characters' back stories in the novel, and from postwar American literature as a whole.⁶³ Rather than restate the hierarchy of narrative, as in McGurl's case, that can in some aspects, as Jonathon Culler argues, double back on its initial duality to efface the order of the event *Cryptonomicon*'s "story ways of telling" follow Rorty's postmodernist thoughts about the rooting out of subjectivist conditions of ideas of truth. I will therefore argue its return to previous literary productions is to recover a condition of America from the founding and ailing practices of European culture by turning this debate into a story.⁶⁴ When interpreted through Bercovitch's

⁶² McGurl, *The Program Era*, 382.

⁶³ A notion that builds from community in the novel that connects such disparate figures as American and German wartime code breakers, homosexuals, contemporary hackers, a Holocaust descendent, a wartime Fourth Marine, a Japanese soldier, a young Filipino nursing student, and a half-American half Filipino treasure seeker can pass off as a radical community bereft of any social meaning. (This, as Michaels argues in another context, makes the literary critical critique of intentionalism into the posthistoricist valorisation of identity. In other words, it is difference itself (rather than arguable beliefs) that emerges as intrinsically valuable). Lawrence Waterhouse is a musician before being put to use for the war effort as a code breaker. He and other musicians in the wartime story are given desk jobs after the sinking of their ships at Pearl Harbour. The novel adds however that they are "musicians [...] greeted without being welcomed and saluted without being honoured" (66). Lawrence and his group are put to use decrypting the enemy's most significant codes. This group includes a diverse mix, as diverse as Randy's contemporary group, and the novel attempts to forge through a series of experimental relations (posthistoricist identitarianism) resistances to institutional impulses that were seen to turn their individual code breaking tenors into an automated cold war construct. On the other hand, and this is where the narrative becomes quite vexed, the academic crowd is given no such storytelling allegiance, as they claim the end-of-history narrative in which it is no longer intellectually defensible to equate historical knowledge with western history. In sum, and conflating the recent insights gleaned from critical theory, the academics' convictions to convince Randy of the truth about himself and their desire to get him to be the same (as them) is given a certain repetitive quality. (Michaels argues the mistaken critique of the end of history narrative was that it made disagreement impossible). Their entrance into the storyline invokes Raymond Williams and John Guillory's understandings of the homogenisation effects of theory on critical language, and how the novel sees the making of meanings infinite as a betrayal of the story of liberal education cloaked in European consciousness. The academics, as we shall see, hail from Anglo-American centres of elite and privileged learning and turn their postmodern relativisms inspired by the recent insights of European critical theory on Randy.

⁶⁴ In *The Baroque Cycle* the Stuart dynasty is an ailing pox-ridden warring system. This is to be replaced in Britain's changeover to a modern state by another equally fatuous, equally reprehensible masochistic system. This time it is the Georgian reign. Although the novel portrays the changeover from one system in terms of real hope for women like Eliza who is violently ripped from the traditional life of the land the changeover for women like Hannah Spates simply transfer her from one system of oppression to another. What we have to see in many ways is Eliza reflects the literary critique of intentionalism. Yet beyond the question of intention it is difference itself that emerges as intrinsically valuable. This is a very complicated suggestion for Eliza yet in the three volumes of *The Baroque Cycle* we see how she offers routes beyond the question of intention insofar as "from a certain distance, or a certain angle, in a certain light [she has a certain formation] and the fact that from another distance, at a different angle, and in a different light they don't." Eliza is called a whore, she is and is not. She is considered a counterfeit princess, she is and is not. She is revered for her mechanical cruelty, something she holds and something she does not. She is seen to profit from slavery she does and does not. (This is something which costs Eliza dearly, as her one true love half-cocked Jack buys the cowrie shells to profit from the slave trade to be just like her. Jack is unlike Eliza as he cannot find the means necessary to turn this internal conflict into a source of intelligibility). The point being for Eliza "there is no necessary or intrinsic conflict between these positions, no question of right or wrong, true or false," as Michaels argues. Eliza's recourse to difference and identity is in many ways still a subservient formation to the new great man game. Her lover Bob Shaftoe sums this up adroitly as he waxes lyrical to the Puritan Daniel that new and cleverer players are currently resetting trends and re-writing the rules for the new system. The novels' encounters with the routinisation of change expresses a

nativist imaginary we see how its rhetorical concerns can also offer challenging readings on the postmodernists' vocabulary.

As well as offering a form of social criticism that McGurl argues recreates the archetypes of the racial unconscious in its own image *Cryptonomicon* draws on the theories of pedagogy that Sean McCann and Michael Szalay argue played a central but ambivalent role in the countercultural imagination. One aspect of this pedagogy was that it allowed students to free themselves from the school as system of repressive socialisation.⁶⁵ McGurl sees the eruption of ambivalence into *Cryptonomicon* as a problem when reading aspects of its racialised narration especially how it relates to other postmodernist styles engaged with processes of information technology and their approaches to assimilation and cultural diversity. In a style of writing he calls technomodernism McGurl argues *Cryptonomicon* is a somewhat looser and baggier type of novel in this mode, which emerged out of the countercultural imagination (and into the literary academy) during the sixties. *Cryptonomicon* attempts to overcome the types of literary academic politicisations that defined the postmodern cultural field in the 1990s. In doing so, it offers the opportunity to reappraise the politics of liberal pluralism and its commitments to the categories of personhood when they were transferred to the institutional environment engaged on many levels with the problem and promise of cultural difference.⁶⁶ Its way of sidestepping postmodernist arguments also reflects McGurl's Liars Paradox as it commands us to see a strain or struggle with the dominant mode of discourse, which is the art of self-governance.⁶⁷ This, as we shall see, orients *Cryptonomicon's* mode of narration towards the past, which can see it forming the uncomfortable alliances with old Americanist consensus formations on ideas of truth. However, as we shall also, when viewed through the lens of Bercovitch's recovery of the Puritan rhetoric, *Cryptonomicon's* struggle for self-governance developed in the links it makes between a group of disparate wartime characters and a white male UNIX hacker, can offer a reading for a form of cultural restriction that may become a source of creative release. This offers an antagonistic criticism to take to the 1990s postmodern academics' appeals to a history of veiled white racism in the US.

The Academics in Cryptonomicon

mode of contingency in the American form that I will argue can find a different meaning when read through the Puritan rhetoric of the New Englanders, which became the rhetoric of the dominant culture of the US.

⁶⁵ See McCann and Szalay, "Introduction: Paul Potter and the Cultural Turn."

⁶⁶ Invoking these references from Guillory and McGurl respectively demonstrates without hopefully adding another spontaneous philosophy how progressive educators within the postwar university "worked to re-gear US schools for the systematic production of original persons [...] more than a few of whom would become the most celebrated form of the self-expressive individual, the writer" and how views on social construction were not entirely the same between cultural and science studies. See Guillory, "The Sokal affair." 487-488, and McGurl, *The Program Era*, x; 83.

⁶⁷ McGurl's concept of the Liars Paradox relates to a construction in Forrest Carter's *The Education of Little Tree* in which a linguistic construction tells us to beware the artifice of language. See McGurl, "Learning from Little Tree," 248.

Cryptonomicon is aware that views on the literary academy are bought to the public sphere's attention through the politics of cultural conservatives who largely fashion the mainstream media for their own ends. It, however, condemns the academics takes on racial otherness. Their recourse to difference has, in other words, become ineffectual in the public arena. To show its concerns to how the domain of the arts has become inoperable in the social domain and no longer holds an effective view on the issues of racism, patriarchy, or homophobia to name just a few of the issues the novel engages with the academics cultural politics are brought into a debate surrounding a deregulated corporate environment in the 1990s. Deregulation initiatives alongside the academics turning away from old fashioned ideology critique and towards post-Marxist identarian politics and neoliberal initiatives are brought together and traced to old world sources of concern, such as institutionalizing impulses, and the European discourse of mastery that centres with greater ease in wartime Europe and Britain. Drawing comparisons between what the novel sees as the perverse capitalist impulses coming from Europe with Guillory's analyses of the culture of the school through The Sokal Affair we see that *Cryptonomicon's* condemnations of the "spontaneous positions – antirealism, relativism, antifoundationalism [...] is to condemn literary and cultural studies to rehearse without surpassing the conflict of cultural criticism with science."⁶⁸

Crisscrossing the academics anti-intellectual link ups with new media (both raced and gendered, and in many aspects, as we shall come to see, lacking in aspects of a unified political theory); *Cryptonomicon* attacks the politics of the academics insofar as these theorists see that their ways of interpreting new technologies are the result of free political choices. As Charlene's group becomes less and not more informational less and not more communicational when reviewing the deregulation initiatives of the 1990s, *Cryptonomicon's* writing believes the academics views on the Information Superhighway has helped increase the further dominance of the first over the third world (82). *Cryptonomicon* will not concede to the type of passive-aggressive tactics the academics use to push their antirealist views on the declining bonding capital in the US. Setting up an unfeeling postwar academic and a somewhat sensitive "hard scientist" (58) I will argue the novel attempts to deal with an ineffectual response to the corporate environment and the supposed depredations of mass culture.

⁶⁸ The Sokal Affair invoked many responses but the one I choose to focus on is Guillory's. I will also focus on Christopher Newfield's response to Guillory concerning the "giant dissing of the literary and cultural studies field." The Sokal affair largely addresses the way in which Alan Sokal's hoax reproduced "postmodernism as a discursive bloc, in effect, the ideology of a party in the culture wars." Considering that many academics wanted to free their arguments from such discursive blocking effects Guillory reconsiders the Sokal affair for how it brought science studies and cultural studies views on social construction into an idealised disciplinary enclosure. Guillory looks to separate literary and cultural studies views on social construction to restore what Newfield calls the "theory function." The theory function, as described by Newfield, "supposedly incarnates methodological rigor as a base for disciplinary unity." The lost aspect of this critical rigor came about as Sokal conflated together the disciplinarity of science studies, science wars, culture wars, thereby producing the postmodern discursive bloc that was having trouble redeeming itself in public opinion as a political movement. See Guillory "The Sokal affair," 473; 506; 587. See Newfield "The Value of Nonscience," 509.

The academics in *Cryptonomicon*'s contemporary storyline refuse to believe they are part of any declining social or cultural values in US contexts. *Cryptonomicon* attacks them not only for believing they can stand outside practice in order to govern practice from without (antifoundationalist theory hope) but also for their isolationism and their purism. Liberal arts student Charlene, main fictional protagonist Randal L. Waterhouse's soon to be ex-girlfriend and newly tenured campus (Yale) College radical, stands in directly referential terms to women's marginalisation and disidentifications within pre-existing patriarchal power structures. She and her "academic friends" (81) bring the turn to theory proper, and politics of representation in *Cryptonomicon*, into relief. The scene around a dinner table where the academics gather together to give their opinions on the social world, opinions derived from the extending of their literary techniques, highlights what the novel sees as imbalances in those that seek to structure discourse to their own, oftentimes-spurious, advantage. In many ways the novel condemns the academics for a presentist lapse as they push their posthistoricist positions involving conflicts of interpretation onto Randy. Their posthistorical (Benn Michaels's preferred idiom in his "against theory" apotheosis of postmodernism) denuding of a World War Two veteran's image strips him of what they believe is any universal significance. The novel follows what for it are highly contentious uses of postmodern research methods and "the way in which these statistics were gathered" (76) to where new media plies its trade i.e. the public sector. Classroom studies are contrasted with the bigger stronger media corporation views that restate their own forms of well-established superiority over mass cultural opinion. The academics cultural politics and subsequent claims on labour and work power in the US become largely ineffective to the malfeasance of the rampant individualism that exists in *Cryptonomicon*'s rather messy global corporate environment.

Guillory argued "the temptation to understand the processes of canonical revision according to such political models as 'affirmative action' [is] a very dubious analogy which trivialises a necessary, fragile, and altogether too limited political practice whose site is very different – the site of employment."⁶⁹ The academics are tied to themes of self-serving individualism, which is

⁶⁹ Newfield and Gordon offer a thoughtful reply to outcomes that defend systems that produce racialising effects "often in the name of some matter more urgent." Although this type of argument develops a strand of sympathy rhetoric denoted in their appeal to matters of importance "often considered more urgent" this type of sympathy training is not the kind of approach circa 2012 to take to the literary marketplace. Appeals to feeling and sympathy-training on aspects of liberal racism are from McGurl's point of view boring and ultimately reductive. He, like Benn Michaels, treats the categories through which racism operates, is felt, and is addressed as conceptual errors. Like Michaels, McGurl locates the racism of cultural pluralism in its use of racial and cultural identity rather than in the liberal racism in which pluralism coexists. Like Michaels, McGurl does not get beyond the white moderate position on race but furnishes it with a philosophical rationale. Although both do agree racism is a problem they prefer to see what the neoliberal order has produced. McGurl does not support racialised perspectives on racism on the grounds that they are a kind of reverse racism that offers an expression of a rational truth about race that does not link it to a racial ideology in its own right. This was the expression of truth Readings became concerned about. In many ways, McGurl's' appeals to persuasion are

considered none threatening to corporate class abuses insofar as their postmodernist applications on information technology have no political involvement in the real world. In short, the novel sees the academics as heightening the fears surrounding technology and its misuses. Their conflating the mercenary and military interests of the wartime technocrat with the contemporary hacker reproduces a demonology of technology, which allows in many ways further regulatory measures for what the novel sees is the elite to further anoint around the world.⁷⁰ The Internet we are told has only one important function for Randy. He uses it to communicate with other people through email (51). The novel in this reading does not follow the internet enthusiasms of the 1990s on the grounds of what Guillory argued “was an undisciplined, “enthusiast” eagerness to take the whole world as its subject.”⁷¹ As we shall see, it is the academics takes on racial otherness and their commandeering of public perception surrounding the uses of the Internet that *Cryptonomicon*'s writing tackles. *Cryptonomicon*, then, sets out its challenge to the retreat it sees taking place inside the university. The aspects of the career minded professionalism of the academics repeat Tocqueville's basic social problem of democracy. Their escalating logic of strong overstatements serves only the purpose of standing out from the rest. *Cryptonomicon* links the academics recourse to a discourse of difference unfavourably to squeamish university professors and their uses of French literary theory, views on social construction, and pluralist claims to a globalised world riven by difference as opposed to disagreement. Their technical views of language have become a very spurious and co-opted criticism for hacker Randy.

Bercovitch's restating of a “rhetorical battleground” gave many postmodern professors the chance to voice disagreement as well as retaining aspects of “a permanent diversity within the semantic field.” This is expressive in the characters Bobby Shaftoe and Goto Dengo. These figures are involved in numerous conflicts yet show an unwavering belief in the other. Some of the distinctions attached to these characters of course cannot hold. However, *Cryptonomicon* develops through them more of the posthistorical identitarianism that should be a property of the academics in the novel. In this reading we see how *Cryptonomicon* stakes out less of an issue with the recourse to a discourse of difference but how institutions make for problematically institutional subjectivities. In short, and using Gordon and Newfield's argument *Cryptonomicon* “locates the racism of cultural pluralism in its use of racial and cultural identity rather than in the liberal racism with which pluralism

for an America without race. This is an urgent appeal. If one thing Stephenson's writing does reflect it is politics in the guise of epistemology in the public sphere had become unsustainable. McGurl links the redeployment of racial identity as the result of racism in Stephenson's writing in the public sphere emphasising how race consciousness is a greater problem than racism. McGurl's turn to *Cryptonomicon* is to revoke the race *problem* with the “*race*” problem to turn it back again. McGurl, *The Program Era*. See also Gordon and Newfield, “White Philosophy,” and Guillory *Cultural Capital*, 345.

⁷⁰ This barely veiled stab at how the old world humanist elite have conquered technology for their uses brings back into view the old conflicts in the faculties.

⁷¹ See Newfield, “The Value of Nonscience.”

coexists.”⁷² This as Paul Giles has recently argued replaces cultural identity with racial identity or the race *problem* with the “race” problem as the major issue in US based cultural criticism. However, as I have tried to develop through the critical lens of Bercovitch his one-dimensional nineteenth-century dissensus paradigm offers a force of pluralism that is more convincing than the deconstructionist or poststructural accounts of becoming or being. We will come to see how *Cryptonomicon* largely blames the academics for processes of mass distraction through their passive acceptances of historical power. These deconstructionist critics are further attacked for their pluralist views because they offer a rather one-dimensional suspect demonology of the scientific uses put to wartime technology.⁷³ I therefore read the novel, conversely to McGurl, as an attempt to recapture discourses of ideas of truth that can renew twentieth century cultural pluralist perspectives on assimilation and diversity, and social bias as the determinant of canon formation in the US that have reified in the institution.⁷⁴

Cryptonomicon is concerned about the loss of rigor in Charlene’s cultural criticism and constructivist view of the social field. Its struggle for self-governance, I want to argue, emphasises a comprehensive national ideal, and the fictional embodiment of a representative American self. Impossible blood ties in *Cryptonomicon* signify retractable aesthetic qualities for McGurl as he

⁷² Conflating Benn Michaels’s descriptions in “The Shape of the Signifier” with a deconstructive reading of these characters can show that “we have to respect the rights to their uses of their own language and by the same token if we don’t value the names they give for themselves it cannot be because we think their languages are mistaken.” Also, there are numerous accounts in the novel where it attempts to resist an absolute to semantic state to offer an account of performativity in language that can offer what Judith Butler argues is “permanent diversity within the semantic field that once acknowledged enables us to recognise that no utterance has the same meaning everywhere hence that the context in which the meaning is assigned to an utterance has become a speech conflict. I believe it is worth spending more than a few moments of this type of critical investigation into *Cryptonomicon*. However, it will be suffice to reflect on Michaels’s comments when he writes “one of the points of [Butler’s] *Excitable Speech* is thus to argue against hate speech laws that by trying to fix the meaning of the terms like queer and nigger make both the theoretical mistake if imagining that utterances can have a single meaning and the political mistake of foreclosing the opportunity to appropriate those terms from the dominant discourse and rework or resignify them and thus to rally a political movement.” See Michaels, “The Shape of the Signifier,” 275.

⁷³ Following Bill Readings’s argument we see how the academics are condemned in the novel as they are reconsidered as “the educational subject [that] is now the system and the autonomy one gains through education is to occupy a preconstituted place in this system, which we usually describe in terms of working for oneself.” Readings further argues “Guillory’s tendency to the ad hominen attack in relation to de Man and his disciples seems problematic in that it seeks to hold individuals responsible for their blindness to the fact that they are not individuals individually responsible for their blindness to the fact that they are not individuals but tools of the system.” See Readings *University in Ruins*, 157; 139.

⁷⁴ Michaels argues how *Cryptonomicon*’s writing substitutes posthistoricist identities for arguable beliefs. I will argue its resistance of an absolute semantic state can also be re-described in Bercovitch’s contextual re-description of ideology within the rhetoric of the dominant culture of the US. In short, the posthistoricist substitution of identities for arguable beliefs is reframed within a very specific contextual framework. One of the arguments against postmodern theorising was its notion of content-less environments rallying politics. Bercovitch restates a context for the substitution of identity for ideology and thus offers a framework in which identity politics can become just that i.e. politics. McGurl and Michaels concur that Stephenson conflates his science studies in its engagements with information technologies with cultural studies, which reinstate for these critics aspects of violent racist politics by other, literary means. This is a serious assertion to make. However, McGurl associates *Cryptonomicon* with the writings of the white supremacist Forrest Asa Carter. McGurl expresses that *Cryptonomicon* is a looser and baggier style of writing in this mold especially as it intersects with science studies. However, the outcome is the same for McGurl as both authors (Stephenson and Carter) reinstate violent racist politics by other, literary means.

questions its attacks on a bunch of Yale School academics. The academics newest form of literary expression in the novel is at best considered naïve when attempting to deal with a code of co-opted liberal heroics. McGurl's more rigorous textual and historical way of dealing with *Cryptonomicon*, thereby reinstating Guillory's calls for the theory function and Bercovitch's dissensus appraisals, is by showing how its "overtly pluralist fiction" in the postmodernist writing style problematically produces "a symbolic placeholder for a paradoxically non-ethnic ethnicity."⁷⁵ McGurl aligns *Cryptonomicon*'s attempts to placate the racial identity in a national cultural identity with old subjectivist conditions of ideas of truth. In doing so, he attempts to unmask older forms of the aggressive expansionism tied to its narrative. Applying a more rigorous analysis to its claims for a valid cultural knowledge McGurl seeks to make "visible the machinery involved in its production of difference," and offers its engagements with information technology held by a condition of the elitist aesthetic inventory of the modernist aesthetic. *Cryptonomicon*'s antecedent romanticism (and the omnivorous egoism of the imperial self) now masquerades in a form of non-ethnic ethnicity. McGurl writes, "doing so, we see how even the whitest technomodernism can function as a discourse of difference, producing a symbolic placeholder for a paradoxically non-ethnic ethnicity, that might as well be called (with apologies to John Guillory) technicity."⁷⁶ McGurl's analysis sees *Cryptonomicon*'s arguments about racial identity as symptomatic of specific sociological conditions of production and consumption, and of a specific institutional-aesthetic totality. He also sees how this institutional aesthetic can reify when its successes have partially reified in the public sphere or have been turned inwards on its own modes of co-opted expression. Moving onto how the world looks in the twenty first century environment McGurl treats the categories through which racism is felt in *Cryptonomicon* as conceptual errors politically troubling and intellectually flawed and something in need of new realignment.

Cryptonomicon opens up themes of an insistent monolithic whiteness, which anchors formulations of early US national identity. Holding two mutually antagonistic outlooks it also opens onto debates

⁷⁵ McGurl's symbolic placeholder is significantly different from the one Charlene and the other academics in the novel condemn Randy for. Randy, in short, is critiqued as Foucault's placement of Power, which determines possibilities for other subjects. The academics in the novel use the New Historicist technology to critique Randy's bourgeois self. New Historicism and semiotic analysis entered history and the political economy in the US through the work of Foucault. McGurl, Bercovitch, and Guillory, as we shall see, each test these semiotic readings when delivered through the rhetoric of the dominant culture in the US. For McGurl's quotation see *The Program Era*, 382; 62. For the understanding of the reinstatement of the theory function Christopher Newfield writes, "Guillory's giant dissing of the field for its allegedly pandemic "spontaneous philosophy"—its skepticism—as an attempt to revive not realist theory per se but the theory function, which supposedly incarnates methodological rigor as a base for disciplinary unity. The piece is awfully intent on a public chastising of "cultural criticism" on the grounds of its undisciplined, "enthusiast" (p. 503) eagerness to take the whole world as its subject; the piece seems biased against Left versions of political criticism, including the identity politics that have expanded LCS while necessarily increasing its complexity." Newfield sees these attitudes as restored methodologies of apparently neutral unifiers that essentially become a manager of diversity. In Readings's terms Guillory's institution would be the institution you get if the university was an apolitical pastoral space and not the brute enforcer of methods of communication.

⁷⁶ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 62.

surrounding what John Miller argues is the constant clatter of derision aimed at the idea of Americanisation. Miller argues this has undermined public confidence in the country's ability to assert itself in the vigorous way necessary to make assimilation work. *Cryptonomicon's* poststructural critic Charlene offers her bricolage approach on an American monoculture racked by Cold War literary subjectivisms. She is also highly susceptible to dividing rather than cohering forces. The "highly intelligent but scattered and flighty Charlene" (59) leverages her discourse into a counter attack on the ideologies stemming from World War Two and the Cold War period. Her "academic crowd" develop what they perceive is a more relevant psychology and philosophy of power relationships beyond the simple conceptual framework provided by traditional formal politics. Charlene and her academic crowd believe in precipitating the end of history (of ideological conflict) for a universe to be defined by difference rather than disagreement. *Cryptonomicon* sees this as an erroneous pursuit, reproducing a toxic culture of denial. Therefore, I argue its attempts are to reshape questions of an affiliation that shapes an emerging ironically monoracial national identity. This reading allows me to reconnect the debates surrounding the conflicts of interpretation and the performativity of political discourse, and those that take their inspiration from deconstructive theories of language and cultural diversity in the contemporary period to Bercovitch's critical reviewing of radical liberalism's critical-rhetorical returns to the antebellum period. *Cryptonomicon* in its approaches to these terms offers a mode of ambiguity that places it in two dominant postwar modes of criticism. My aim in chapters one and two is to establish which one is best suited to fit the purpose of the novel.

Berlant openly acknowledges that she works from within Bercovitch's dissensus model. Whether she really does so is not my case to argue.⁷⁷ Her task is not made any easier as critics such as Ivy Schweitzer have remarked the model of dissensus is "a seductive form of ideological consensus in which dissent is constitutive, disarmed, and thus truly impossible."⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Berlant offers her not uncritical allegiance to the nativist mode of analysis. Her reconstructive reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne in a nativist symbolic is to offer alternative perspectives on Bercovitch's model of fictions that are at once implicated in the society they resist. To ward off the political defeat that accompanied what are now considered many arcane theories that energised literary departments of the 1970s, and 80s, Berlant argues:

⁷⁷ Berlant offers her mode of criticism from the dissensus model but she does not completely change her reading alignment. Berlant will not concede to this way of thinking or reading and offers her mode of criticism in dissensus but not of dissensus thinking. I believe Bercovitch's pluralist approach for now is the correct approach to evaluate all modes of pluralism. His argument is convincing.

⁷⁸ Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship*, 129.

Hawthorne thus expresses in my view a problem of modern mass national identity yet to be solved in practice or in theory. He provides a field of negatives condensed in the word local that are not simply critical of the nation in the mode of dissensus but restlessly predictive of other collective utopian political forms and social movements. The affective intensity of the local and everyday life provides a floating buffer zone within the nation refuting both its totalising claims and its horizontality as a referent for social thought even against Hawthorne's own intimate identification with the privileges of nationality.⁷⁹

As we shall see, and unlike poststructural critic Charlene in *Cryptonomicon*, when plumbing the emotional and conceptual ground of a character such as Eliza in *The Baroque Cycle* through Berlant's utopian-anti-utopian female complaint genre its mode of writing does not transmute women's partiality or contradictory interests into a consensus by ideology but offers the opportunity to explore other traces of sources of rhetorical continuities passed down through the proof-texts of American history. These sources were not formed in ideological restriction. In short, and within Berlant's recuperative tactics and alternative vision of a National American Symbolic, the emergence of a woman's intimate public in *The Baroque Cycle* marks out a contradictory domain of intimacy in a recourse to difference (let's call it a genre) that Berlant believes will enhance the ability of a residual culture to contest for meanings (where women have the freedom to act in history), and which cannot be absorbed into Bercovitch's dual cultural work of art and ideology.

Finally, Paul Bové argues how Bercovitch's bases of analyses will always provide unsatisfactory results as it offers "a persistent concern with the epiphenomenal that would be always preliminary to an "American" criticism."⁸⁰ My main concern, however, is to locate *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle*'s modes of ambiguity within Bercovitch's concept of history as rhetoric and fact entwined. In sum, Stephenson's novels offer the opportunity to consider in what ways initiatives in US literary and cultural studies have moved on from previous approaches to assimilation and separation and from deconstructionist (textual) and cultural studies (historical) approaches to interpreting literature and are unique in their focus on devising a new rationale for the academic relations between national politics and literary production. Taking Bercovitch for instance, he looked to restore the symbolic modes of expression that could be remade and reimagined first and foremost as a means for the ends of successful socialisation. Bercovitch took assimilation very seriously as an achievement and not in any form surrender. His reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne led him to reconsider in what ways modes of ambiguity had led to a powerful form of symbolic reconciliation and interaction (art and expression) that were reflected in the social material engagements of classical or American Renaissance writers. Bercovitch's remaking of American

⁷⁹ Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy Hawthorne, Utopia, And Everyday Life*, 181. Hereafter abbreviated *Anatomy*.

⁸⁰ See Bové, "Notes Towards A Politics Of "American" Criticism."

Renaissance terms in the US taking it out of the old consensus formation of Spiller and Matthiessen on art and cultural expression and into a newer form alignment charting ideological restriction as a new enlivening form offers an alternative perspective on the multiple arrays of increasingly dazzling and solo performances of the postmodernists and their replacements of disagreements with differences.⁸¹ I will argue that when interpreted in terms of Bercovitch's discovery of New England Puritan rhetoric Stephenson's writing rather than be interpreted through postwar themes of diversity and difference can lead to more imaginative ways of engaging with postwar literary productions in the US and offer the opportunity to reappraise Bercovitch's nativist approach to reading and writing, which aspires to the traditional horizon of retrieving an authentic American identity and voice.

Chapter One

Defining what shapes and modes of analysis characters viewpoints form under becomes a key concern in this chapter, as I ask questions about *Cryptonomicon's* concerns about postmodern identarian politics and the themes of cultural diversity and difference in the postwar American university. Declining to choose between an absolute certainty of meaning for *Cryptonomicon's* mode of ambiguity I argue how its antagonistic outlooks towards tyranny in the modern and contemporary environment (both in the institutional and public spheres) present the powerful postmodern and nativist varieties of co-option and dissent. Driving my reading is the attempt to find a mode of writing for *Cryptonomicon* that pace the poststructuralist and the postmodernist themes of inauthenticity and difference but also how the novel offers an affirming non-contradictory sense of place for reappraisals of the acts of deconstruction. Tending toward an adversarial impulse *Cryptonomicon's* writing offers a deep inbred suspicion to the academics alien cultural criticism on traditional ways of knowing and seeing. Finding within its continuing resistance to current demands for social change I will attempt to uncover a hopeful message for this chapter where America is still a condition of possibility holding out further hope for future generations, and where consensus can be formed and newer conflicts made. I will pick out some themes from *Cryptonomicon* in terms of its attempts to recapture nature, beauty, and truth as a point of view on sources of history. Older styled literary critiques of intentionalism will also be given to mark out what *Cryptonomicon's* writing ultimately believes is the failed intellectual commitments of the academics to achieve criticism's reintegration into the public sphere. Threaded through the real abstractions of economic

⁸¹ In Benn Michaels reading of *Cryptonomicon* he argues how its "redescription of difference of opinion (the difference between what you think that letter is and what I think that letter is) as difference in subject-position (the difference between you and me) makes the literary critique of intentionalism into the posthistoricist valorisation of identity." Tracking this way of understanding I will attempt to see whether *Cryptonomicon's* racialised narration in fact reinstates mythic forms of whiteness into the text or in Bercovitch's terms offers characters that can offset capitalist materialist democracy and the conflicts inherent in the very meaning of free enterprise. See Michaels, "The Shape of the Signifier," 275-276. See also Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins*.

science and political dynamics the novel blames the founding practices of Europe for the state of America's liberal decline. *Cryptonomicon*'s mode of ambiguity, thereby, offers the opportunity to reappraise concerns about the political effectiveness of Yale School approaches to the old humanist impulses tied to values inherent in literature. Literary theory and the academic attempts to move theory and more specifically the deconstructive strands of literary theory to the centre of the teaching curriculum are considered in this chapter as collusive with old world ideas on subjectivist ideas of truth, and we shall see how Charlene's confusion of literary analysis with social action is harmful to what *Cryptonomicon*'s writing believes is more encompassing forces of social integration for American society.

Chapter Two

Linking my reading of *Cryptonomicon* to Guillory's sociological analysis of theoretical pluralism (as it became transferred from the institution to the wider non-academic terrain) allows me to reappraise Mark McGurl's recent attempts to reintegrate the social conditions of production and consumption of postwar American Literature. Although McGurl concentrates on the school's specific sociological conditions of production in these areas, he reads these conditions to understand and redeem aesthetic transformations of American fiction in the second half of the twentieth century. His other project is to safeguard the institution. *Cryptonomicon*'s returns to engagements with the nineteenth-century's realist promise I want to argue offer similar condemnations of the pluralist critics' assignation with inauthenticity. The literary academy's attempts to politicise the cultural field in terms of their antirealist agenda in the 1990s offers the opportunity to reappraise *Cryptonomicon* outlining a narrative that incites a lost world of political aspiration in the name of science not and not in the name of the politics of literature. The literary and cultural critics redescribing reality in sceptical and relativist terms also offers the opportunity to reappraise the concerns about 1990s culture wars. These debates express how politics in the guise of epistemology had become ineffectual in the public domain. These debates are useful for my reading of *Cryptonomicon* insofar as they take in the views of Richard Rorty. Rather than explore Rorty's critique of Stephenson's book *Snow Crash* I further want to argue in this chapter in what ways *Cryptonomicon* exceeds the laudable objective of affirming cultural diversity that repositions its narrative in the 1990s debates about literature. What I want to argue emerges in a reading of *Cryptonomicon* in this chapter is a thought experiment similar to Guillory's, as he attempted to overcome the impense of antirealist or postmodern project and Leftist discourse in the university. The mixing of fiction and function in this chapter can put *Cryptonomicon* at odds with its own oftentimes postmodernist confusing of mixing high art and low diction. The return to realistic end-oriented literary forms will be argued for or against as distinctions are spread farther afield in a

more complex social reality. *Cryptonomicon* offers a way to read through these debates on social differentiation, as its objects are isolated in what it portrays as the chronic shortage of functional – not fictional—process. A final idea will be to locate *Cryptonomicon*'s writing with Richard Rorty's views on the fields of socially produced knowledge in US academic criticism conflating Rorty's ambivalent patriotism with *Cryptonomicon*'s adherences to a sense of place.

Chapter Three

In chapter three I move out of the heralding of new possibilities in the shift in the attention in detail taken towards the aesthetic in terms of McGurl's sociological dialectic of the university classroom acting as both structure and agent to read the continuing formations of American identity and return to its converse position, which offers the debate on the relationship between the subject and its location as always an affective imaginary phenomenon. I will offer this mode of criticism through the contradictory stances taken by women in *The Baroque Cycle*. Through this reading of *The Baroque Cycle* I will offer Berlant's not uncritical allegiance to Bercovitch's pluralist semiotic and his alternative perspective of a multidimensional-one-dimensional US public sphere. Conflating the critical work of Berlant's women's culture concept with my reading of the contradictory standpoints taken by women in *The Baroque Cycle* offers what I hope is a challenging reading to Bercovitch's way of making process an affirmative means of controlling culture and what Berlant saw was the codification of cultural studies in the humanities.⁸² Offering Berlant and Bercovitch's key conflicting arguments on views about social construction and views on ideological restriction and repudiation becomes a key focus of the chapter. I will appraise how women's expression of their individuality can form in either of these pluralist accounts. However, rather than reconciliation or repudiation form the basis for my analysis for a women's culture concept in the three volumes it is Bercovitch's emphases on an American pluralist semiotic and ideological restriction and not Berlant's in this chapter that I will conclude my readings. As well as bringing forward other ways to retrieve the aesthetic point of view on history for the revised rationale for an integrated curriculum in the US I will conclude my thesis with what type of university I believe Neal Stephenson prefers, i.e. either Bercovitch's way of understanding the University of Culture or Bill Readings's way of understanding the University of Excellence. This will offer a final opinion on Bercovitch's nativist approach to reading and writing which aspires to the traditional horizon of retrieving an authentic American identity and voice.

⁸² Bercovitch ultimately rejected the type of cultural work connected to poststructural emphasis as a basis for actual social change in the US.

Chapter 1. Postmodernity or Nativist Viewpoint

Introduction

In this opening chapter I want to show how fictional characters, such as Lawrence and Randall Waterhouse and Goto Dengo and Bobby Shaftoe, create a complex genealogy of a wartime code breaker, contemporary hacker, and World War Two Japanese and American soldiers. The characters in *Cryptonomicon*'s wartime storyline strike up an impossible friendship, as they come through the horrors of war. Their interracial subjectivities offer what I will argue is an alternative perspective on a conservative impulse to preserve the attainment of the good. The good in this context meaning a culture that combines the conditions of modernization in the United States with the principles of liberal democracy. This early American ideal can be seen in the way characters form racial bonds across friendships. Similarly, in the contemporary storyline, although the novel suggests that UNIX hacker Randy's friends are of a different kind to any that newfound partner Asian-American Amy or America Shaftoe has seen, these friendships can form in what was largely considered the male homosocial bonds that emerged in a political sphere that excluded women. The relation between academic and political concerns via literary departments during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s saw such bonds of male affiliation as threatening and ultimately recreating the archetypes of the racial unconscious in the classical image. Conversely, *Cryptonomicon*'s writing believes the aspects of a latent racial unconscious taken from old world classical ideals have been transferred into the academic's cultural work. It is this new ethic of aggression that is transmitting its effects on the purportedly disengaged scholarship of the art impulse of the US canon.

We begin to subjectively identify with the abstract rendering of a character like Lawrence Waterhouse only when he turns down the offer to join Lord Comstock at the new Black Chamber. Because Lawrence is surrounded by the creation of the comic moment we never directly enter into his character. Lawrence is expressly made to stay away from circumstances in the novel, which involve notions of tragedy. There are many ways to argue for the way in which the character Lawrence is subliminally transferred or left in a state of halted or suspended agency, in order to pull at a certain desired effect. The novel creates a storyline distance for Lawrence that isolates him from his immediate military community. He can offer a refused identification with the World War Two command centres and the ensuing Cold War technological arms race. British hegemony is always an echo to play itself out in American institutional contexts in relation to these concerns. The novel shows its concerns with the white British hegemony and wartime elite and American corporate interest in the war. Alan Turing we are told disappears from Lawrence's view into the "the realms of classified" (122-123). Lawrence is part of a diverse group that challenges the military

industrial complex. He is good at keeping secrets, and too valuable to the wartime higher-ups in the retrieval and decryption of information, therefore, he must stay away from the war. The creation of distance in which Lawrence pulls at the unconscious level can be given an account with an older style of literary subjectivism and literary critique of intentionalism. In George Poulet's identification of the tragic moment in Moliere he writes the tragic moment in Moliere is "easy of achievement," and leads to author-reader subject-object identification. However, Poulet writes "the comic is the very opposite of the unitive consciousness, which forms around the tragic moment." Not able to enter the character of Lawrence directly in this reading, he is expressively made to stay away from any moments of tragedy and thus we enter his character (and a sort of liminal interior dialogue with him) always through moments of ridicule or farce, it is necessary to confront what Lawrence as the opposite of unitive consciousness proposes. It is apt that Lawrence who is significantly important in the novel elicits no subjective and more importantly no moralising response until the final few pages when he destroys the Arethusa transcripts he has been set to decrypt. As we shall see it is therefore always difficult to give a correct type of literary value for *Cryptonomicon's* critiques of intentionality.

Cryptonomicon responds to the postwar growing concern that institutions left to their own devices make for problematically institutional subjectivities. Lawrence, I want to argue, however, also brings forward not only rhetorical concerns surrounding what Sean McCann and Michael Szalay argue were the ambivalent theories of pedagogy that enabled Native Americans, Gays, Lesbians, Blacks, and Women to find their voice so to speak, but also the return to the study of antebellum era topics and issues concerning social bias and the purportedly disengaged scholarship of the US canon. These concerns amidst others, as we shall see, operate within a fusion of opposites between a handful of characters that exacerbate the difference between history and the dream, whilst also alternatively offering a form of symbolic reconciliation that ratifies embedded structures of political assent in the US.

The way in which the novel pulls us in to merge with imaginary voices or worlds in this chapter I want to argue attempts to hold us at a distance forcing us consciously to apprehend the performative operations and formal construction of poetic language. For instance Lawrence Waterhouse is a wartime code breaker and gives the reader access through which we begin to understand the complex nature of Alan Turing. Lawrence gives off characteristics that see him as ultimately benign. He politely refuses Turing's sexual advances, and via rational self-reflection opines why there are men like Turing i.e. homosexual. On the other hand, Turing is a tragic figure abused by the wartime military elite. Turing's historical past is well known, and the novel looks to construct his

historical abuses into the storyline. The novel doubly indicts Turing. He cuts a forlorn figure in the novel as he attempted to step outside the historical forces that looked to control him. Turing then is abused not only by the military wartime elite but by his own theoretical impulse to stand outside the domineering forces that make him a victim of a patriarchal society. This charge, as we shall see, is leveled at the academics in *Cryptonomicon*'s contemporary storyline in terms of "antifoundationalist theory hope." The novel in many ways attempts to show how there is no discourse independent of belief. In its incessant story making, it attempts to interpret away this kind of divisiveness in which to escape belief systems there has to be a giving up of all beliefs. This reading shows that *Cryptonomicon*'s writing has moved out of Rorty's damning critique of *Snow Crash* and now offers its mode of experimentalism in terms of Rorty's ambivalent patriotism and Bercovitch's ideological restriction. We then see how the novel creates a complex characteristic, as a determining impulse cannot be centred through wartime patriot Lawrence. He is rather an object that we must confront rather than draw empathy from or elicit any emotion towards. He is a humane figure yet he allows himself to be made an instrument of war. His code breaking exploits help to kill thousands of people yet Lawrence never questions his role in the war effort. The novel, on the other hand, does question his role through a series of experimental relations and Lawrence is to force upon the reader a dual consciousness. It is not until the end of the novel that the reader can feel any sympathy for him.

In this chapter we will also see how *Cryptonomicon* is a book steeped in understandings of the contemporary period where the radical agency of human community is always paradoxical, a Derridean community of those without community. Lawrence joins the military a soldier neither saluted nor honoured (*Cryptonomicon*, 66). He and his kind, as ordinary marine grunt Bobby Shaftoe often picks out are incomparable to anything that he and his "buddies" from "Shreveport" and "Pittsburgh" can fathom out (4, 34). Lawrence's group of code busters are largely incommensurable to the war effort (66), and as Derrida remarks in another context, come under the aegis of radical "heterology asymmetry and infinity." This runs counter to the "homology symmetry immanence and finitism and politicist concord," Ivy Schweitzer argues, is a property of classical friendship.⁸³ The gendered "we" of Lawrence's community is therefore always paradoxical a community of those without a community. Lawrence and his group similar to the men in DeLillo's, *Libra* where a counter-community is formed are men that are not idealized, as this community itself is a site of betrayals and conspiracy. And like the men in a Pynchon novel, the men in Waterhouse's group refuse to surrender themselves to the play of policy, which is to rebirth in America. Again underlying *Cryptonomicon*'s refused identifications with America is a deeper underlying politicist

⁸³ See Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship*, 11.

concord with America that refuse the tarnishing of World War Two heroes through the process of their absorption and recycling in the European critical theories of poststructuralism.

Because I want to argue there is a search for a community in the novel, which I will also argue attempts to undo the academics complex politics of posthistoricism, *Cryptonomicon* challenges us to think through the contemporary period's dialectical and rhetorical responses to the cultural and global significances of knowledge disclosed by contemporary and postmodern literary theory, and on the status of the US in world history. We are pulled into a mode of cultural nationalist self-redefinition with Randy and Lawrence Waterhouse as they promote discussions of racism, particularly in its friendlier modern ones, like institutional racism. Bobby Shaftoe and Goto Dengo, on the other hand, bring institutional racism to view in their respective public domains. These public spheres are largely more benign offering a space from which the novel can retrieve a world of dynamic friendships in and across racial boundaries and stereotypes. *Cryptonomicon* understands that the ability to talk about such issues has reified in the institution and how the new neoliberal order has in fact largely reified what was once a progressive world of interrelationships. Yet it also uses the deployment of postmodernist techniques, which complicates our ways of understanding commitments to culture in the postwar university and, as we shall see, the postmodernist niche fiction of the post-1960s literary marketplace.

I will argue how the novel shows its discontent to the high philosophical abstractions of the academics, and the criterion behind their use of a specialised discourse. The novel embeds the academic's abstract philosophical proposals and interrelated philosophical problems conflated as jargon into a spurious form of indoctrination. Randy we are told wants children. Charlene, on the other hand, does not (81).⁸⁴ Finding a somewhat moral fecundity inherent in the refusal of academics to have children *Cryptonomicon* draws the language of theory and the eclectic student of culture through a process of historical and rhetorical antitypes. It conflates the project of academic theory with the projects of the theorist of pure expression in wartime and draws both accounts into America's own backyards tainting Roosevelt's wartime policies with spiritual, moral and ideological codes of mastery. Taking issue with either fascistic wartime abuses, or spurious uses of

⁸⁴ Though this is not a primary focus or concern in this chapter such a notion can evoke the persistence of the combining of the sacred and the secular. According to Bercovitch the Yankee heirs of the Puritans shifted the focus of figural authority from Bible history to American experience consecrating this as a movement from promise to fulfilment and translated fulfilment from its meaning within the closed system of sacred history into a metaphor for limitless secular improvement. Whether aimed directly at James II courtly circles or more interestingly Yale baron wombs signal the novels' testing of secular limitations, and an allegorical reading of the backgrounds of these stories offer an understanding of how the movement from promise to fulfilment (taken from the errand into the wilderness) is a changing but persisting, persisting because changing narrative. See Bercovitch, "The Typology of America's Mission," 136.

Continental forms of theoretical indoctrination I argue the national centre (at least in rhetorical terms) holds in *Cryptonomicon*. It views postmodern abstractions and postmodern theorising as wrongheaded. It is therefore the easy and glib postmodern abstractions on the nature of “the Spectacle” in *Cryptonomicon* that I want to argue the language brings to the fore in this chapter and not a deeper expose into the validity of the nature of the Spectacle itself. Rather than turn to how *Cryptonomicon* assumes that to expose these hard facts is to dispel the claims of rhetoric its surrounding the wartime community of the codebreaker, or the contemporary community of the hacker in an imaginative and more appreciative framework evokes America, as it has so often declared itself, the nation of the future. In its returns to a symbolic community of hackers, which no longer fits historical description (since the academics have conflated Randy’s hacker ethics with that of the wartime technocrat) or its return to wartime codebreaking communities (again heavily criticised by the academics for having *their* origin in political modes of control) *Cryptonomicon* offers its own deconstructive tendencies up for reconsideration.

Opening up this thesis’s account of *Cryptonomicon* symbolic self-definitions protect many of the key figures (healing fractures) from the clashing inscriptions of the movement of theory and the deconstruction of common sense values in America. In short, I argue the novel isolates the conflict theorist’s radical doubt in the university. In doing so, it offers the opportunity to reappraise concerns taken not towards harmful ideologies of modern Western thought but towards the absence of reflection on the school as an institution. Tackling the school’s use of theory and the middle-class liberals who look to transcend their disciplinarity it obfuscates the use of academic jargon in a public domain racked by crude sociologies and poststructural formalisms. In the confusion surrounding the uses of academic theory *Cryptonomicon*’s writing does not divorce itself from the limitations of material social engagement. Main fictional protagonist in *Cryptonomicon*’s contemporary storyline Randall L. Waterhouse is locked into competing systems and subsystems of domination. Told that he is wedded to a system of ideas in the service of evil (the American ideology) he leaves academic girlfriend and postructural critic Charlene. Attempts at the reassertion of Randy’s American selfhood are made in his long and drawn out exile abroad and newfound courtship with Asian other Amy or American Shaftoe. Randy’s leaving one America to find another, is a way in which I read the novel’s complex resistances to an institutional environment engaged on many levels with the problem and the promise of cultural difference. Although Randy is a figure cocooned from America’s recent cultural past he offers challenging ways in which to view the university projections on his identity that as will now see the 1990s versions of cultural studies failed to translate *in practice* into any meaningful reform.

The University in Ruins

Bill Readings, in his compelling reading *The University in Ruins* (1996), argued that the debate between dead white males and multiculturalist talk of diversity was a moot point, as culture had become a meaningless term in the university's pursuit of new teaching frameworks. Readings argued that, with the onset of cultural studies, culture as a meaningful term that would unite the humanities disciplines had ceased to exist. Although a particular methodological challenge to race, gender, and empire or national identity, the 90s turn to the model of consensus by ideology, for Readings, failed to translate in practice into any meaningful reform. Readings's new watchwords for the university were diversity and excellence.⁸⁵ Despite a compelling reading, Readings's book gives a bleak reading of the university system, arguing that it behaves more like a corporation, and the central figure of the professor has shifted to the administrator. He saw how a general administrative logic of evaluation had replaced the interplay of teaching and research as central to the functioning of the university.⁸⁶ Invoking allusions to how mechanisms for governance have shifted towards corporate form, Readings argues the university has become a site where it is no longer easy to establish a community of scholars, but rather tertiary institutions are now regarded as resembling a place of work. Through mocking ironies of the professionalization of posthistorical scholarship exemplified in liberal arts student Charlene's recruitment to Yale—both characterised as dropping any pretence to structural alignments to reason for the promotion of labile optimistic pluralist perspectives—*Cryptonomicon's* character assassination of the postwar academics questions the literary curriculum as a site of political practice and the university professor's role in a wider non-academic terrain. Reflecting the recent failure of classroom politics to adapt adequately into the US public sphere, and viewed through the works of Guillory, Graff, McGurl, and Readings, in this chapter I reflect on the nature of literary and cultural studies in the United States, as questions are asked of necessary linkages between leftist politics and antirealist or postmodern epistemology.

Reflecting the 1990s failure of university classroom politics to adapt adequately into the US public sphere, and rather than denounce literary theory, as antitheory practioners Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels were to do, Gerald Graff maintained that a broader theoretical framework was needed to teach and evaluate literary texts. Graff after reconsidering theory and its uses looked to place it at the centre of the teaching curriculum rather than dismantle it. His method of teaching the conflicts stood directly oppositional to the antitheory avowals of the American pragmatism of

⁸⁵ Summarising Readings's argument Anthony Smith writes on the jacket cover of *The University in Ruins*: "The task that substitutes for the pursuit of culture is the adherence to Excellence, which regulates the university to the treadmill of global capitalism. It turns out graduate students as objects, not subjects, at so much per head, under the scrutiny of state bureaucracy." See Jacket cover, Readings, *University in Ruins*.

⁸⁶ Readings, *University in Ruins*, 126.

Knapp and Michaels. They posed the question why do we need postmodern literary theory at all. Graff, on the other hand, and caught between mounting pressures on academic standards conducted from the very top (as the likes of Lynne Cheney and secretary of education William Bennett were pushing hard against the trashing of western culture and relativism in the university), devised a novel way to move literary theory to the centre of the teaching curriculum, believing that with the recent insights taken from European critical theory postmodern issues of multiculturalism and diversity could still be dealt with in a traditional way.⁸⁷ Graff saw the need to defend cultural diversity as the university was radically transforming itself into a bureaucratically organised and relatively autonomous consumer-oriented corporation. His method of teaching the conflicts, he argued, would stem the current disquiet that had surrounded debates over representation in the US canon whilst also eradicating any attempts to resituate the university or the canon as an ideological arm of the state.

The critical background surrounding representation in the canon was reconsidered in the US with the publishing of John Guillory's highly influential *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (1993).⁸⁸ Guillory argued that the radical pedagogical theorists call for a democratic curriculum did not have legitimacy of priority of status as a political project. He wrote:

The debunking of totalities [...] is a sort determined by the present political and institutional conditions of literary criticism [...]. In the language of theory, its language of rigor is the problem of specialization or the effects of the technobureaucratic organisation of intellectual labour on the discipline of criticism.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Such was the nature of competing and conflicting interest inherent within textual composition, and the inevitable cultural conservative backlash against the excesses of posthistorical discourse and Leftist writing traces of US culture wars inevitably surface in my reading of *Cryptonomicon*. Because culture wars signify the background reading the novel sits within the divide Pat Buchanan a conservative demagogue declared would be America's sternest test. Surrounding the time of *Cryptonomicon's* publishing there was a lot of culture wars fall out. Polemical propaganda was dedicated purely to column inches and visible space in press and media coverage. This would constitute an interminable list. In part it deals with issues such as conservatives assailing politically correct approaches to United States history while liberals condemn white exploitation of Native Americans during the exploration and settlement of the American West. William Bennett attacked Stanford for trashing Western culture while Stanford faculty members retorted by hailing the changes, as enabling at last a birth of multiculturalism within core university courses. Robert Bellha argued how Americans were turning inwards becoming more fragmented, more isolated and detached from community concerns. Bellha for his part was considered romantic for clinging to ideas of community. Culture wars debates continue up to the present with Berlant's understandings of compassionate conservatism rekindling the classic tradition of aristocratic societies. I touch upon the cultural conservative backlash to culture wars and aspects of compassionate conservatism in chapters two and three respectively.

⁸⁸ Guillory argued that those involved in canon wars based on the premise of social bias missed their own intuitional location, and what they arguably represented was not their own politicised culture-critique of discursive productions of particular socially biased historical formations but that of the culture of the school. William Spanos similarly argues how those involved in the production of posthistorical knowledge had not adequately perceived the "imperial essence and the historical genealogy of the kind of thinking that characterises posthistory." See, Spanos, "The Question of Philosophy and Poiesis in the Posthistorical Age, 163-164, and Guillory, *Cultural Capital*.

⁸⁹ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 238; 231.

Guillory took to understanding the emergence of a theory-canon as a problem of the elevation of “*rhetoric* as a technical practice.” He argued that this process was “quite unlike either the art of interpretation or even the more intuitive exercise of judgement or taste, the art of appreciation.”⁹⁰ Guillory saw how cultural politics were yet to cement their space, and therefore were not yet identical to social imperatives outside the classroom. Because of the literary left’s failure to transform their social claims into political objectives the politics of New Left academics that was extended into *potential space* was, in short, overdeveloped by the pluralist version of liberalism emergent in post-Vietnam American society.⁹¹ *Cryptonomicon*, although part of a dominant postwar collective of aesthetic dispositions characteristic of an aesthetic drift from pernicious national traditions delivered through the problematic of the Kantian aesthetic, also offers the opportunity to reappraise a backlash to cultural studies and cultural politics, and the deconstruction of commonsensical values in the American literary humanist tradition. As I will come to argue, *Cryptonomicon* gets trapped between legacies, critiquing the old-world colonial state infrastructure and the dominances of the American ideology. In positing awareness of being vulnerable to both European and nativist scrutiny, it is important therefore to look behind contexts and critiques of American imperialist exploits, and to focus on the importation and transference of French theory into the North American academy.

Guillory extended this argument into *potential space* overdeveloped by the pluralist version of liberalism emergent in post-Second World War American society.

The adjustment of critical practice to new socioinstitutional conditions of literary pedagogy is registered symptomatically within theory by its tendency to model the intellectual work of the theorist on the new social form of intellectual work, the technobureaucratic labour of the new professional managerial class [...] rigor in the idealized self-representation of rhetorical reading translates in practice into the routinization of charisma [...] I [...] read this problem as the failure of de Manian theory (and theory in general) to function as anything other than an interim, imaginary solution to the new conditions of intellectual labour, conditions that will certainly require a thorough rethinking of what it is literary critics do in the class room and in their writing.⁹²

Using his emphases on the emergence of a distinct theory canon, and subsequent questions of what the political means in the context of the school as an institution, fictional protagonist of

⁹⁰ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 203; 181.

⁹¹ Gabriele Schwab uses D.W. Winnicott’s suggestion that cultural experience is located in potential space between the individual and the environment. Much of the antifoundational criticism that came to pass in the latter half of the twentieth century saw this space as a space from which to resist traditional political methods and the transformational function of literature and aesthetic experience. See, for instance, Gabriel Schwab, “Cultural Texts and Endopsychic Scripts,” 160-176.

⁹² Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 181.

Cryptonomicon, the nerdy UNIX hacker Randall Waterhouse's conceptual reason is transferred from the intuitive hypothesis of canon exclusion.⁹³ Amending McGurl's recent analysis of the signature preoccupation of modernist fiction, Randy's preoccupation with signature *does not* find new meaning when it is transferred to an institutional environment engaged on many levels with the promise and problem with cultural difference.⁹⁴ Viewed through the crisis surrounding cultural capital in literary canon formation, *Cryptonomicon's* returns to previous literary productions rather than bring into play the initiation of discursive practices act as counter to indiscriminate use of a canon of theory in American contexts that looked to govern practice from without. Crisscrossing anti-intellectual link ups with New Media, the novel extends the opportunity to reappraise politicised culture-critique in US academia as it deals with aftermath of poststructural theory in the US.⁹⁵

Neorealist critique is tied to Charlene and her group's leftist politics. Dr G.E.B. Kivistik, a "Fiftyish Yale professor" (81), is criticised by Randy for using the "academician's ace in the hole:

⁹³ Charlene's dehumanising rhetoric is challenged. She believes that the limits of national consensus and rational discourse have been exposed but her answer to target the canon for its social exclusion and racial effacements is an argument couched in elitist terms hidden from Charlene's viewpoint. The intuitive hypothesis of canon exclusion is connected to the way in which Guillory argued antirealist theorists assumed that their epistemology held a necessary relation to political positions. What Guillory in fact argued was this was an erroneous route to take as the school's determining apparatus had affected de Man's teaching pedagogy. Guillory argued the charisma of de Man as the name of theory had been converted into bureaucratic prestige irrelevant of any subversive content. Guillory, as suggested, for Readings errs between de Man as the name of deconstruction and his institutionalisation. However, the social horizon circumscribing and conditioning the emergence of the academic superstar and the refunctioning of rhetoric's *techne* as a kind of technology incorporated into the protocols of rhetorical-deconstructive reading are offered as a mimesis of the technobureaucratic itself. In short and reading this through *Cryptonomicon* the sanctioned educational institution of Yale with the help of the mainstream media establishment is being used on behalf of a ruling elite to halt the continuing spread of scientific industrialisation and subsequent free and open information exchange in American computer culture. To halt these reification processes *Cryptonomicon* attempts to literally deprogram the intellectual left's dream of a socialist utopia born out of the common birthing of a people in the school. As we can see here, the diminished significance of the literary syllabus in the University for Guillory was an institutional effect and not the result of any "deconstructive [...] attack upon the universality of the values supposed to be expressed in the literary canon." In sum, theory was simply an interim solution to the diminished significance of the literary syllabus in the postwar period. What became more pertinent for Guillory was what came after theory, and how concerns about the aesthetic and literariness would re-emerge in a reshaped school and university classroom environment. He argued The moment of theory is determined [...] by a certain defunctioning of the literary curriculum, a crisis in the market value of its cultural capital occasioned by the emergence of a professional-managerial class which no longer requires the (primary literary) cultural capital of the old bourgeois. The debunking of totalities [...] is a sort determined by the present political and institutional conditions of literary criticism [...] In the language of theory, its language of rigor is the problem of specialization or the effects of the technobureaucratic organisation of intellectual labour on the discipline of criticism. This was for Guillory the unmarked horizon of canon debates Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 177.

⁹⁴ I invoke McGurl's generalised conception here and turn it around. See McGurl, *The Program Era*, x.

⁹⁵ Using Francois Lyotard's concept of information theory the academics undermine the possibility of a single subject's mastering the complexities of the social bond, metonymically incarnating it as a personal relation to culture. Their cultural pluralist advocacy of the technological infrastructure sets out to internationalise the curriculum and mark global history as the history of global relations of Western states. However, nowhere does the novel show that their favourable media images of oppressed and minority cultures support indigenous populations. Charlene's struggle for Global hegemony is attacked as the novel candidly caricatures the strong overstatements academics used during the heyday of High Theory to advance career opportunities. The perceived inability to reach wartime events is connected to the conference circuit, and to challenge the anodyne pluralist perspective the novel draws attention to Charlene's particular conference and its abridged but pithy nickname "War as Text." The way in which the novel reacts to the furore surrounding the conference poster suggests again it is a novel in part informed by media views on the culture wars.

everything is relative, it's all just differing perspectives" (83). Through Randy we see how this antirealist epistemology when tied to leftist and liberal politics forms an ineffectual response to the corporate environment. Randy and his business partner Avi in the early stages of the novel to make "fuck you money" in the Philippines.

This is an allusion to a Randy/Avi conversation of two years ago wherein Avi actually calculated a specific numerical value for "fuck-you-money." It was not a fixed constant, however, but rather a cell in a spreadsheet linked to any number of continually fluctuating economic indicators. (26)

While Randy and Avi we are told are "kicking the crap out of everyone else in the world when it comes to networking" (26) Charlene's crowd and their new media linkage between postmodern epistemology and leftist politics stops short of real political involvement. The performative aspect of their cultural work is further criticised by their strong overstatements on descendents of white European males. This crowd believe they have surpassed a Marxist critique of the reproduction of unequal social relations but in their stereotyping of Randy they pigeonhole their theory of the performativity of political discourse offering an exact view like Marx before him.⁹⁶ As a consequence the academics become caught up in ineffectual battles of cultural representation allowing resurgent forces of corporate populism and reactionary conservatism to gain the moral and political high ground on left conceptual thinking. In the furore surrounding the conference poster the novel attacks rather than defends the latter day embrace of postmodern epistemology and conflicts of interpretation in the institution.

The contradiction that shows itself in my reading of *Cryptonomicon* is that the antagonistic approach that attempts to retell a story not from the ordered centre is not the abandonment of the realist and leftist narrative (as Richard Rorty extols for *Snow Crash*) but, rather, that neo-progressive movements in deconstruction and pragmatism are not used as structural movements through which we trace the humanist condition. To recuperate the self as self-presence, *Cryptonomicon's* objectifying of its characters becomes part of a tradition in the US that stretches in a literary tradition from Kant to Georges Poulet. In short, however, Stephenson's fictions, as atypically aligned to post-modernist writing, can often be mixed with a genealogy of concepts and terms surrounding what Edward Said called the "informationalization of cultural knowledge." This transnational content has ostensibly destroyed traditional alignments to the literary humanist perspective. To propose *Cryptonomicon* as finding origination in terms such as "the information economy," "the Spectacle," or "the American new pragmatism" is antithetical to my overall reading. However, characters in *Cryptonomicon* often mark themselves out as radically oppositional

⁹⁶ Terry Eagleton offers a humorous summary on theory. See Eagleton, *After Theory*, 36.

to traditional aspects of literary aesthetic humanism. Arguably one of the better interpretive models of the information economy (notwithstanding McGurl's recent systems theoretical analysis of postwar American fictions in *The Program Era*) is Guy Debord's notion of the all-encompassing spectacle and the sophistication and brutality of this modern integrating form. I offer an interpretation of Debord's method, however, only insofar as it was criticised by Michael de Certeau. De Certeau among others saw how Debord was too dogmatic in his approach to historical authenticity.⁹⁷ Postmodern critics argued Debord had taken on the spatialising objectives of the metaphysical imperialist perspective. Many subsequent postwar scholars believed this perspective became lodged in the reading process and used deconstruction techniques and putative nonconcept of textuality (that cannot reform in the symbolic consciousness) to liberate the signifier from its dependence on the logos or primary signified.⁹⁸

Cryptonomicon's liberal grad student Charlene is condemned in the novel as she is indoctrinated by the will of one man. Dr. Kivistik is suggestive of a sleeping old-world leviathan (he is an expatriate of British and Finnish descent). His will to appropriate is attuned to how Charlene revises her political effects in the social domain. The novel makes an altogether different play on Kivistik's political intentions, as he attempts to introduce moral truths to the general mind in America through a fascination with the media spectacle. Nowhere in the novel will Randy concede to this type of domineering and nowhere will he believe the academics or the media's propositions, in which to enter into a state of fascination with the media spectacle it becomes possible to undertake in Guillory's terms "the project of awakening the master's desire."⁹⁹ Kivistik comes to the West Coast to recruit Charlene for Yale, but UNIX hacker boyfriend Randy, "really, *really* suspects that he was there [...] to fuck her" (81). Although the narrator underlines Randy's comment, suggesting that he feels somewhat "whacked out" (81) when he makes this statement, what lies behind Randy's sentiment is a nativist response tied to Charlene's cultural alignment with New Media projects and the post-structural alignment that extols *différance*. Although main fictional protagonist Randy does not represent an easy cultural standard for the Americanist, he is to stand for unanxious ideas about

⁹⁷ The difference as I see it between Debord's and Lyotard's and Baudrillard's postmodern take on the society of the spectacle is the idea that Debord believes that there is still an authentic reality to have. Debord's study was also different from British Cultural theorist's practice of alternative and lived hegemonic process in which the individual collectively creates through culture the everyday order from which they are a part. Although offering more complex route to obtaining experience of one's own social and historical life and contemporary background - language that speaks of both subordination and domination can form interesting resistances against interlocking systems of control - however negates that persistence of such forms of domination rather than sum up the complexity of all lived experience generally applies to the culture of the dominated.

⁹⁸ Writing on an aspect of symbol as "a special unarbitrary mode of language," lodged in the American reading and writing process Frank Lentricchia expresses, "symbol not only permits us a vision of ultimate being [...] but because it partakes of being [...] [it] permits us, as well, to partake of being, as it closes the distance between our consciousness and the ultimate order of things." See Lentricchia, *Ariel and the Police*, 6.

⁹⁹ Guillory argued that with emergence of a canon of theory came a contemporary will to power in a discourse of mastery. See *Cultural Capital*, 181; 203.

honesty, industry and integrity in the American truth system. Randy's first thoughts offer an encounter with imperceptiveness to his privileged technocratic status and are the way the novel offers a critique on traditionalisms in America's pasts. However as an object posed, not being able to find easy relatability content with him, he is to offer critique on the imaginary separation that enabled liberal subjects like Charlene to experience the otherwise threatening contradictions released by the cold war consensus as the negative capability of a whole self. *Cryptonomicon* finally interprets away the sort of divisiveness that leads to liberal arts student Charlene failing to deal with a problem of the whole self head-on: she annexes this negative incapability to antagonisms with the State.

Randy is incensed that Kivistik, who is emblematic of everything that is old-world driven, has dragged reigning critical practice and criticism's social imperative to the theme of information in the US. Old-world passions imbued in Kivistik's passion for mastery are further drawn into the kind of thinking that characterises posthistory as the academics enter America from elite and privileged centres of adult learning: "they stumbled in from Heidelberg and Paris and Boston and Berkley then sat around Randy and Charlene's kitchen table drinking coffee and talking at great length about the Spectacle" (51). Randy becomes angry that Kivistik is ignorant on the subject of technology. He is aggrieved that the college professor has turned his "contrarian view of the Information Superhighway into more air time than anyone who hadn't been accused of blowing up a day care centre" (81). Kivistik is foreign in ways and symbolic motives from the touching on borderline "red American" Randy.¹⁰⁰ The novel drives home themes of inauthenticity, and in nativist terms offers a transgenerational critique to take to Charlene's liberally progressive views on a global capitalist world-reality. As I argue, a patriotic notion of national identity imbued in American canonical figures is latent in the novel. It is relatively straightforward to locate un-patriotic modes of political organisation within social space opened up by literary styles centred on cultural importations of French theory into the North American academy, which *Cryptonomicon's* experimental writing forms a part. Shedding some distinctive light on psychology in US writing Winfried Fluck writes:

while the works of Emerson or Thoreau are traditionally said to embody a new patriotic spirit in American literature, it is important to recognise how this sense of nationhood emerges from a negotiation with and partial suppression of transnational frictions and disturbances so that the development of transcendentalism should be seen as interwoven systematically with the belligerent Anglophobia of this era.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Frank's thoughts help to open up the novel. He saw that within polemical disputes between right and left wing politics the cultural right gained ground in light of liberal costal excessiveness. I deal with Frank's thoughts in relation to a nativist response tied to Randy in chapter two. See, Frank, *What's The Matter With America*.

¹⁰¹ See, Fluck, "American Literary History and the Romance with America," 15. See also Paul Giles who writes: "no foreign powers disrupt the symposium once Emerson enters it." Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and*

From a postcolonial narrative Charlene's views on the modern spectacle are turning active principles of debate into passive agreement with historical power, and her replication of Guillory's problem of representation in the sphere of democratic politics is presented as capturing very little in essence of what diverse social movements against pernicious national traditions tell us of progressive historical change.¹⁰²

Cryptonomicon sets up a divide between those that see the founding political origins of America as technologies of oppression and those that still believe in commitments to the Constitution neither liberalism nor conservatism have prevailed in the up keep of these principles. Cold war tactics are processed from unscrupulous information gathering methods. However the novel also offers the opportunity to explore how these tactics were transplanted into American contexts not simply from cold war consensus politics but in imported post-Marxist philosophies. The novel draws focuses on problems inherent in the institutional projection of pluralism as the academics become obsessed in their attempts to unmask power from under ideal reformulations of law. Its interrogation of the academic Left's failure to concentrate on economic selfishness effectively colludes in the proletarianisation of its bourgeoisie. This amounts to what Robert Putnam in his book, *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital* (1995) characterised as the spread of increasing detachment and isolation in America.¹⁰³ Reacting against the performative voluntarism of the academics the novel reflects a bottom-up popular revolt against the increasing isolation Americans feel from one another, and connects new directions in scholarship taken in the United States with old world discourses of mastery fascism-socialism. In attempting their radical cultural overhaul of public space, now potential space, through identity politics the novel reflects that the cultural Left point of view missed the complexity in the traditionalism of society leaving figures such as Randy bereft and in isolation.

Creating a contrast between young liberal arts student Charlene, who brings to the fore demands of de Manian American discipleship that disseminated the syllabus of theory into a wider non-

the Formation of American Literature, 1730-1860, 5. Lentricchia also writes: Emerson sought to "undermine al all costs – whether lordly or bourgeois – European privilege." See *Ariel and the Police*, 116.

¹⁰² On the spectacle Debord recognises: "Rather than talk of the spectacle people often prefer to use the term media. And by this they mean to describe a mere instrument, a kind of public service which with impartial "professionalism" would facilitate the new wealth of mass communication through mass media – a form of communication which has at least attained a unilateral purity, whereby decisions already taken are presented for passive admiration. For what are communicated are orders and with perfect harmony, those who give them are also those who tell us what to think of them." See Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, 6.

¹⁰³ William James saw similar problems with reification through institutional processes. He argued how European institutionalising impulses rebirth themselves in America policy in a "big" and "great" manner. James believed that without an aristocracy or an established church the American intellectual would stand against forces that would divide rather than unite or cohere the nation. See Lentricchia, *Ariel and the Police*, 120-121.

academic terrain, and a young and beautiful Filipino nursing student Glory, the novel critically dialectically juxtaposes different sets of characters.¹⁰⁴ The wartime characters bring forward surrounding notions of interest-group politics, which counter what is considered an ineffectual response to global capitalist aggression: the portability of cultural politics in the contemporary setting. Although embodying a certain binary (light over dark) distinction, Glory is celestially dressed in a “white nurse’s uniform,” (44) Kivistik for his part is painted in the fashion of a diabolically black robber-baron as he steals Charlene from Randy; she never becomes an easy container for man’s ideological containment. Glory does not need to be defended, and becomes the leader of a resistance movement against forced wartime expansionist ethics. Her characterisation works in tandem with the wartime assassin Bobby Shaftoe. Shaftoe is a Fourth Marine. Given this moniker as the novel merges fact with fiction, *Cryptonomicon* makes character adjustments to how the US Marine Corps was to conduct covert killing ventures for the State in both Second World War and Vietnam. Shaftoe’s search for Glory offers a form of resistance, as they rebuke the machinations of the larger military war machine and military industrial complex. Her goodness (she is young and a nurse) sheds reflective light on his and his country’s descent into a moral abyss. Shaftoe becomes a delusional animal in war. Unable to cover himself in Glory, she becomes lost to him; he becomes a revenge taker and spirals into the abyss, becoming a heroin addict. His farce-like simplicities often cover the depth of what is actually being portrayed in the novel (instrumentalism, war, death, rape, loss of hope in humankind). It is important, therefore, that we should highlight the weaknesses from the loss of seriousness, which James Wood argues is a weakness of a certain kind of postmodern novel, but not overlook how the author is attempting to engage with sophisticated problems of his own day.¹⁰⁵

Before moving on it is important to note that representation in Stephenson’s literary trajectory beginning from *Snow Crash* through to *Cryptonomicon* becomes increasingly distanced from the American way. Also, *Cryptonomicon* comes under the sub-intellectual line of criticism of historiographic metafiction, and therefore it does not make much sense to speak of a key core of American interpretive texts that open onto a transhistorical reality that fit the confines of genre fiction. The storytelling act of life and narrative in metafiction becomes not one of representation or realist investigation or interpretation, but rather its key terms are sourced from the radical and open affair of textuality. This technique carries similar weight to tactical strategies and perceived powerful conversionary ethics that sought to resist spectacular co-optation of organised forces of the capitalist economy. For taking one version of this type of what Rorty called a “spectatorial,

¹⁰⁴ For an altogether different account of a dialectical interchange in *Cryptonomicon* see Katherine N. Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects And Literary Texts*, 118-142.

¹⁰⁵ Wood, *How Fiction Works*, 115.

cultural left” attitude to literary invention and public policy in the US Stephenson was critically maligned.¹⁰⁶ The question of the impasse surrounding dead white males and multiculturalist talk about diversity is then not made so much a moot point in the novel as an interestingly complex one. Randall L. Waterhouse is Charlene’s boyfriend. The L. stands for Lawrence, and connects Randy to the wartime story. Through taking the name of his codebreaking grandfather Lawrence Waterhouse, the novel holds out a radically ambivalent critique towards Charlene’s poststructural trashing of white western culture. By omitting Randy’s father from the story (Randy’s father and mother do emerge but simply as a notional “Mom” and “Pop”) *Cryptonomicon* duly casts its own postmodern critique on fathers and sons, as it looks to challenge the presentist lapse and smug moralism of the academics.¹⁰⁷ This, in the novel—no matter how problematically posed—replaces the American Dream with an alien cultural criticism.

Cryptonomicon’s attack on male behaviour, especially when engaged on the information front in the Second World War, signals how white Anglo-American male patriarchs such as Roosevelt and Churchill became involved in wartime murdering sprees in information wars. Holding out its Anglophobic concerns towards the academics, a lot of the restriction on contemporary Internet freedoms is ultimately sourced from this old-world affair. Colonel Chattan is a man of rank and has “no difficulty issuing difficult, unpopular commands” (145). He tells Lawrence Waterhouse at a top-secret meeting, “Turing is presently engaged on at least two other fronts of the information war, and could not be part of our happy few” (145). In the opening pages of the novel Bobby Shaftoe takes issue with unpopular commands, and the novel casts its critique over latent aristocratic norms. I deal with Shaftoe’s reluctance to give orders in chapter two. Lifting the meaning of such a high profile Anglicized phrase taken from Shakespeare’s *Henry V* into the storyline, is in many ways telling of *Cryptonomicon*’s surface conversion to a postwar code of classroom ethical adjustment: one that berated America as a proto-imperial Empire that was in the process of picking some colonies up for itself.¹⁰⁸ However, in registering a model of dissent it offers the opportunity to reappraise narrative continuity within an originary political rhetoric and traditional ways of

¹⁰⁶ Rorty argued that those shored up by the politics of difference had lost in their virtuoso acts of self-expression most but the performative connections with continuing struggles against domination. See Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 146.

¹⁰⁷ *Cryptonomicon* critiques cold war ideology and transgenerational links between postwar fathers and sons. It similarly critiques unscrupulous information gathering methods in World War Two and data gathering methods in 1990s telecoms and software industries. In the wartime setting Earl Comstock, a spokesperson for corporate class interests, tells Lawrence Waterhouse that he has a “fatherly affection for [him] as the result of [their] work together” (895). However, as well as offering a critique on a regime of capital distribution in the military industry complex, it also takes cultural criticism to task for what it sees as offering an ineffectual politics. New political readings, such as psychoanalysis, semiotics and feminism were to defeat postwar sometimes known as cold war ideology up to a point, however, the novel also recognises that alongside the partial substitutions of Freud for Marx as a source of social theory specific modes of deconstruction have now lapsed into an institutional tendency reforming in Rorty’s “spectatorial Left” approach towards politics and culture. See Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 76; 146.

¹⁰⁸ For a postcolonial narrative in American literature see Lawrence Buell, “American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon,” 435.

knowing and seeing. I deal with returns in terms of the American ideology in chapter three and understand notions of intertextuality in Harold Bloom's psychological struggle to achieve selfhood.¹⁰⁹

Charlene is a fledgling deconstructionist critic. She is part of the organising committee and presents at the up and coming "War as Text" conference (50; 77). The novel ridicules the system of the conference and the university circuit presenting it as centralised network of organisations. Charlene's universities' "computer systems are linked into one. They exchange teachers and students. From time to time they host academic conferences" (50). Charlene's university and its centralised closed system are juxtaposed to "sprawling penitentiaries and three and four star hotel rooms" (50), suggesting the conference organisers and the university offers a narrowing theory of hope and optimism disseminated to and for the enlightened few. Juxtaposing the centralised closed system of the university's computer network and a prison and hotel system offers a way in which we see how *Cryptonomicon* is dealing with what it considers is routinized and formulaic systems. Randy, on the other hand, "knows that [...] system[s are] not closed loop[s]" (75). Similar to *The Diamond Age*, where Nell's closed system is not a closed loop, as the primer is "staffed from afar by an empathic woman," *Cryptonomicon* offers the opportunity to explore an alternative outside to closed systems, which is categorically different from the one the academics it argues choose to rely on when that system chooses to posit an outside to itself.¹¹⁰

The way in which the novel sets up the discord between Randy, the academics and the War as Text conference is to suggest that the novel sets out a problem with what Stanley Fish termed postmodern "antifoundationalist theory hope."¹¹¹ This moral conundrum plays a part in the conference. The conference sets out views of the postmodern academics as they attempt to unmask hegemony. To escape imperialist bondage philosophical assumptions have now been updated to postmodern theory that is nontrivial. Charlene attacks Randy because of his beard and her research centres on Unshaveness, which becomes a signifier of male patriarchal aggression. This scene although comically set out draws attention to Randy's ruling forms of (habit) consciousness based on an unseen ethics of privilege. In the academic's posthistorical denuding of meaning of the

¹⁰⁹ Harold Bloom and Richard Poirier both appropriated Emerson in the face of poststructural neopragmatism seeing in him the only hope for our imaginative lives and to point to something beyond scepticism, to possibilities of personal and cultural renewal.

¹¹⁰ See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 45 for the comment on *The Diamond Age*.

¹¹¹ Fish argued "neither empirical generality nor thematic novelty is enough to make an argument theoretical in more than a trivial sense, that is, in a sense that marks it as importantly different in kind from other critical arguments. Theory in a nontrivial sense always consists in the attempt to stand outside of practice in order to govern this practice from without and this strong (foundationalist) kind of theory is the kind whose coherence we deny." In terms of antifoundationalist theory hope we see the moral conundrum *Cryptonomicon's* writing poses for the academics as they look to shore up their theories of difference. See Fish in Knapp and Michaels, "What is Pragmatism."

subject Randy's art of self-governance is deconstructed. Charlene and the rest of the academic crowd reduce him to a social position to unmask hegemony. Rorty argued how

many self-consciously postmodern writers seem to be trying to have it both ways – to view masks as going all the way down while still making invidious comparisons between other people's masks and the way things will look when all masks have been stripped off.¹¹²

In their treatment of Randy as a placement of power the academics follow the anti-humanist stridency evident in humanities departments throughout the 1980s and until the mid-1990s. The novel, read from antifoundationalist theory hope, draws attention to the antihumanist critique of the symbolic self associated with foundational structures of American bourgeois humanism, and draws attention to the notion that Randy's ability to commandeer a notion of the whole self was modelled out of cold war consensus politics.

Highlighting a shrinking public sphere in terms of "antifoundationalist theory hope," and academic freedoms that face growing pressure from the technological centralisation of economic and political power, the novel brings together two contemporary strands of postmodern theory: an end-of-history narrative and the politicised culture-critique of historical memory. Charlene's openly hostile movement from the secular discourses of modernity to *writerly* practices of postmodernity allowed the deployment of *écriture* to redefine all rules that embellished the civic religious principle of Emerson's proverb that "nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind."¹¹³

¹¹² For this and the Stanley Fish quotation see Rorty, *Feminism and Pragmatism*, The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, 12-13.

¹¹³ It is an important aspect of this thesis to see what type of mind *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle*'s styles of writing bring back to the reading process. As expressed McGurl argues how *Cryptonomicon* fundamentally re-creates the archetypes of the racial unconscious in its own image. This is levelled at *Cryptonomicon* in terms of its uses of points of view. Because *Cryptonomicon* offers a mode of ambiguity McGurl rather than see this writing style in the deconstructive attitude towards literature demonstrates how its writing on minority voices carries within it the classically modernist technique of impersonality. He argues how this technique was rotated into a minor position as the postwar university enabled students to break from an elitist aesthetic to find their voice in theories of textual performativity. McGurl sees *Cryptonomicon*'s staging of a point of view in the postmodernist style as ultimately damaging to progressive aspects of postwar education, and from a different angle somewhat equates *Cryptonomicon*'s writing with that of the white supremacist Forrest Asa Carter and his uses of the practices of higher education. To be able to see into an author's mind, which is arguably what McGurl attempts to do when offering his critique of intention, can also lead to a phenomenological interpretation. The idea to use Emerson was to link the author to returns in the novel that covet a singular ideal sovereign agency. McGurl, we can argue, sees *Cryptonomicon* opposing whilst also reinstating this value and brings forward a complex argument on how *Cryptonomicon* brings back the romantic conception of genius and with Emerson's omnivorous egoism of the imperial self. For McGurl, *Cryptonomicon* capitalises on the theories of pedagogy that played an ambivalent but central part in the countercultural imagination. This imagination became tied to a downside: the anti-institutional political excesses in the 1960s. *Cryptonomicon*'s conflating this type of excess with a mode of criticism that was working to re-gear the school for the systematic reproduction of original persons for McGurl actually destroys the genealogy that links the gesture to the social positions and racial interests of white progressives i.e. a racial ideology in its own right. McGurl looks to reverse engineer the processes of these links by restating the author into the narrative at least as a function of process. Speculatively we can add this is to ward off the crude attacks that are now being placed on cultural diversity as failed critical response to the

Historically, and because inferences can be made to strands of German idealism in the novel, rather than Emersonian society tack to the physical link from which John Locke made a blueprint intuition for Emerson became the source of truth where individual perception would illuminate the structures of the world.¹¹⁴ The turn to influence studies in this context is significant. -Allan Bloom argued how the critical juxtaposition of postmodern relativism with Locke's physical link to the blank tablet of the mind had disastrous consequences in American university contexts.¹¹⁵ Emerson's turn to imaginatively localise civilization was to bring out potentiality embodied in the representative American. The break from an Emersonian literary and historical tradition in the arts and the contemporary movement in the humanities to a politics of the image and reduction of the political to the cultural is a reduction that the novel presents as critical theories weakening rather than enhancing literature's power to teach and challenge readers.¹¹⁶

As *Cryptonomicon* rises to the challenge of relentless outside pressures from marketisation, another theme of hope emerges. This time it is in the wartime setting, and which counters the academics'

increase in inequality in contemporary environments. For the quotations see Emerson cited in Leitch, "Ralph Waldo Emerson," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 718. See also Lentricchia, *Ariel and the Police*, 116.

¹¹⁴ My initial readings of Stephenson links Emersonian thought traced through George Poulet's phenomenology of reading where the attempts are to pose a literary critique of intention. McGurl significantly updates terms of how to resituate the reader's of the kinds of writing that ask to be called literature and the postwar writer back into contextual alignment. A contact with Emerson's "sovereign agency in the citadel of subjectivity" on the other hand can follow in the tradition that sought to 'undermine at all costs – whether lordly or bourgeois - European privilege.' My literary critique of intentionalism found many problems when attempting to develop a frame of reference though Poulet's psychologism. Foucault's notions of the initiation of discursive practices and the author function make this literary critique of intentionalism redundant especially when noticing how the novel's posthistoricist substitution of identities for arguable beliefs had followed the claim of this form of redundancy. In other words, returns to the past can be quite quickly dealt with insofar as they reform in the symbolic consciousness the imperial metaphysical perspective as the agent of knowledge production, which enables the subjugation or accommodation of differences and *differance*. It is this tension that I spotted in the text and it is a tension, as we shall see, that brings into view many complex critical arguments in Americanist Studies approaches to literature on the substitutions of identities i.e. deconstructions for arguable beliefs. My intention was to see how *Cryptonomicon's* writing resituated literature in the recent university studies on history. Again there were no offerings of terms that would situate literature in history form a style of writing that was "writing" in the postmodernist style reflective of deconstructions. Routes to the reading experience are never formed in a way in *Cryptonomicon*, where the reader can reach common purpose with the author through external processes of identification. Therefore I dealt with aspects of Leibnizian monism and Emerson's remapping of Leibnizian monadology in characters that follow similar understandings where comprehension of their internal logic cannot be given by their outwardly (mechanistic extension) forms. This was to offer a literary critique of intentionalism but was always off the pace. These readings, among many others such as externalities that should shape characters internal activities that never confirm to a Heideggerian reading and psychological phenomenology or a reading that would turn this over for a Husserlian-type transcendental one of how certain characters can form within Kant's disinterested purposiveness of form that approaches the beautiful and the good directly "but only in intuition reflected upon, not in its concept, as we do morality," were specifically to relate the language in the novel as not going strictly over to playing the text in a European poststructuralist sense. American transcendentalist Emerson rejected John Locke's systematic empiricism holding instead to a Leibniz-like monism, which in turn held to the unity of the world and God. And although I state that there is not necessarily a theological argument to be drawn from *Cryptonomicon* there is a search for monistic unity, or in modern literary fictional reading terms a desire for consensus.

¹¹⁵ See Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*.

¹¹⁶ Guillory wrote: "the reduction of the political to the instance of representation, and representation to the image is only the first step toward a political critique of the literary curriculum to say that it is a medium of images. This mode of canonical critique reduces the curriculum to such a medium and thus to a mass cultural form. In this sense the critique of the canon betrays its determination by certain postmodern conditions by those conditions in which media images have the central ideological function of organizing our response to virtually all aspects of our lives." See *Cultural Capital*, 8.

theories of optimism and postmodern suspicion of all dreams of return. Lawrence Waterhouse, Bobby Shaftoe and Goto Dengo motivate the action in these scenes and form part of an interracial and positive plot characteristic. Through their cultural montage the novel finds its place in larger multiplicitous whole. A value (rather than fictional) judgment taken on their relationships informs us that white America was not only built from capitalist models of aggression and colonising instincts, which the academics look to pin on Randy. The wartime characters present a foil to the academics. Biographies are sincere. The moralising Dengo, the becoming aware psychological motivation of Lawrence, the dehumanisation of Shaftoe, and his unwavering belief in working things out are transformed into a larger narrative that not only wards off the “high” irrational logic of the academics but offers a narrative that supports America to counter contemporary antihumanist strategies to denude the historical subject of referential meaning. Charlene’s constructivist view, where language and self-description are key, is considered a social “con[struct]” (77) and not much use in motivating actions. Charlene sees her critique of male behaviour as a tactical point to engage with a society in which it is increasingly difficult to distinguish the natural from the socially constructed at any point. Kivistik as the name of theory in the novel wryly induces a thought process in Charlene that is not hers, and she is cut off from an intellectual appraisal and artistic appreciation of books and symbols of natural beauty native to American understanding and representation (77). What is cut off from Charlene’s viewpoint, as she reduces a symbolic image of America to an economic variable, is the functioning and positioning of the school and how the institutional site of canonical revision mediates its political effects in the social domain.¹¹⁷ Through Randy’s alarmist resistances to theory in which the world is viewed not simply as a linguistic construct we see how tyranny rather than constituted in cold war bureaucracy is now constituted in Kivistik’s neorelativist critiques and the university’s promoting of mass liberal communication methods through dubious uses of theory. This challenge draws focuses on dividing rather than cohering forces that emerged between postwar radical college professors and average American citizens like Randy.

Cryptonomicon’s is to reacquaint the reader with a pre-postmodern critique of postwar and Cold War American society. It mixes idealism with social criticism—and often imagination for its own sake, as allusions to Lawrence’s dream of the Hindenburg airship disaster in the opening passages confirm (18-19). It can be argued that its primary engagement with a historical background is not

¹¹⁷ Guillory draws out what he considers a false enlightenment when he writes: “The work of art was crucial for political economy’s founding distinction between use value and exchange value. The conflation of these two terms in current anti-aesthetic arguments betrays how much present critique of judgment has forgotten about intimate historical conditions between aesthetic and economic discourses. The cost of that amnesia is a kind of false enlightenment and restatement in altogether more reductive terms of a relation between the aesthetic and the economic much more interestingly and problematically engaged in 18th century moral philosophy.” *Cultural Capital*, xiv.

Hitler's "hellish empire" (193), and thus giving a very modern take on the Holocaust novel, or America's Cold War project that looms large with the likes of Alan Turing disappearing from Lawrence Waterhouse's view into the "realms of classified" (123), but the anxiety felt towards the selling out of educational freedoms in the university's mergers with big business and the private sector. The novel openly engages with the dominances of wartime and aggressive business interests, and ensuing proto-imperialist legacies of the US as it took over from the old-world in terms of military and economic power. The Philippines were largely brought into American-styled domination in the twentieth century as they were labelled unfit for self-management and duly considered as part of the white man's burden. However, as we will see, the attack on US paternalism in *Cryptonomicon* presents itself only in so far as it is to offer a renewed connection with hope in the present. Through differing perspectives of a handful of characters and small groups, we begin to see how questions surrounding theories of optimism is diverted away from the Sixties New Left claims on progressive educational opportunities and democratic reform and directed towards institutionalizing impulses and murderous abstracting perspectives that centre in wartime Europe. Pushing against what the novel considers is the reification of historical processes as Charlene takes fringe countercultural movements and New Left activism into the graduate school *Cryptonomicon* to supplement a somewhat blighted story of heroic freedom fighters creates distance from knowledge informed by the hegemony of the subject position: a presentist lapse that is now imbued in the American university professor's complex politics of posthistoricism, and which the novel characterises as suggestions from the state.

To get more of a feel for a novelistic utopia and how resistances are formed to State instrumentalism and corporate managerialism, which the novel caricatures now inherent in the university system as an institution, and which, in turn, it presents as the commitment to the dissemination of founding European practices into a continuation of corporate capital by other means, Michael de Certeau, in his *Practice of Everyday Life*, criticised Debord's method of revolutionary engagement.¹¹⁸ Debord attempted to bring truth and historical authenticity back into the world of semblances. Aligning Debord to a dogmatic approach when it came to complex social realities de Certeau argued that his flaneur type acts of resistance had taken on the spatialising properties of the imperial essence. The point here is not to argue the pluses and minuses of de Certeau's neorelativist critique of Debord, but to argue that *Cryptonomicon* delivers a similar judgment on the high-powered academics. It is their abstracting visions infused with anti-intellectual link ups and New Media in information economies that now imbue the objectivist

¹¹⁸ Leo Marx argued how a certain group of Americanists handed over unintentionally the "UR" coding in the conception of America to an elitist corporate standard. See Marx, "On Recovering the "Ur" Theory," 118-134.

interpretive method, and theory, whether structuralism or capitalism, for Randy, is the remedy of difference.¹¹⁹

Cryptonomicon's non-academic characters resist a new type of corporate overview discretely tied to themes of information and postmodern relativism, and take to the streets to fashion a form of self-protest. Randy will not take a cab in Manila, much to the detriment of the sex workers and other cabbies, preferring to walk everywhere (88). This theme of walking, which Rebecca Solnit argues does not have a radical history in America, rather than be tied to an avant-garde deformation of form through flaneur-type acts of resistance, offer direct contrasts given in spatialising objectives taken from aeroplane flights.¹²⁰ This is highly suggestive of a latent anxiety in the novel concerned with incoming threats into and out of America. Working from the technical point of view of narration is ways in which we see the novel interpret away US divisiveness. The aeroplane as a symbol of freedom and futurity is a device that can highlight the novel's political aspirations.¹²¹

Cryptonomicon takes on an imperialist overview when characters make more use of the panoptical overview.¹²² Spanos writes:

¹¹⁹ Reverting to Benn Michaels's argument on liberal racism and how it appears in cultural pluralism we see how *Cryptonomicon* reflects Michaels's position. Charlene's liberal racism is a product of her cultural pluralism and her anti-essentialist views on Randy's commitments to personhood are in fact considered in the novel as a form of racism that carries within its viewpoints all the subjectivisms and imperial essences *Cryptonomicon's* writing locates it in the cultural pluralist perspective. Finding it difficult to lodge an appeal with the academics that can challenge their subjective opinions, which they believe are no longer opinions that compel disagreement but something that must be brought into Randy's opinions and views of himself. This recourse to difference in the novel is in short the subjugation of all differences into views on social construction that Randy believes is based on very redoubtable data. In sum, Charlene's non-essentialising posthistoricist position is just as essentialising as Randy's yet she chooses to deny her contradictory position none more so reflected in her hiding her cache of bodice ripper novels in the basement of the house she shares with Randy. In short, the replacement of cultural identity as a replacement for racial identity has not in fact replaced the essence of Charlene's partial or contradictory interests. Choosing to hide these interests a nocturnal furtive secret enforces Michaels's antitheory argument that cultural identity is a form of racial identity.

¹²⁰ Here again we see how *Cryptonomicon* becomes a vexed narrative. It critiques the views of the academics for their unwillingness to offer value judgments however at the same time the novel prefers to use a similar recourse to difference as it offers its own disagreements not through opinion or disagreement but rather through the difference in point of view. Michaels writes the point of appeal to perspective in this context eliminates disagreement. McGurl revises this understanding and argues how the appeal to perspective is a classically modernist technique, which rotated itself into the staginess of the postmodern novel to enable a textual performance of vocal authenticity for the "other" writer. Because McGurl argues Stephenson is a white writer that stands in for other narration he argues how its use of ambivalence hides its own racist genealogical links and ties to the male-dominated and misogynistic modernist literary establishment. McGurl, in short, is worried how a novel like *Cryptonomicon* ties its frames of reference to recent cultural alignments to readings of race and racial identity in the university yet in many aspects sees how its racialised narration destroys many of the internal lines of differentiation that were in fact the orderly appearance of new subfields in the humanities. See McGurl *The Program Era*, 56, and Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 15.

¹²¹ This fear of threat by incoming airborne assaults on American soil highlights a state of anxiety, which in turn can be reflective of a general feeling of insecurity in America, as its increasing military aggression on the world-stage was being fed through aerial outrages. See, for instance, Robbins, "Introduction: American Novel Dossier," 1-10.

¹²² Although McGurl argues how *Cryptonomicon* brings back into the text a reverse racism a systematic understanding of this charge is at best considered only briefly. What I mean by this is that *Cryptonomicon's* characters display many of the deconstructionist philosophies. Although deconstruction perhaps at this moment does not have the valence as a political project when viewed from the site of political defeat we can give quite a full and comprehensive reading notwithstanding McGurl's argument of the novel in its attempts to overcome a male oriented misogynistic public sphere. Although this as suggested no longer has a political orientation it nevertheless can offer a full accounting of the

The European consciousness, which has become the burden of an exceptionalist America to assume in its betrayal by the Old World is essentially an imperial consciousness, insofar as it has, from the beginning, been oriented by a metaphysical perspective.¹²³

We meet resistance to high-minded ideals in Bobby Shaftoe when he is “trudging among [his] platoon” (94). However, when on a plane ride to carry out a secretive wartime mission for the government, missions that no longer make sense to Shaftoe as orders have been turned over to steering media, his plane is shot down, and a man of rank is mutilated. A Bahktinian ethos of vulgar exuberance is given as Shaftoe stands in Lieutenant Etheridge’s quivering giblets (180). This grotesque projection upon wartime spatialising objectives casts aspersions on high-powered academics in the tradition of the grotesque. Like the Lieutenant, the academics are uncritical recipients of orders, and are tasked in the novel as highly inflexible when dealing with matters close to the ground. Those that do not display adaptability, or do nothing at the pretence of doing something (this is more seriously iterated in the enemy Italians who let Shaftoe and his band of political assassins move unhindered in their country in wartime), often come to a grotesquely humorous end.¹²⁴ The extreme flexibility overlaid onto the Philippines and its peoples, which becomes synonymous with democratic vitality and ideals that repudiate high cultural norms, counters the reification and obfuscation that forms a central tenet of the academic character’s backstories.

The academics *fly* in for Charlene’s conference from old and new world centres of privilege. Their new spatialising objectives are connected to more forms of technological domination. Digital media studies, for David Golumbia are a “First World Culturalism.”¹²⁵ His understanding offers further reifications of what Thomas Streeter calls Internet enthusiasms of the 90s.¹²⁶ In short, the novel represents the digital strategies of the academics as just another form of technology, and one, more

theoretical moves novels were trying to make to break from the classically modernist orientation of impersonality and the literary critique of intentionalism. This systematic accounting of deconstructionist acts in the novel is beyond the scope of this current essay however a more sober accounting of *Cryptonomicon*’s uses of the posthistoricist substitution of identities for arguable beliefs could offer a basic platform to view and review the current situation of discourse. This is notwithstanding the sophisticated antitheory arguments and newer resistances to the right’s attacks on left conceptual thought.

¹²³ Spanos, “The Question of Philosophy and Poiesis,” 152.

¹²⁴ The Swedes and the Finnish are also blasted for their listless and hypocritical nature in war in the novel.

Cryptonomicon threads a link to this listlessness through character association with Kivistik. A non-conflict attitude is disparaged and connected to the non-conflict oriented approach of the academics and the “postmodern unwillingness to make value judgements” (709). These connections are drawn out, as Julieta Kivistik’s unknown son could be college professor Kivistik. His initials represent G(unter), E(noch), B(obby). Each of these characters has a relationship with Julieta. However we are never quite certain as to who is the father of Julieta’s baby but we can muster a suggestion that Julieta Kivistik is synonymous with leading poststructural critic Julia Kristeva and the novel’s intended pun on the postmodern existential dilemma.

¹²⁵ Golumbia cited in Lennon, “Gaming the System.”

¹²⁶ See, for instance, Streeter, “The Moment of Wired.”

or less, in the tight grip of traditional media dominances. The poster furore surrounding the Second World War veteran in the novel becomes an “Official Object of Controversy.” (51) The novel’s engagements with the veteran’s sensationalised image is highly suggestive of the way TV and traditionally-styled journalistic acts were used to knock the stuffing out of postmodern Leftists who fought for the underdog in terms of revolutionary modes of becoming or being.¹²⁷ A similar disillusionment about the private appropriation of “free information” and the Leftist views on challenging these concerns comes as Randy and Avi’s business call over the Pacific Ocean (23) is given a conversational ethos of money markets. Following what Katherine Hayles calls “the dream of information which beckoned as a realm of plenitude and infinite replenishment” the narrator tells us “Randy used to be fascinated by software, but now he isn’t” (53).¹²⁸ In the novel not only are the postmodern academics tasked as some kind of standing disposable reserve for the old-world, but their concept of information as a utopian dream follows closely spurious telecoms deregulation initiatives of the 1990s, and the billions that went missing in this big gaping hole. Randy and Avi act as a salient reminder of the individualism built into the rhetoric of free information and explosive growth in telecoms, and more saliently the telecommunications scandals of the US in the 90s.

The academics, notwithstanding their civilizing mission to convert Randy, attach a problematic ethic of duty towards his bunch of techies. These techies are maligned for happily living in and of blithely accepting what Charles A. Reich considered the corporate state.¹²⁹ Randy and Avi’s social restraint is made problematic. In their attempts to erect a data haven in light of the Philippines’ lax democratic laws, their status as sympathetic fictional protagonists is in doubt. The novel will not rejoice in their American identity, giving voice to Rorty’s concerns over Stephenson’s unpatriotic behaviours.¹³⁰ *Cryptonomicon* instead focuses upon how the Philippines were becoming heavily impregnated with western expansionist legacies as the telecommunications and free market revolution of the 1990s ballooned into what Thomas Frank argued was “the most fabled New Economic field of them all.”¹³¹ *Cryptonomicon* wants to open the whole fictional account to challenge customs and assumptions around institutions and greedy corporations—not only of the present, but also on traditionalisms that invoke the past. *Cryptonomicon* is therefore not a straightforward indictment of the poststructural academics as it attempts to invoke the revoking of

¹²⁷ Newfield argues that associations that uphold the naïve antirealism connected to literary and cultural studies came from the medias promulgating of the literary academy’s lunatic disbelief in the physical world. See Newfield “The Value of Nonscience,” 511.

¹²⁸ Hayles, *My Mother was a Computer*, 62.

¹²⁹ Reich delivered damning counterculture indictments on education as means of repressive indoctrination and looked to change repressive systems through non-traditional means. See Reich cited throughout McGurl, “Learning from Little Tree,” 243-267.

¹³⁰ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 4-6.

¹³¹ Frank, *What’s The Matter With America*, 40.

freedoms from civilizing exploits in the US.¹³² Information legacies, the delegitimation of knowledge and Second World War triumphalist narratives are brought into these scenes, as the official history of the war is overturned and the benign aspects of modern technological development are infused with Big Business and the university's seceding to corporate power. All of this further dehumanises the Little Man, now characterised by Randy.

The imperial rhetoric of the civilizing mission imbued in flights and "killing zones from above" (540) are countered in the wartime context, as the author engages in third person limited narration with Lawrence. McGurl argues what is gained from third person limited narration is experiential intensity.¹³³ Narrative structure is important in these scenes as it becomes a mode of realistic interpretation; dramatic contrasts are made through Lawrence's often-confused states, leaving the reader open to what the character is feeling and seeing and describing. Lawrence's thoughts are

¹³² Lawrence Waterhouse's World War Two experiences bring into historical consciousness the politicised culture critique of subjectively negative experiences of theoretical expansionist models. As expressed theory that is nontrivial in the guise of expansionist legacies are built from within predominantly European wartime legacy. Expansionist experiences manifested in and through the character Lawrence are doubly posed through a trans-generational relay and conflicts in his interpretation. These via his subject position link the novel pedagogically to contemporary American environments. The latter link when tied to Randy's story relay the richness of cultural critique and postmodern scepticism towards wartime instrumental uses of higher order levels of communication. In the novel the tyranny of America's bureaucratic system reflected in Earl Comstock who looks to build a new-old styled Star Chamber system become adumbrated into disciplinary measures. Postmodern scepticism towards unscrupulous information gathering methods of World War Two is similarly represented in Avi's paranoia of the digital age upon which the contemporary environment in *Cryptonomicon* is largely built. In turning down the offer to join Earl Comstock's new National Security Agency and what resembles the American dream Lawrence is offered the job at the NSA because he is good at keeping secrets but declines pastoral property ownership (house in horse country) and modern conveniences in relation to material goods (a new Hoover). Lawrence is an ambiguous figure in the critique of Americanism in the postwar context. He sets out on the one hand a transnational representational critique of the image of American national character the tyranny of bureaucracy and of instrumental reason as the chief problems of American society however he also offers a trans-generational link between grandfather's and sons. The digital connection is always made tenuous in the novel as Avi tells Epiphyte corps group that they live in a world of real people pointing to a map of the globe. This suggests disenchantment with the medium of information protocols dedicated to world peace. What is more interesting is that the total indignation of Avi and Amy towards injustice is countered with Randy's weak passivity. His model of a "weak feeling" against injustice resounds in affect theory's counter-conceptual claims to strong emotions of negative critique. The novel in this sense always oscillates between a new progressivism and the fear of anti-essentialism. See Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*.

¹³³ Because Lawrence can only speak from limited experience through the third person narrator we see what the character really feels not what she says she feels. Thus the novel adds irony through simple point of view tactics. This reinforces the limitedness of a central character's point of view. Thereby, when we rotate this viewpoint through the posthistoricist substitution of identities for arguable beliefs Lawrence and his community's isolation in the wartime context just as Epiphyte Corps and Randy are in the contemporary context becomes a source of radical posthistoricist identity critique on the triumphalist template. Lawrence's stages the retreat from the permeation of the military into all aspects of his life. He is a soldier greeted not welcomed saluted not honoured as he is drafted to his new military position in information retrieval. Lawrence no longer has a ship after the sinking of the *Arizona* and *Nevada* at Pearl harbour and becomes valuable to the war effort only in that he is instrumental in the new great man game. Like Bobby Shaftoe Lawrence is flung into situations beyond his immediate comprehension or control. In a moment of rye pre-Kennedy nationalistic self-observation Lawrence wonders to himself after hearing of Alan Turing's departure to England to work in the realms of classified what uses his country would find for him. Similarly we see that Although Lawrence critiques the classical centre in a politics of the image the novel is at pains to never allow the reader to enter or relate to the character Lawrence as a feeling being until the last few pages when he destroys the Arethusa transcripts. This thwarts Earl Comstock's claims for full system's control. Lawrence, Bobby Shaftoe and Randy all share similar character traits in this aspect as they from doubling effects with each other, which in turn isolates the importance of their community from the larger belief systems that circumscribe their personal commitments to national politics. For notions on third person limited narration see McGurl, "Understanding Iowa: Flannery O'Connor, B.A., M.F.A.," 540.

directly contrasted with war, paranoia, Bletchley Park and Wartime Lipstick. Each theme is driven out of context, and challenges to customs and institutions are made. Vanity, reflected in Lipstick, is taken out of context and challenges the vapid nature of celebrity academic culture and the romance eroding effects of their new civilizing mission. The academics disfigure an image of a Second World War veteran with lipstick and the novel draws this scene together with a grotesque image. Wartime lipstick is left over “from whatever tailings and gristle [...] once all the good stuff [animal fat] had been used to coat propeller shafts” (141). Bletchley Park and heroic individual quests surrounding information legacies are similarly given a grotesque styled exuberance as the novel attempts to expel its old world anxieties. Its old-world gables are covered in “bird’s shit” (193), and the motorcycle farts its way past such fabled towers as Lawrence turns up. The sign of filth in particular is not something Americans usually associate with such a place of earnestness and recognised wartime historical importance. Because this response can also be seen as a response to America’s Cold War bureaucratic project, invoking *Cryptonomicon* in simultaneity of meaning can offer Americanisation in the multicultural critique of American ethnocentrism characterizing the dynamics of American culture as a multiculture with various conflicting dimensions of cultural difference and social heterogeneity.¹³⁴ Conversely it can transform a symptomatic sense of the exilic condition into a fully knowing one. I deal with accounts of formal exile in chapter three.

McGurl knows that to return to a naive empiricism from the perspective of a “completely discredited foundationalism” would make him sound “goofily anachronistic.”¹³⁵ Instead, and paying homage to the impasse of the pluralist agenda, McGurl does not seek to covet returns to a singular ideal of Emersonian sovereign agency, but looks to reinstate reductions of the author back into the narrative at least as a “function of process.”¹³⁶ By returning the reading of literature to an

¹³⁴ As I attempted to show in the introduction *Cryptonomicon*’s narrative can sit on an uncomfortable and dangerous boundary line that offers the elision from a national into a transnational perspective with intersecting cultures formed at America’s inception. Conversely, it can follow routes to meaning through Bercovitch’s Puritan rhetoric. The former intersecting narrative can be traced in the work of either Berlant or Paul Giles’s criticisms’ of Bercovitch’s nativist pluralist homogenous semiotic.

¹³⁵ See McGurl, “Pluralisms of Postwar American Fiction,” 129.

¹³⁶ I argue that the problem McGurl sees with cultural pluralism is in terms of its conceptual errors i.e. the *race problem* become the *race* problem. What I mean by this is that cultural pluralism as marker of difference and a way to ward off racism has been co-opted by white writers like Stephenson that have destroyed the genealogy of its links with progressive reform. This is what McGurl ultimately argues is the exacting of the revenge of the low-brow being taken out on the middle-brow for its failed intellectual response against elitism, inequality, racism and so forth. McGurl then rather than return to a notion of supplementing the text to ward off further counts of critical interpretation of his argument and when divorced from its author and contingency of its origin to make itself free for new relationships takes what I consider is an argument from Michaels. In sum, McGurl is not so much as interpreting intentional meaning of the text but changing it. Michaels argues “thus the act of creative supplementing would be an act of creative writing producing not a new interpretation of the text [...] but a new text.” In short McGurl is writing himself into historical record not by giving two different meanings to one text i.e. postwar literary production (the common object) but by changing this text’s meaning in alignment with nationalist culturalist significance and historical importance. McGurl can return to the past not with another interpretation of what that past meant but rather from a new context to review the past or what he calls long modernism. McGurl even alludes to this new common object of past and present when he states that “this is the difference that his book (and fifty more years of literary history) would make in our take on the

institutional *a priori* that is not, as Foucault would suggest, as carceral (or, Emerson suggests, perverse), McGurl in my view solves the postmodernist scepticism of all dreams of return.¹³⁷ *Cryptonomicon*, rather than offer a reflexively reflexive position similar to McGurl, often attempts to reach the power of the American *a priori* by surrounding characters with the use of comic or tragic moments. These moments can act as a source of subjective identification with previous historical production. Rather than this isolationist critique offer the posthistoricist substitution of identities for arguable beliefs in its mode of ambivalence it is distributed across the cross-generational narrative where the reader is returned to a mythical or transcendental awareness of America's past, through either processes of identification, or withdrawal from that identification. The reading-in of a distributed agency tied to monism and Emersonian self-reliance challenges the systemic idealism held in the Newtonian-Lockean interlock of constitutional time-space and abstract individualism made problematic in liberal ties with postmodern relativism. Similarly, a type of formal arrangement expressive of Leibnizian individualism challenges the individual appetite of the Japanese, which the novel exemplifies through Goto's unwillingness to be scripted into wartime expansion controlled by extrinsic forces.

Wartime codebreaker Lawrence is only second in importance in data encryption to that of his close associate Alan Turing. Randy and Lawrence Waterhouse are tied together with Turing as a community hell bent on promoting individual freedom whilst remaining true to civic life. These character's insights are to take what is best out of wartime heroic freedom fighters, and a transference of values tied to a reading of their behavioural response in the novel offer counter-assertions on the hacker and the digital computer as it was and still is tied unremittingly to the technocratic elite and mercenary corporate interests. In Lawrence we see that the historical descent of the hacker is given an alternate locus of temporal articulation from that which the academics place on Randy. Lawrence counters language of the momentary big pay-off for complicit co-option into technobureaucratic institutions of power. Although an instrument of informational think-tanks that put him to uses for war, he finally refuses to be bought off. He destroys the original Arethusa transcripts that would allow Earl Comstock greater systems control in ensuing Cold War Power Networks. He rejects Comstock's barbed offer of the American Dream, "the nice house in the horse country, gas stove and Hoover" (897), as palliative to join America's "new Black Chamber" (895). Lawrence not only is a symbolic characterisation of the attainment of the good enshrined in the

history of modernism." This has many divergent implications, such as what we intend is always what we mean regardless of when the author is divorced from the intention and contingency of its origin. In short, we cannot simply interpret the past away we have to change the text's (the common object) meaning. This as Giles argues has replaced racial identity as the persisting problem in US cultural criticism. See McGurl, "Understanding Iowa Flannery O'Connor, B.A., M.F.A.," 543, and *The Program Era*, 368. See also Knapp and Michaels, "Against Theory 2: Hermeneutics and Deconstruction," 53.

¹³⁷ See footnote directly above.

Declaration of Independence: as he internally and externally fights to ward off the abstracting process and its entwinement with a regrettable old-world context involving state domination and belligerent homophobia (Turing and Rudy are regarded as inferior beings in both British and German contexts) he also sounds out a ringing un-endorsement to the large payoff to individuals living in the inherently pluralistic conditions of postmodernity.¹³⁸ Charlene's group are individuals that fought against the excessive rationalism of the wartime elite, yet somehow their individual natures, like that of the wartime code breakers, have been turned over to a covert legacy of systems control. Lawrence, as one of America's Greatest Generation, finds within him the embodied civic-minded means that refuse the survival neatly repackaged back to him and rebranded in the form of commodities. Reattached to him is the return to a republicanism ethos of egalitarian attachment, and we see how the novel struggles with its own deconstructionist critique as it latently carries the traces of subjectivity, which its own critique up to a point attempts to erase i.e. that all men are created equally and sovereign of their own minds and have capacity to think. Whether this makes the author of *Cryptonomicon* personally responsible for the recreation of the archetypes of the racial consciousness in the US is what this thesis attempts to deliberate fully upon.

The radical theorists' call for a pedagogical curriculum is reflective of what Thomas Frank argued was a reactionary backlash to right-wing vilification on the basis of the *latte-libel*. This term is used to represent what Frank saw was a failure of the liberal left to respond to a reactionary conservative politics, as the Republican party took control of the moral high ground and attacked liberal democracy from the Right. Placing an emphasis on culture wars, Frank points out how "know-it-all college professors" and liberals from the coast were alienating the "heartland" common voter with their power-in-discourse methods on how to run America.¹³⁹ Frank's insights are helpful to illustrate why liberal thinker Randy finds it a fruitless tactic to take issue with the side of Charlene's civic view of humanity or that her of friends. The assumption that they are tied to a nativist response is compounded as we are to learn that they have developed "some academic jargon [...]" Randy would [n]ever understand unless he became one of them" (52). Although the academics fail to engage seriously with those outside the academy Randy represents the US imperialist mentality that the academics' condemn him for, and which they somewhat paradoxically confirm as old-world driven. On a plane flight, the northern Luzon rainforests, to Randy, are "just a shitload of trees [...]" [he] wants to bulldoze all of it" (507). This is on his third Business Foray in the Philippines. Through an understanding of Randy's business ventures, the novel links together an understanding

¹³⁸ In many ways we can see here how the novel brings forward the problems inherent in deconstructions in that it was a methodology that could be deconstructed in terms of its own findings. Both Foucault and de Man criticised Derrida's anti-philosophy for blindness that would lead to further commentary. See De Man, "The Rhetoric of blindness," 118; 139, and Foucault, "What is an Author," 1625.

¹³⁹ Frank, *What's the Matter with America*, 16; 20.

of real estate via the idea of private property ownership. On “Randy’s Second Business Foray” (80) he earned enough to buy and own the old Victorian house that he shares with Charlene, and we are told the Victorian house gave him “a feeling of safety” (80), which is scripted as part of the possessive individualism of Randy. Many critics of Lockean liberalism came to see this view as conservative and again we can see how *Cryptonomicon* is tied to the postmodern view on traditional ways of knowing and seeing.¹⁴⁰ Overall Randy is tolerant of others although this often leaves him isolated in the academic’s engagements with US liberal culture. Randy’s isolation, as he is unwillingly scripted into a new historical role and reinserted in the academic crowd’s fundamental reconception of the historiographic method, is countered through his relationship with others. The academics take issue with Randy’s forthright views with them, and we see how their academic jargon is often juxtaposed alongside their postmodern unwillingness to make value judgements. *Cryptonomicon*’s experimental attacks on themes central to postwar American culture are overturned in these scenes, and it is Charlene and her friends who are perceived as reducing the world to an increasingly mechanized or mechanical humanity.

We find out that it is Randy who wants commitment “by wanting to have kids” with Charlene but it is Charlene who has “issues with kids” (81-82). The novel has Avi tell Randy to “fill in the fucking blanks” as to why after ten years he has not married Charlene (28). Frankness of speech and civic and familial notions of duty through which the traditional individual in America first touched based with public interest (institutions and the State) explain how Randy and Avi, and Randy and Amy’s relationship challenges assumptions on the dominant anti-humanist stridency in the contemporary university. As the novel moves closer towards an anxious understanding of the erosion of traditional freedoms, either in Charlene’s cold hard professionalism or academic cohort Nina’s promiscuity (85), there is a retreat or even a recreation of an almost Southern will to order.¹⁴¹ Richard H. King, writing on the Southern response to abstraction argues,

what is wrong with modernity [for Southerners] can be encompassed by abstractions such as individualism, reductionism and materialism. For Lytle, in discussing Warren’s *All the King’s Men*, the issue is “the inadequacy of the autonomous mind” (112), the individual cut loose from family, community, social order, and the “tradition of fathers.” Montgomery defines “Yankees” to be “those who are given to

¹⁴⁰ For a retort to scholars that belittled foundations on the basis of John Locke’s conjoining of liberalism and property rights in the constitution see Diggins, *On hallowed ground: Abraham Lincoln and the Foundations of American History*, 48.

¹⁴¹ The sexuality of grad student Charlene and academic Nina in the group is a problematic source in the narrative, and relays a link to how Allan Bloom understands the great books of western thought had been devalued in the contemporary university as a source of wisdom and how sexual habits of modern students had lead to their inability to fashion a life for themselves. A sterile social-sexual habit is given to Nina as she attempts to catch Randy’s eye at the dinner table (85) while Charlene is painted with an inability to fashion a life for herself as she decamps from Randy to set up house with the older Yale Professor (578).

wilful, aggressive pretences to innocence, wherever and whenever they are born”(13).¹⁴²

Randy’s protestations to being ousted from history and labelled an elitist technocrat can infer upon him King’s deep bred racial suspicion, as he is pushed to any familiar intelligible ethnic or religious group loyalty. With it, the novel captures a distinct set of meanings for the regional philosophical, and, more importantly, as we will see, the “white” faculty history of postmodern America.

Cryptonomicon’s aura of seriousness (as mock contrasts often lighten some of the more top-heavy claims in the novel) is arranged as searches are mobilised. Although not adding any particular suspense to the plot (as the novel is too heavily involved with getting across numerous ideas) these searches present a foil to the academics’ posthistorical discourse. In a storyline that takes him to the strangeness of the Philippines a travelogue of local customs and greetings cuts across the novel’s spatial properties, offering a distinct narrative counter-assertion that throws focuses on the academics’ spatial imaginings. Realising and describing the Philippines’ past and present complex urban and rural dynamics through Randy, a narratological allegiance begins to be held with distinctive intermixed sociocultural (and topological) elements as the novel contrasts the Philippines in a number of dramatic ways. Randy leaves America and Charlene. His journey can follow a number of themes which stand in an oppositional reading to the academics’ takes on racial otherness, not least because of its lengthy discussions about local customs and sustained scenic descriptions. As others have argued, nature, books and action carry a distinctly new-world recipe that can lead to a cultural nationalist program.¹⁴³ These elements in the opening pages of *The Baroque Cycle* (as Benjamin Franklin plays a cameo role to devalue classical education through a noncosmopolitan and pragmatic application) testify to such tendencies in Neal Stephenson’s fictional writing.¹⁴⁴

Tiger economies in *Cryptonomicon* attempt to replicate American style democracy at the expense of becoming “economic laggards” (866) in the surrounding environments, and this engagement throws a portent of seriousness behind the comic relief placed on Charlene’s American based pluralist perspective. Also rather than learn from direct experience or hard work (Randy explores racial otherness at first hand in his journey westward and southwards quite a complex statement in itself as it hold connotations of American manifest destinies), the novel criticises the academics’ lack of honesty and industry. Charlene turning her back on the image of the American dream is characterised as not coping with a problem head-on; she submits to institutional blindness in the

¹⁴² See King, “The South and Cultural Criticism,” 703.

¹⁴³ See Buell, “American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon,” 423.

¹⁴⁴ See vol. 1, *Quicksilver*, 7-15.

form of Kivistik. Charlene is, in fact, doubled in exilic conversion: her affair with Kivistik is characterised as a spurious love affair between radical self-interest *and* Kivistik-as-the-name-of-theory. Both these traits are as equally collusive in eroding socially cohesive views from the immediate bonds of locality where frankness of speech and hard work is key. “Randy is forever (and without rancour) telling people that they are full of shit” (81). This is something the academics cannot abide believing that no person especially a white American and misogynist male like Randy should offer pretence to be “right or wrong about anything” (81). *Cryptonomicon* rather than succumb to the academic group’s nihilistic assertions on ideas of truth offers Randy as ultimately flexible in a non-specialized way. He unlike the academics gets to grips with despondencies of the Second World War telling Avi “quietly and without rancour” that he is “obsessed with the Holocaust” (25). Randy, in short is put forward as Emerson’s, “right kind of reader.” Rather than take up any specialised discourse or academic jargon he relies on himself to go to the local store and buy the books that would see him learn the art of computer language (81). Randy is to offer an audacity to the academics bringing his own truth system to First World digital media studies. On the other hand, Kivistik and Charlene offer, at best, what is construed as only technical support to the nation *qua nation* if their aim is to spread intercultural literacy. The academics, now presented as imagineers, want the key to success without the effort. Because they paint Randy with labels (84) the liberal worldview they offer is considered as an arrogant assumption, and a postmodern distortion that has intensified to a complete breakdown of all mutually recognizable forms that can give a dynamic world of interrelationships.

Although Randy’s incursion into the Philippines hatches into an imperialist-type adventure, (which invokes spurious deregulation initiatives and telecommunication scandals of the 1990s) this plot also mobilises a romantic relationship with Amy. McGurl sees how a problematic antecedent romanticism in *Cryptonomicon* comes through in a displaced representation of a paradoxical nonethnic ethnicity in postmodernist fiction.¹⁴⁵ Notwithstanding McGurl’s argument of how high ideals of Romance find their way into *Cryptonomicon* the genre of romance offers an alternative to critique the crushing hegemony of the US as it flexed technological prowess and global power on the world stage—without, however, completely discrediting a prospect of America that can renew hope and optimism. As well as the novel following scientific developments in warfare and then in social conditioning in the US, these conditions are ultimately not as important as the classless romantic adventures that underline a handful of characters that symbolise both real or utopian hope and the idea (and ideal) of America. Abstract denouncements of the State were already heavily shackled to old-world prejudices (and *Cryptonomicon* has little problem in understanding these

¹⁴⁵ See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 43.

abstractions as structural abstractions of old world ruling elites), yet the novel also criticises further abstract denouncements in the postmodern tendency, which have built confused social relations.

The aura of seriousness behind the novel's often vicious deadpan humour and comic dry wit (directed towards modern day global capital and its eroding effects on the human and human rights) emerges in the capitalist jobbing out of the space age death facility. Governor Alejandro tells Randy that to implement this facility was too costly and thus they have now many men waiting on death row (755-757). A postmodern theme of suspended or halted agency such as this arises on more than one occasion.¹⁴⁶ Because the novel has such little artistic unity it is through patterns that characters draw around them and the characters themselves that can tell us more about the novel's engagements with a sense of historical agency underlining its imaginative engagement with specific locales. Notwithstanding the economic expediency that has been placed on the death control that the US exports to the Philippines, and which is comically portrayed to highlight the dehumanisation of life characters form a counter to a State that organises death in such a way.¹⁴⁷

Cryptonomicon's inability to free itself from religious awareness points to the academics' inability to cope with religious awareness. In doing so its postmodern counter to State-death forms in a vexed way. Glory Altamira will not give death his due, as she occupies a subliminal state in the narrative, being neither dead nor alive in her contracting of leprosy. Bobby Shaftoe answers the amount of killing he has to do by searching for the missing dead body of the Altamira boy lost in the battle of Manila (775-776). Shaftoe deals with tragedy not with martyrdom, but with the affirmation of life. Shaftoe's death itself is simplistically portrayed. Through Goto Dengo, now Americanized and suggestive of the openly democratic nature of the early ideal of young American literature that would take any individual wishing to uphold its ideals and renounce its own (this Americanization is made easy in the novel as the Japanese are busy committing terrible atrocities and thus the autodidacticism of assimilation in the early ideal is also challenged in the comic portrayal of General MacArthur "Christianising Dengo's ass," [769]) we watch in solemnity as the "General Issue coffin containing Bobby Shaftoe is laid into the earth. [Dengo] crosses himself, staring at the coffin lid stained with dirt, and then, with some effort, lifts his head up again, towards

¹⁴⁶ For a very interesting take on realism in the contemporary novel in terms of fixed, suspended or halted agency see Mark McGurl, "Zombie Renaissance," review of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, by Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith, *N+1* (27th April 2010).

¹⁴⁷ The character of Andrew Loeb is the futuristic American apotheosis of this State-death characteristic in capitalistic formations. This is, though, not as well portrayed as Patrick Bateman in Bret Easton-Ellis's *American Psycho* (1990) as Loeb is only a weak or soft target in the novel. He is relevant, however, to the novel's take on postmodern American corporate life in the age of a deregulated capitalist world environment.

the sunlit world of things that live” (859).¹⁴⁸ The transcendent imagery of America as a founding democratic ideal and the love for the wise, the good and the beautiful, which provide the image of order, is strong here, and distributed throughout the entire novel’s experimental form. Through the fusion of opposites in the character Dengo, the novel challenges the postmodern politically-correct atheists and their upper middle class neo-Marxist, anti-democratic reform policies, which the novel accrues as having no answer to real suffering in this world. Although *Cryptonomicon* returns to religious awareness it will not give easy acceptance to a conservative intelligence and man’s intuitive biological quest for the divine. Glory is, after all, a pun on the Christian metanarrative of redemption, sacrificial goodness of the afterlife and righteous belief in America’s victory in the Second World War. Bobby Shaftoe at one time inadvertently calls his one lost love “Gory” (617). Also, Dengo’s fortitude and sincerity is given a sardonic (almost ludicrous) twist in relation to Bobby Shaftoe. Bobby Shaftoe in turn fucks Glory in the early stages of the novel in front of the thorn-clad figure of Christ (47-48). A strain of virulent white racism is always latent in Shaftoe, suggestive of how the author is confronted everywhere by the sexism, heterosexism, racialism or imperialism that the academics believe lies at the core of an American racial monoculture.

Characters that occupy in-between states such as Bobby Shaftoe (who should have died with the rest of his Fourth Marine core at Guadalcanal [94]) or his girlfriend Glory (who contracts leprosy and who should have died when the marauding Japanese army “took Manila” [128]) are indicative of more than experimentalism but how these characterisations are embodiments of a culture that oppose easy centralisations of modern technology within the state. Charlene’s specialised technical discourse and theories of individual powerlessness has eroded what little is left of this romantic charge of democracy and subsequent hope for the young in the US. *Cryptonomicon*’s vexed relationship with the postmodernist agenda characterises this Democracy as entering mass production in the US through very spurious means, such as the dehumanising transference of values (characterised through the literary teaching pedagogy of Kivistik). The academics are portrayed as using New Media via neo-Marxist philosophy to spread and expand the struggle for global literacy. The novel form offers their global spread of democracy within the centralisation of modern technical forms as antithetical to a founding ideal of America, and critiques this centralisation through the spatial narrative and its themes of exploration and travel, the mobilising of love plots (surrounding and encapsulating the ideal of what America is or was about to become before dispassionate and dehumanising objectives took hold) and themes that emerge surrounding the East Coast academics and co-opted university sites. There are, of course, many problems with these points of view—not least a point of view that sees humans as easily co-opted and manipulated as

¹⁴⁸ The idea of American Christianization Mark Twain suggested was akin to cultural death for the Hawaiian. See, Rob Wilson, *Exporting Christian Transcendentalism, Importing Hawaiian Sugar: The Trans-Americanization of Hawaii.*”

passive consumers of information. *Cryptonomicon* is not a science fiction dystopia in the fullest sense, and there is pursuit of an optimistic or utopian outcome and positive message through the small groups and a handful of characters. Reading in the American form these characters generate the Jeffersonian image of a genuinely free society composed of a hierarchy of self-governing units. Characters adhering to the original cult of liberal self-reliance where the impression was that the people could do no wrong and the government could do no right open and close the book in the novel's underlining of a positive and somewhat conservative message that can tackle problems with contemporary society, whilst also taking on poststructural thought and its failures in dealing with dangerous consequences of a globalised world.

If Stephenson writes for America as Rorty expresses, it is in terms of ambiguity, ambivalence and knowingness. The exception to this viewpoint is held within the academics' position, suggesting the novel's focuses and social criticisms are tied to this immediate literary-cum-social-cum-historical background. A non-specialised flexibility that is averse to the academics' careerism and competitive edge is given in Dengo. He "was a good swimmer but not the best, a brave soldier but not the bravest" (555). Similarly Bobby Shaftoe gains command in the military not by traditional means, which would also enforce Emerson's notion of the cult of the hero that turns into the worship of his statue. These men in the novel follow no ranking order, and are personifications of individuals rising not by any force of will, or by bending or appropriating another's will to their own reason, but by a condition of their humility. These characters challenge the simple minded militaristic chauvinism of Comstock putting humility rather than reason before contingency in a world ruled by old world terrors. Although we see a twist in the ethics of community that exploits notions of the irreducible presence of the other, *Cryptonomicon* never burrows deep inside the other of French theory to make its claims: rather, the language positively eschews such a deconstructive writing ethic. This can be seen not only when Bobby Shaftoe meets his missing son for the first time (and attempts to impart knowledge that is more sustainable and less jargon-oriented) but also as the language pursues the purpose and limits of equality (found in Charlene's academic feminist philosophies that theorists have now argued as the dilemma of difference).¹⁴⁹

The academics invoke Benedict Anderson's imagined communities as they turn the nation into a spatial conception.¹⁵⁰ The novel again adopts a postmodern tendency as it argues how making large scale distance as the basis for space is a complex and erroneous principle. In his everyday life theory, de Certeau looked to collapse the objectifying view by taking to the streets of New York. Randy, as with many other characterisations in the novel, collapses the panoptical view, by taking

¹⁴⁹ For an understanding of problems with theory see Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship*, 68-69.

¹⁵⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*.

to the streets or to the jungles of the Philippines. A point of view that is created in engagements with these fictional characters and far-off spaces, as they form their meaningful interactions with those close to the ground, draws out resistances to spatialising objectivist approaches bound together by cause and effect:

Shaftoe realises that his mental concept of what this mission was going to be like, as he reviewed it with officers in the LCM, bears no relationship to the reality. This is only about the five thousandth time Shaftoe has experienced the phenomenon in the course of the Second World War; you'd think he'd no longer be surprised by it.
(788)

A direct rebuke to the academics, Shaftoe is to create street-level views that shift emphasis away from grand narrative totalising perspectives. It is not only the military and business interests in *Cryptonomicon* that define these views. The novel suggests that the spatialising perspective, which can be traced back to Newtonian principles of cause and effect, is now firmly encamped not in astrophysics or the pulpit but somewhat paradoxically in the high cultural pluralist perspective.

Without a satisfying climax or clear denouement in the novel a more salient aspect of pluralism is delivered into the storyline when fed through Randy as a point of view of American socialization. His posing an objection to the way Charlene gathered her research statistics is brutally pushed aside as “counterintuitive” (76). Charlene’s derailing of any perspectives other than her own is countered, as Randy is to find himself in the Philippines. Where Randy offers a type of *bildung*, Charlene uses her time while he is away in order to get “her friends” (81) on side over the relationship breakdown. She “has been able to structure the discourse to her advantage, just like a dead white male” (584). The dead white male assertion is tied to Charlene in the bureaucratic nomenclature defined by new-styled managerial elite in the institution. This characteristic given to Charlene aligns the whole novel (and not just a handful of characters) to stand in reconsideration of the academics’ overdevelopment of morality in their talk of diversity. In the confrontation between the academics and Randy, he, now standing as an agent of power/knowledge production, displays an uncharacteristic bout of emotion; a humanist impulse he is seen to have lost in the years that he has spent living with Charlene. Being labelled a “technocrat” (83) Charlene’s “group” (27) scrutinise him as a figure cocooned from America’s recent cultural past, viewing him very much in a manner in which he feels as if “he were a test subject on the wrong side of a one-way mirror” (52). Randy’s short but indignant outburst as the academics attempt to force upon him a postconventional knowledge structure indicates a disaccord that the novel distinguishes as views held between contemporary academic projections of and on his social identity, and university presses that organise the faux radicalism of the conference circuit. The way in which the novel sets up the

discord between Randy, the academics and the War as Text conference is to compound the notion that the novel sets out a problem with postmodern theory and antifoundationalist theory hope, as contemporary academics sought to push for new relationships that would tie together more equally the environment and the individual, culture and self. What the novel largely fails to recognise is that its experimental energies are taken from their readings of literature, semiology and rhetoric.

Antifoundationalist theory hope is a complex characteristic written into the War as Text conference, and sets out the optimistic culturalist views of post-modern academics as they seek to unmask nationalist hegemony to promote new worldviews. Exceptionalist America is seen as a betrayal by old-world consciousnesses and the academics look to uncover it, step outside it, and then govern it as they round upon Randy. Deep strategies for ordering relations denoting an invisible imperialist structure are updated in Charlene's "beard work" (77) over which "three different Ivy League schools are fighting to hire her" (77) and which is characterised as "part of some academic jargon" (52). Her research centres on "Unshavenness as a signifier in WWII Movies" (77), and becomes a signifier through which we view Randy's links (Randy has a full beard) and associations to male patriarchal aggression (77). The academics' ideas are farcically portrayed, and the slapstick quality of the narrative at times broadens out onto the academic and the individual's capacity to form a view based on life that is not formed by the State or the fascination with the media image or spectacle. The creation of the comic moment as we enter characters through ridicule or farce or the grotesque often makes it harder to uncover the text's moments of profundity as it deals with the real horrors of war. The sinking of the *Nevada* and the *Arizona* is dealt with in a flat, deadpan (rather than tragic) style, with Lawrence traipsing about on the burning deck with his glockenspiel (Lawrence played this musical instrument before the attack). There is a passage of great beauty in this scene as Lawrence flings the musical instrument overboard: "a military lyre of burnished steel that sings a thousand men to their resting places on the bottom of the harbour" (64-65). However in the novel's rush to get its ideas across, the passage is often lost. James Wood argues how in Pynchon the making of "flat" characters, only to rush them away, comes at a real cost to the "final seriousness" of his texts, as "everyone is ultimately protected from real menace because no one really exists."¹⁵¹ Immediately after this scene (as Lawrence is whisked away in the novel's incessant story making) are Lawrence's first engagements with information theory. Sustained descriptive passages are given, that render in the imagination Immanuel Kant's supersensible substratum, where the power to ward off irrationality and horror is fed through the faculty of reason and the mathematical sublime. The horrors of war are not lingered upon, but some attempts are made to cast aside postmodern existential dread and rationalise such atrocities.

¹⁵¹ Wood, *How Fiction Works*, 115.

Often the emphasis to feel revulsion or pity is hard to tie to a single moment in *Cryptonomicon*, as it does not transpose the singular shock of the historical moment to the reader. This as expressed can mask the text's profundity leading to a reading of the grotesque and associated links with contemporary approaches to literary and cultural studies. The attack on Pearl Harbour, as seen through Lawrence's eyes is a case in point. The absurdity of Lawrence traipsing aimlessly around the deck of the Nevada with glockenspiel and support alternates between the singular compelling dramatic situation and the deterioration of reading through an open interpretation of the text. The throwing of Lawrence's glockenspiel overboard in the direction of the Arizona is replete with emotional depth. However, this moment of intensity can never resonate completely, as the arrangement of the narrative structure leaves no accumulation point through which the reader can explore the dramatic sequence. As also suggested, the novel does not fall prey to total indignation that isolates historical caution to the winds of mass distraction or the postmodern tendency to reduce complexity to the quick assimilation of the already known. This in itself can suggest that the story is complex and does not rely on the emotive transference of values, which would bring a sense of dramatic relief to the reader. Through aesthetical comprehension where the sublime is routed through the mathematical, the horrors, which we (through the senses) fear, can be overcome by the logic of the mind. If the faculties of horror through the concept of the sublime belong to the mind alone (as Kant suggests) then we have reason to ward off unavoidable suffering. This is a very complex (or a very old) association to make of intentionalism in Stephenson's text, but it is one way of making sense of attempts in the novel to make use of a mathematical comprehension of the sublime. In other words, *Cryptonomicon* tells a story of the unavoidable suffering destined for men, and that there are oppositions in life that can never be overcome. Reason alone is a way to ward off the fear of an incomprehensible object – the evil that men do, which is formless, vast and spacious. Often in Stephenson's text there is a display of recognition when the illogical (machinations of evil corporations and evil men) can be given full or absolute comprehension. Through Randy, in turn, we see how fundamental elements of philosophy are foregone, and with it the academics' conclusions are stereotyped to formulas that have befallen the whole American university system, and a specialised technical discourse that trained graduates to prepare for technical-managerial roles rather than that of public intellectuals.

The novel derides Charlene and her feminist politics and her dispassionate criticism of Randy. Her condemnations on his patriarchal views are overturned somewhat as she has a stash of "bodice-ripper novels" (762) in the basement of the house that she shares with him. This "huge cache of paperback romance novels, none of which Randy had ever seen before" (762) form a microcosm of

the macrocosm of the European worldview. Spanos argues that the ideal European text mirrors in the microcosmic form the macrocosm posited by the speculative metaphysical consciousness.”¹⁵² The old Victorian house is isolated in the novel. Anything devolved from the old-world such as Randy owning this house is antithetical to a community minded “stout yeoman righteousness” that can be drawn from Randy.¹⁵³ Again an Americanist response can be tied to Randy as he posits resistances to a bourgeoisie mechanics of motion motivated by personal self-interest. This argument in itself can be fraught: Lukacs saw how it was the bourgeois that conducted a violent struggle in interests of its own class, using every means at its disposal, including those of imaginative literature. However, there are differences between the emergence of a European bourgeois formed in liberation and an American one formed in liberalism. Extricating *Cryptonomicon* from two strands of liberal ethics is important and I deal with this aspect in chapter three. House ownership, ideal texts, and class-interest surround and encapsulate the academics’ use of posthistorical discourse which in turn draws complex space around Randy’s perceived ruling forms of (habit) consciousness and the academics’ implicit critique of exceptionalist America. Through the flawed characteristics of Randy, the novel, by not drawing an ideal attachment to his characterisation, opens up to further interrogation the content of the academics’ posthistorical discourse and its use of metafiction.

In their treatment of Randy as a placement of power and knowledge production, the academics follow the anti-humanist stridency evident in humanities departments throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Like many other contemporary literary critics, Patricia Waugh now feels it is time to draw a line under the period of high theory and deconstructionist ethics and to merge with the empowering discourses of literature and literary value.¹⁵⁴ Jurgen Habermas responded to postmodernists at the time, calling them young conservatives. Tying Stephenson’s outlook to Habermas’s perspective, the novel draws attention to the lapsed potential in antihumanist critique, and false reformism of the university as it based new social commitments on rejectionist politics of modernity. The novel similarly draws attention to the notion that Randy’s ability to commandeer a notion of the whole self was modelled out of cold war consensus politics. This latter critique historically locates the novel’s perspective within a community of American postwar poets, fictional writers and literary critics that forged transatlantic links and views and adjacent critical discourses of *différance* and diaspora, which positioned “America” as a completely discredited foundationalism. Although the novel offers its own critique of postwar (sometimes known as cold

¹⁵² See Spanos, “The Question of Philosophy and Poiesis,” 152.

¹⁵³ See Thomas Frank for how alignments can be made to Randy’s simplistic virtues invoking the plain people that are grassroots Americans. Frank, *What’s The Matter With America*, 16.

¹⁵⁴ See, for instance, Patricia Waugh, “English and the Future of the Humanities,” *Times Higher Education*, January 7, 2010, 32-37.

war) ideology, it reconciles the legacy of class-rooted politics with the necessary corrective offered not by cultural studies and poststructural theorizing (that postulated notions where social position and economic class would no longer matter or at least argued against in terms of ethnic and racial ties) but in commitments to an early ideal of America and new social movements. To Charlene's academic crowd (an apt moniker for this group as they become reflective of the homogenisation effects of theory on critical language and cultural uniformity) Randy's indignant outburst at being labelled a technocrat offers, at best, a primitivist reflection or nativist response to their politicised culture-critique. Being backed down into using "oppressed-person's language" as the academics criticise him for his old-fashioned views (84-85) the novel asks how far such strategies for deconstructing totalizing world views and promoting subaltern or minority perspectives have had the paradoxical effect of legitimating the world view such disciplines claim to subvert. What becomes most recognizable in *Cryptonomicon's* convoluted configurations is how the conventional narrative provides an eclectic mix of old-fashioned ideas about US cultural continuities to halt the ethic of dehumanising brought forward by the academics' broadening the scope of power finding resources for hope in the primary care of people, families, neighbourhoods and small groups.

A way to analyse the author's anxiety towards ruling class minorities is that cultural separatist movements isolated the traditional American self from him or herself. These stakes seem too high and *Cryptonomicon* falls back into a form of American uniqueness. Cultural politics challenged the traditional liberal worldview for its non-inclusivity of poor Americans, Native Americans, Black and Mexican Americans. The idea here, following Mark Rupert's line of enquiry, is that although not making a direct tangible link to strains that existed in a one-sided affair between giant car plants and its white workers (imperilled privilege) the novel typifies this type of anxiety through its mobilisation of an anodyne cultural pluralism that was used to quell resistances to new changes, in what was arguably a harshening of the democratic order and erosion of traditional liberal policies in America.¹⁵⁵ While most academics and Leftist intellectuals were following postmodern distortions on culture and society, a Left according to Rorty that the oligarchy in America dreamed of, the adverse effects of the importation of radical French philosophy became apparent in the Reaganite Revolution of the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹⁵⁶ Many new deregulation initiatives were being installed whilst the Left (linked to postmodern epistemology) were fighting economic selfishness from a labile and optimistic culturalist perspective, and as such had an ineffectual politics in which to halt the rise of economic selfishness in this era of capitalist growth.¹⁵⁷ The crystallisations of an ethnopoetics and politics of difference was already the product of administrative processes designed

¹⁵⁵ See Rupert, *Producing Hegemony: The Politics of Mass Production and American Global Power*.

¹⁵⁶ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 139.

¹⁵⁷ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 76.

to facilitate domination according to Ayers and separating economics from cultural reform was a false directive in a struggle for power to have one's voice heard.¹⁵⁸

Cryptonomicon deals not only with microscale instances and managerial perspectives in Charlene's discourse as a spurious product of administrative process, but also post-Second World War liberal consensus. Literary space surrounding Randy's connections to the past in the reading process is theoretically distinct from space surrounding Charlene and her radical critique of American literary history. In her new Left moralism (and in a bout of unselfconscious presentism) she has fallen out of love with romantic belief in the idea of America, and in Randy she sees his white humanist-aesthetic liberal side as little more than a right-wing construction; it is a reflection of the violated core of the principles of democracy. Leaving Charlene and meeting Amy, Randy's posthistorical position in which he is given a new subject position is expressed as a class position. This is brought to the forefront of his intellect by America (Amy) Shaftoe's ability not to be culturally or economically determined (104). Charlene, on the other hand, is determined. Power, in her mind, is a new determining basis for everything. We see how in the novel this is to become detrimental to old republican values of liberty and virtue and erode any form of political meaning from subversion. In her intimacy with Continental post-Marxist thought, class politics for Charlene become radically new informing cultural concepts, and she begins to show deep resentment and antipathy towards Randy's problematic self-fulfilment. It entails the arrogant assumption that life could be made fundamentally better by coming to grips with reality in this public space. Charlene and the academics feed into Charles Reich's countercultural conception of how the school was dangerous to the individual.¹⁵⁹ Rather than a politics of access to educational institutions, postwar academics became concerned with the very nature of education as an existential process. Randy's easy-going relationship with technology alongside bureaucratic organisational structures is problematic for Charlene. However her attempts to negotiate between cultural, technological and older-style class distinctions becomes infused with separatist strategies and ideological essentialism that a postmodern liberal Left took towards politics, education, and culture. This left, which replaced a Deweyan pragmatic participatory Left, as it existed prior to the Vietnam War, was seen as essential to extend the domain of the political and political agency into the (formerly a-political) pastoral space of higher education.¹⁶⁰ *Cryptonomicon* conducts its own quizzical analysis into Charlene's

¹⁵⁸ Ayers, *Literary Theory: A Reintroduction*, 206.

¹⁵⁹ See McGurl, "Learning from Little Tree," 260.

¹⁶⁰ The potential space that was overdeveloped in the postwar expression of liberal pluralism undermined Dewey's pragmatic approach to progressive educational values. This was the idea that the child could learn from experience and only from others as they relate to experience. Dewey's left was therefore pragmatic and participatory as it geared the child to mobile self-expression and curiosity for the ends of successful socialisation. We can see how this challenges the presentist lapse in the ensuing discourse that took this child centered progressive educational impulse not into cohering forces but in dividing ones. Therefore, "a truly democratic project was assimilated by the private schools and

oppositional identity politics and absences of class analysis that centred with much greater ease in Continental and British contexts.¹⁶¹

The socialisms the academics play out in the novel are, from Randy's perspective, nothing more than a liberal ruling class extension, part of a false abstracted totality that is exclusionary and alien to the individual's specific wants and needs. Randy is terminally locked into this new isolating perspective. He, however, is given a characterisation that symbolises hope in the primary cares of people's needs, and attempts to redress in his novelistic journey the sense of personal loss of American freedom's slippage into further reification. The socialism from Europe, as the novel testifies in its condemnations of the academics' adaptations of neo-Marxist philosophy, cannot incorporate within its understanding the burgeoning spread of the globally oppressed or unincorporated. The understanding of self-reliance and self-sufficient reason, combined within motivating actions of small disparate groups, act as counters to the academics' existential philosophies on the very nature of education and their largess and arrogant assumption that to sit around all day and talk about such things would eventually alleviate the problems that they foresaw. A form of communal self-government is never taken from these groups and there is always an act of resistance that builds a model of real hope. It is in language used between Amy and Randy and their group that there is a wider remaking of a participatory democracy. Charlene and her academic friends, on the other hand, in their language and style, invoke demagogue potential within language games and new media as they offer a black-and-white-almost Gnostic-refusal of any emancipation narrative, particularly in so far as they stem from the Second World War. Epiphyte Corp., Randy's

away from the immigrant-oriented schools." The scientific experimentalism of Dewey's educational practice was rotated into a heightened respect for difference but only insofar as it taught a newly burgeoning middle class to recognize their privileges. Progressivism's second suburban phase for McGurl circles back to alter progressive educational thinking even as it was directed towards minority populations who would be recruited into large numbers into the suburban middle class. In short the belief in this new educational phase was a belief in personal creativity however how they achieved their values actually was not by making their decisions consonant with that reality. In other words the progressive experience had been co-opted into the rhetoric of the dominant culture of the US. For Bercovitch as for McGurl however this was always varieties of co-optations varieties of dissent and always varieties of co-optation and dissent. Randy confirms to the Dewey approach seeing how his creativity could take him away from recognition or sacrifice and the democratization of the romantic concept of genius. Stephenson's attitude for McGurl however is to miss how individual worth or personal experience or self-sacrifice was to go through a second phase as it became tied to practices of higher education working to re-gear US schools for the systematic reproduction of original persons (i.e. the substitution of assimilation for cultural diversity that would emphasise the conditioning effect of a liberal-progressive institutional context on an elitist aesthetic discourse). *Cryptonomicon's* way to reverse genius and the cult of the hero turned into a worship of his statue as Emerson argued and castigated European geniuses who have an undisguised contempt for common virtue standing on common principles is very much like Emerson to reinstate the unbounded hope and omnivorous egoism and from McGurl's point of view this turns back the clocks on a further reform movement to democratize such genius. In short, we can see how rather than do more interpreting McGurl offers a sober accounting of the substitution of assimilation for cultural diversity or in Michaels's terms what the common object really was. Still in other words, McGurl offers a reshaped analysis on what the project of cultural diversity meant consonant with that reality.

Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 8-9.

¹⁶¹ Ayers writes that resting class as an issue away from Marxism now look perfunctory. He also argues that on the Continent and in Britain the New Left critique of existing class iniquities had an easier passage into public spheres because of an already existing Marxist tradition. See Ayers, *Literary Theory: A Reinroduction*, 95; 194.

telecommunications company, counters dispassionate academic slogans, telling its members that they still think and feel in a world of real people (188). Its projected business interests are always tempered by the tragically obsessed Avi, who although keeps the need for the understanding of real people alive through his experience of the camps, turns the camps into an overriding gesture towards the building of new solidarities. Avi brings real people into the equations of Epiphyte qualifying projections, but at the same time he isolates the experience throwing the individual back upon themselves through traumatic points of exchange. Attached to Avi is the negative incommunicability of this event. However, we are to learn that it is within the action of others (Gunter, a German U-boat commander is to wilfully and without coercive force sacrifice himself for Rudy, a homosexual) that there were just as many men and women who died to halt this terror, as there were conscious and unthinking supporters of it.

Randy and Amy function as a foil to the academics' attempts to speak to and for the masses. Between their perspectives a love plot is mobilised, and a reconstruction of educational and cultural reform can be made. Charlene believes that she and her academic friends act as radical disjunctions in the older system characterised by economic determinisms, thereby adding tactical counter to alleviate its harsher mutations and forms. Marxist historian Ellen Meiksins Wood's quotation here is useful to reappraise Charlene's problematic historical revision of an unreformed capitalist economy. Wood writes:

It is worth noting that the totalizing tradition has not prevented Continental culture from spawning the most complete disintegration of the social world in the doctrines of post-structuralism, including fashionable currents in post-Marxist theory. Here contingency has become the fundamental principle of social life and history, and all the critical totalizing power of social theory has been definitively suppressed. At the very moment when the world is coming ever more within the totalizing logic of capitalism and its homogenizing impulses, at the very moment when we have the greatest need for conceptual tools to apprehend the global totality, the fashionable intellectual trends from historical revisionism to cultural postmodernism are carving up the world into fragments of difference.¹⁶²

It is in Charlene's misplaced pessimisms that she turns away from active engagement. Through the relationships Randy enters into, we are afforded viewing space on a thinning of the imagination that has ensued among academics, which encourages them to become bourgeois. The academics have lost sight, in the context of mass cultural production and in their failures to recognise their own ideological dependency of economic selfishness' become embroiled with computer-generated symbols. Complex genealogies in the novel upbraid the academics' mediated critique of surrounding structures. Bobby Shaftoe is made an instrument of wartime capitalist aggression sent

¹⁶² See Meiksins Wood, *the Pristine Culture of Capitalism*, 92-93.

out to protect business interests. This time the specific business interest is Lawrence Waterhouse's efforts in data encryption. Shaftoe is made complicit (as the Marine Corps were historically) with state run incursions into new uses for language, yet he is also a maker of symbolic poems. The narrative aligns his figurative use of language to the way in which he resists systemic orders to conduct his own more personalised wartime missions.

In an article for *Wired* Stephenson expresses his complex relationship with the “whole western freedom thing” and American sense of democracy.¹⁶³ He understands that “America is the hardest to ignore instantiation of a cultural and philosophical system that can be seen in a few other places” (866) and refers to it as such in *Cryptonomicon*. He imbues the Western freedom thing as a contemporary shining light in modern world affairs. In this article on China he upholds symbolic virtues of his country reappraising American collusion in joint venture business capital arrangements with China to the scene of the dead pro-democracy student with his brains splattered out over the square. The whole western freedom thing is a complicated affair compared to some Asian countries, Randy muses, and comes to the conclusion that in Asia “no one gives a shit about human rights” (866). As Stephenson says in his article “for a Westerner to trash Western culture is like criticizing our nitrogen/oxygen atmosphere on the grounds that it sometimes gets windy.”¹⁶⁴ It is, of course, hard to ignore that Western freedom was imbibed with Nazism. However this threat was channelled into the greatest allied force ever assembled to halt Germany's attack on the democratic underpinnings that created Western society. *Cryptonomicon* can be said to take its underpinnings perhaps a little ashamedly from the very foundations of American thought. It pushes for the large *and* the small, and brings to light not simply postcolonial power relations between men and women (the Bletchley WRAFs and WRENs, Montgomery, MacArthur etc) but also upholds moral integrity in the American economic system. This is a strange amalgamation in fiction, as not only does it tell us how the world works (turn fiction into social theory) from an Americanist perspective, but also it taps into historical memory, which can give a feeling for this perspective that rises above the poststructural trashing of white western culture.

Randy is one of a long list of Waterhouses who stands opposed to the primacy of economic relations. America, in a reading of his specific interest-group politics, is still (or can be) a shining example of hope, democracy and policies for peace and freedom. But first, the novel suggests, it has to untangle itself from the confusions of the postmodernist agenda over whom and what constitutes a threat to further multicultural and democratic reform movements. What begins to emerge through Amy's primary care of Randy and his subsequent displays of emotion towards her is the signalling

¹⁶³ Stephenson, “In the Kingdom of Mao Bell,” *Wired*.

¹⁶⁴ Stephenson, “In the Kingdom of Mao Bell,” *Wired*.

of an order of relations with others in the novel that are not governed by the calculation of competitive advantage. The novel, rather than do away with old US cultural continuities, retains linkages, commitments and realignments in certain sensitive areas such as public morality, (Bobby, Glory) religious intuition (Laura and Scott), and orthodoxy of language, (Amy and Randy).¹⁶⁵ *Cryptonomicon* tries to hold onto its literary “little man” cultural capital and responds to dissolutions of active reception and living response that can turn on an effective community of experience. It recovers specific understandings of key core values of an American humanist tradition, where self-sufficiency, self-reliance, personal independence and creative reading and writing practices (greater freedoms) have come undone in intellectual link-ups with news media systems of communication, transmission and dissemination. Its contemporary take on the Spectacle does not alter old Americanist subjectivist beliefs, but rather emphasis is drawn towards those who have misapplied the deconstruction of the Cartesian *cogito* with radical culture critiques on the storytelling market.¹⁶⁶ My position when reading *Cryptonomicon* is similar to Guillory’s when he argues that those who have abstracted discourse from literary contexts reform continuations in “the great game of cultural capital.”¹⁶⁷

The Conference Poster

In this final section I cover a few of the themes from the introductory section, and demonstrate how anxiety in the novel shown towards politicised culture-critique is explicitly drawn from the academic conference poster. The conference poster shows a Second World War veteran denuded of

¹⁶⁵ The issue of Laura and Scott arises in *Cryptonomicon* in relation to critical attacks on the academics’ secular constructions of reality (595).

¹⁶⁶ Highlighting Georges Poulet and what he calls Descartes “initial or naked moment” can find saliciencies in my reading of Bobby Shaftoe’s search for Glory. Separated from Glory, Shaftoe lurches from one frightening experience to the next. The way the novel deals with Shaftoe’s search and the way it organises a plot around this search for all its deadpan wit and humour invokes an anxious search for something one has lost. I draw distinctions as to how the author attempts to make writing again the American problem after thirty years of French radical critique. See Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, 14.

¹⁶⁷ Because my thesis will deal with aspects of McGurl’s closed systems reading of *Cryptonomicon* where high art moves into a larger cultural industrial system it is important to link McGurl’s literary studies insights into how Guillory viewed the emergence of a theory-canon as specifically a literary question having to do with the movement and transition of literature to what Raymond Williams calls a “new phase of civilisation.” Guillory writes: “we are in a position now to recognize that the career of theory had everything to do with the status of literature in a new phase of civilization.” Cultural politics and cultural theory is largely in Guillory’s view an opportunity to examine regime change in the redistribution, or granting access to cultural capital that the school hands out. In his words, it is not a political question but an institutional question which surrounds “the school’s historical function of distributing, or regulating access to, forms of cultural capital.” Bill Readings, on the other hand, took a distinctively oppositional view. He saw reversion back to a game of accounting in closed systems of exchange would restore the basic principles of Enlightenment modernity in a University that was developing toward the status of a transnational corporation. As I will come to argue McGurl tackles this problem when he recognises that Readings gets it “crucially wrong in seeing [the University] as a measure of bureaucratic efficiency alone.” McGurl argues rather than the University of Excellence facilitate the smooth running of the pluralist machine, insofar as American culture had become a corporate culture, it cashes out in the workplace as referential to something wholly other than itself. In this aspect new emergent knowledge will be produced when we learn how to read the postwar educational experience from a galvanised modernity. See Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 262-263; vii, Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 106; 164, and McGurl, *The Program Era*, 406.

absolute value and historical meaning. Through the poster, the novel challenges the reader on many assumptions, and not only the poststructural influence on making effective political claims on the functioning of social and cultural norms. Randy is a figure that does not, for the most part, work on the tacit assumption that America stands as technocratic monolithic force over the rest of the world—or if he does, the novel introduces this comparative dimension only to suppress it.¹⁶⁸ The academics for their part do not see themselves tacitly upholding suggestions from the state. They, in other words, like Thomas Pynchon's postmodernist Oedipa Maas, believe that the sheer febrile act of communication itself will bring the government down. In many aspects, the academics sign on to the Foucauldian Left point of view that argued to sign on to a political program was to be complicit with abuse or political domination.

The saga surrounding the poster in the novel arises as a Second World War infantryman is given a grotesque face-lift for an up and coming conference called “The Intermediate Phase (1939-45) of the Global Hegemony Struggle of the Twentieth Century (Common Era)” (50). The narrator jokingly relays that “this is a bit of a mouthful and so it has been given a pithy nickname: War as Text” (50). Scenes surrounding the conference hold many references to the state of the domain of the arts as useful for making valid interpretive claims on the social and political functions of cultural norms.¹⁶⁹ The conference poster reflects badly on Charlene and her academic crowd. They have flown to California specifically for the conference where a great deal is made over what the academic crowd and the conference circuit represent to the state of American democratic society in dealing with complex issues, such as pluralism, global and technologically oriented discourse, posthistoricity or Marxist historicism, and transnational capitalism. These complex issues are brought together in the opening pages, and the novel in part deals with easy or routine formulas as political institutions are reduced to theatre and politics to symbol manipulation in the space of new Media as they take up competing views on the Spectacle. Charlene's pluralist assumptions on knowledge are challenged further still as she utilises the positive critical value of the current mass media where the act of perception is enriched to the point of seeming to author the world it perceives.

As *Cryptonomicon's* plot is chronologically complex, we are introduced to Randy as he is flying across the Pacific on his way to Manila. Randy has already had his final bust up with grad student girlfriend Charlene “who actually gives every indication of being his *ex*-girlfriend now” (50). The

¹⁶⁸ See, Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections*, 5 for how the understanding of the revisionist impulse turned back on itself.

¹⁶⁹ The academics have divorced their criticisms social imperative from the art-impulse for the more expressive claims of ideology critique. The novel ultimately holds that this is an erroneous principal when attempting to reintegrate the intellectual commitments of the academic critics into public debate. I covered the debate on the art impulse or the loss of it and the academic relations in relation to this loss extensively in the introduction.

information or knowledge economy is where the academics dream of a vision where social position and economic class cease to matter, and is to arise later in the novel when the academic group typecast and label Randy an elitist technocrat. Randy and his business partner Avi are tied into the conversational ethos of money markets, and their association with telecommunications exploitations of the Manila data havens are characteristic of what the academics see as only one in a list of what is a very long and extended history of imperialist, capitalist and bloody aggression directed towards the exploitation of the Philippines. The novel itself does not form an injunction against the academics' reading of capitalist aggression, and indeed alerts the reader to such exploitative ends. Avi tells Randy that one of the oldest parts of Manila, "Intramuros," which means inside the walls, "was annihilated by the Nipponese in 1945" (25). Randy's rumination "inside the walls" provokes another awakening of historical consciousness, however, which tells Randy how America's material bases are being separated from the culture of its material social life (50). What is further brought into the scene in which the new class of intellectuals is already occupying and directing sites of the new cultural and information technologies is the conception of the "global village." The global village in this reading becomes metonymic of Lyotard's language games, where it was possible to celebrate the carnival of sociolects that called for the erasing of a common language installed in the populace by means of a privileged literary curriculum. It takes an understanding of the Philippines tragic history in order for Randy to ruminate on his own cultural past. The co-opting of his material social life is now being made complicit with academic endorsements of stylish consumer society. The academics talk confidently at the dinner table of their product and its planned marketing, and they somewhat unknowingly are closely engaged with the major supplying corporations (Hollerith, ETC, Hollywood) and the myriad new specialist agencies and their interstices.

The novel's simplistic or flat characterisations draw emphases towards the dispassionate tone of the radical liberal intellectuals, and their uses of the Internet. Theirs are largely dispassionate attempts to deal with social issues such as internal colonialization, information economy, posthistorical discourse and transnational capitalism in New Media spaces. Randy's outward displays of emotion shed light on anti-humanist stridencies, as the digital revolution deterritorializes human relations and the novel makes him ill-prepared for the proposition which encapsulates his American way of life. His movement through novelistic space, leaving America and making contact with others, acts as a foil to America's newest cultural reform movement. In relation to the academics, his flatness (he is largely unreflective, naive and idealistic to them) draws emphasis towards a figure that has been cocooned from America's recent cultural past but also towards those that have abstracted the historical subject from any forms of a Universal history. Spurious allusions are made as the academics seek to challenge traditional political methods previously critical of patriarchal

aggression. Turning away from direct political action associated with conflict, the conference poster, to make its statement, shows a photo of a “haggard World War Two infantryman” (50). Although this whole scene is comically portrayed, an aura of seriousness builds as *Cryptonomicon* resists the intelligentsia’s image of the Second World War veteran and their specialized academic jargon. The organisers of the conference sensationalise the image of the veteran. It is “worked over” by “an artist in San Francisco” (50).

He started with a black-and-white half tone photo of a haggard World War Two infantryman with a cigarette dangling from his lower lip. He worked this image over using a photocopier, blowing the halftone dots up into rough lumps, like rubber balls chewed by a dog, and wreaking any number of other distortions on it until it had an amazingly stark, striking, jagged appearance; the soldier’s pale eyes turned an eerie white. Then he added a few elements in colour: red lipstick, blue eyeshadow, and a trace of red brassiere strap peeking out from the soldier’s unbuttoned uniform shirt. The poster won some kind of award almost the moment it came out. This led to a press release, which in turn led to the poster’s being enshrined by the news media as an Official Object of Controversy. (50-51)

The “poster saga” (52) sets up a round of confrontations between Randy and Charlene and the academic crowd. In doing so, the novel challenges the state of the liberal arts education in America. The academics that come to stay at Charlene and Randy’s house show tendencies towards Kivistik that reflect upon culture wars surrounding postwar teaching methods. *Cryptonomicon*’s character assassination of the academics invokes Bill Readings’s comments on Guillory’s critique of Paul de Man. Readings expresses how Guillory “says some important things about the disciples of de Man, whose tendency to mimic the master fits in with the development of the technobureaucratic organization of intellectual life by linking a supposedly singular charisma to a reproducible technical rigor.”¹⁷⁰ The academics’ ingratiation himself or herself before Kivistik is oppositional to Randy’s “sappy romantic need for ingratiation” (331). Randy is accused of being a romantic on at least three occasions in the novel, which is considered patriarchal and misogynistic by Charlene in its unreconstructed state. Kivistik, on the other hand, is largely presented as a poststructural propagandist who gets by “parlaying [a] strongly contrarian view of the Information Superhighway,” which Randy believes is turned “into more airtime than anyone who hasn’t been accused of blowing up a day care centre should get” (81). Kivistik is consistently the aggressor in his contacts with Randy, and his statements on transatlanticism, cosmopolitanism, and diaspora as a critical response to capitalist globalisation, to Randy at least, are made without qualification and the novel presents the Yale professor with narrow-mindedness. Randy, excellently conversant with the Internet and encryption, presents a foil to Kivistik, yet it is the latter, with his newly-endowed cultural capital taken from the North American university system that is to win out in this specific

¹⁷⁰ Readings, review of *Cultural Capital*, by John Guillory, 323.

culture wars battle with Randy. The transformation of the Arpanet to the Internet is a message buried in *Cryptonomicon* that extends not only to business and civil government, respective in Randy and Avi's flight over the Pacific and the National Security Agency locked into laws of civil government, but now in the institution of the University.

Connected to the furore which surrounds the academic poster is the dinner table scene, in which middle-class research methods and politically correct misapprehensions and ineffectual politics are brought forward in the face of the triumphalism of the post cold war liberal capitalist discourse. Spanos writes:

The highly remarked impasse of the now privileged left-oriented thinking [...] whether that of neo-Marxism or new historicism or feminism or cultural criticism or postcolonial criticism or even that globally oriented “posthistorical” discourse that would “dwell in the ruins” of the corporatized university, bears telling witness to this ominous condition. So, too, not incidentally, does the spectacle of university presses (such as Harvard, Yale, and Duke, to name the most prestigious of these)—the traditional forums at least for originative, nuanced, and densely articulated thinking—competing with the culture industry in the global marketplace.¹⁷¹

We view the dinner table scene through Randy as he is brought to bear witness to privileged Left-oriented thinking of the academics. A blow is “righteously struck” (81) and landed when Kivistik labels Randy as part of an elitist technocratic group. In setting up these specific character traits we see how the author is informed by (and somewhat shackled to) polemics in 1990s culture wars. The culture wars were synonymous with the conservative Right's attack on liberal pluralism and the academic Left's dismantling of tradition, influenced heavily by influential structural and poststructural traditions. The then United States Secretary of Education William Bennett derided pluralist views for having left a “terrible scar across the face of America the beautiful.” Randy in many ways offers the opportunity to discuss Lauren Berlant's work, where this quotation from Bennett comes from.¹⁷² He, feeling imperilled by Charlene's inessential discourse, returns to a lost world of political hope and nationalist aspiration. This utopian horizon is built as Randy meets others on his novelistic journey. Bennett's polemics spelt out (among other things) the making public of a crisis in the humanities. Randy invokes more than a passing reference to Bennett's comments, expressing how out of touch Charlene's academic crowd really are with the common voter. “He knew perfectly well that if he were stuck in academia with these people, and the things they said, would seem momentous to him. But where he came from, nobody had been taking these people seriously for years” (81). The novel offers its critique on the academics' radical agenda into

¹⁷¹ Spanos, “The Question of Philosophy and Poiesis,” 165.

¹⁷² See, for instance, Berlant's, *The Queen of America*, 225.

colonialist and technocratic theorising by way of what it sees as a death by neglect in new media forms. For ordinary American Randy (at once a symbol of the disenfranchised white American feeling left behind by history and narrative technique that can get the novel's ideas across) this is made apparent in his contrasting media state with Kivistik.

Kivistik develops a culture wars parable. As Guillory's "master theorist" he invokes allusions to Paul de Man and the emergence of the reproducible academic star charisma that Guillory found so disconcerting.¹⁷³ The novel furthermore invokes allusions to de Man's anti-Semitic past, dramatising in farcical nature Kivistik's East Coast/Old World villainy as he comes to California to recruit Charlene. Allusions are made that Kivistik charms the disillusioned lower middle class liberals in American university departments.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, through Randy, speculative insights are drawn concerning how the US is becoming to be made up of many one-sided generalisations. Although they show the "postmodern unwillingness to make value judgements" (709) there are no pictures of grey in the academics' world-reality when it comes to Randy's frank exchange of views at the dinner table. Aggression typically associated with males has now been covered over by the morally squeamish professors with their non-conflict approach towards Randy's uncontrollable urges. One of the academics, Tomas, is appalled that Randy understands honesty and industry in this way: "that if you work hard, educate yourself, and keep your wits about you, you can find your way in this society [...] The proconsensus, anti-confrontation elements seized control of the conversation and broke it up into small clusters of people vigorously agreeing with one another" (85). The academics invoke allusions of the old-world judgements on the masses that were incapable of abstract thinking and concerned with little outside their circle of immediate experience. The critique of the individual's capacity to form a life view on personal experience attests to how the novel sees American freedom's slippage into reification, and alludes to how the modern technological concentrations of economic and political power have destroyed both American liberal and humanist traditions.

The conference poster and the scene at the dinner table draw attention to a lack of communication between those perched in "ivory towers" and those such as Randy.¹⁷⁵ Though current radical

¹⁷³ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 195.

¹⁷⁴ In a parallel Hitler made his strongest appeal to members of the lower middle classes. See Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited*.

¹⁷⁵ Problems with middle class pluralism are exemplified as the academic crowd look to overburden Randy with their dual themes of political correctness and academic jargon. Guillory argues that through the phenomenon of political correctness we can see the "paradoxical triumph in the university of an otherwise defeated liberalism." Rather than perform the necessary liberal pluralist cut with American elitism the way the novel deals with these elements point to Guillory's analysis of the "school's historical function of distributing or regulating access to the forms of cultural capital." The American university professors, as they are introduced into the storyline, offer the opportunity to explore a tradition of institutional criticism in the US. Richard Ohmann's pioneering study *English in America: A Radical View of*

pedagogical theorists call for a democratic curriculum, the academics show a professorial commitment to social transformation, thereby narrowing the implied audience to those teachers who already share their politics (and their vision of pedagogy as its appropriate instrument). Randy turns from the narrowing of the curriculum and tries to be a likable kind of guy, and “this is why he hates business. He wants to tell everyone everything. He wants to make friends with people” (107). However he was prone to “saying something undiplomatic [...] partly as a childish but fruitless tactic to get attention he craved from Charlene” (52). Charlene and Randy have been together for ten years but are not married and not committed (27). Their lack of communication is put down to the differences between the traditional view held by ordinary American Randy, who wants to have kids, and the portrayal of Charlene who believes “kids raise issues” (81). Charlene’s progressive teaching views and abstract conceptual poles on a parochial and misogynistic America, such as her semiotic deconstruction of men’s beards and her intellectual media project involving the denuding of meaning of the historical subject, brings Guillory’s understanding to bear on the novel’s critique of Charlene’s criticism’s social imperative. He writes

No program of multiculturalism will succeed in producing more than a kind of favourable media image of minority cultures if it is not supported at every point by an understanding of the historical relations between cultures. If the curriculum is to produce intercultural literacy, in recognition of the imbricated sites of cultural production, we must assume the context is nothing *less* than global.¹⁷⁶

The novel caricatures the academic crowd as offering only a pale counter to forced aggressions such as patriarchy within its diversity project. There is even a form of spectacle dissent in “computerphile Jon” who dares to challenge Kivistik (82). Jon is presented merely as cannon fodder and it is Kivistik’s spurious proposition that the novel wishes us to focus on. Politicised cultural critique is to become the spurious new proposition the US/State uses to encroach upon Randy’s American way of life. Randy, on the other hand, although made into a flat-depthless figure in relation to the privilege he holds, is to pool his resources of history and dissent from sites farther afield than the nation. Randy leaves America and the communication networks the academics support, as they in turn believe that they have liberated themselves from superstition and

the Profession (1976) argued that universities were not “ivory towers” following a disinterested liberal pursuit of research operating to produce pure knowledge, but the instruments of industrial and military research. However, rather than take the university’s overall complicity with the military-industrial complex further, and the notion that contemporary American literature is largely the product of the Research and Development University, it is the treatment of the university professors and their habits and inclinations towards theory and cultural work within the contemporary institutional framework that for my purposes warrants major concern. I argue the novel creates distance not dissimilar to Guillory’s thought experiment and *Cryptonomicon*’s aestheticism is to force a separation between the automated community of the crowd and the mechanical community of the technocrat.

¹⁷⁶ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 54-55.

unpleasantness. It is through this dichotomy that the novel explores the academics presentist lapse and subsequent waning of effect characterised in posthistorical discourse.

Charlene follows a specific model of the liberal arts education that denies Randy access to previous forms of cultural capital. To Charlene's crowd, Randy is a placement of power, which determines possibilities for other subjects, and no longer a subject that can determine communication. Randy, male, white and a technocrat, is an argot to feminist and post age scholar Charlene. Although the novel understands both the emancipation and loss of the self in the transition to postconventional identity structures, it is liberal pluralist Charlene's retakes of Randy's Renaissance humanism that is brought forward and which is seen to have reified what is a very long and extended history.

Charlene, being young, invokes allusion as to how her voice has been silenced, only this time it is the sleep of her negation that is being challenged.¹⁷⁷

The novel reflects on a behaviourist solution to channel inner activities like imagination and reason into a conditioned response. In Guillory's terms, the "pluralist strategy of institutionalizing the category of the noncanonical is equally incapable of grasping th[e] essential ambiguity of the school as an institution."¹⁷⁸ He writes:

But here we return to the fundamental point: pluralism has been able to affirm different cultures but not the fact that cultures are inseparably interdependent both at the moment of a cultural work's production and at that of its consumption. The question is whether or not the school is to acknowledge this postmodern condition. It is certainly acknowledged in the domain of mass culture, where cultural products are very often produced for particular constituencies, but where their circulation interculturally is virtually assured by the restless promiscuity of commodity exchange.¹⁷⁹

By denying a particularity of her selfhood, Charlene offers a flawed view of the history of America. Her knowledge, as an object of cultural capital and object of appropriation, takes an opposing reading as she utilises the positive critical value of the current mass media to voice her concerns. This positive critical value, as Charlene's academic crowd becomes "fully integrated into media culture mediating the desires of every class and group," offers itself in terms of transnational and global.¹⁸⁰ Everything that is bad about Randy stems from his localism and provincialism. As the

¹⁷⁷ On the sleep of negation that translates as the reification of historical processes Guy Debord wrote: "I must admit the others who later published new books on the same subject [the spectacle] demonstrated that it was quite possible to say less. All they had to do was to replace the totality and its movement by a singular static detail on the surface of the phenomenon, with each author demonstrating his originality by choosing a different and all the less disturbing one." See Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, 3.

¹⁷⁸ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 27.

¹⁷⁹ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 53.

¹⁸⁰ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 267.

novel creates a narrative that puts distance between the academics and Randy (“Randy does not want to move to the East Coast. Worse yet he has a full beard, which makes him feel dreadfully incorrect” [77]) it alludes to localisms symbolised in canon wars between the Northern coastal and the Midwestern Southern states (the Second World War veteran denuded of meaning in the conference poster hails from Kentucky). And this suggests—paradoxically—how the American (Right) saw an increasingly shrinking public sphere through commitments to globalised posthistorical discourse and diversity projects. Not offering a full blown nationalistic redressing as Bennett’s polemics in a book such as his, *De-Valuing of America: The Fight for Our Children and Our Culture* (1992) the novel can be seen as a rally against Theory and the glib theoretical abstractions which tended to dominate textual practice in the postmodern engagement with history.

Another poster is presented in the novel. This time it is in the London Underground. The poster shows a demure lady eavesdropping on a “naive young serviceman” who is “gabbing away behind her” (138). As Lawrence passes this poster on his ride to Bletchley he sees cables

Neatly bracketed to the stone walls in parallel courses. They are like the creepers of some plutonic ivy that spreads through the darkness of the Tube when the maintenance men aren’t paying attention, seeking a place to break out into the light. When you walk along the street up there in the Overground, you see the first tendrils making their way up the ancient walls of the buildings. Neoprene jacketed vines that grow in straight lines up sheer stone and masonry and inject themselves through holes in windowframes, homing in particularly on offices. Sometimes they are sheathed in metal, sometimes they are painted over by their owners, but all of them share a common root system that flourishes in the unused channels and crevices of the underground. (138)

Through the juxtapositions of the two posters, the novel draws new technologies into a cooperative end-of-history narrative. In part the novel characterises this conjunction as collusive with triumphalist Leftist discourse, and an otherwise defeated or fragmented liberalism driven to police the borders of its diminished territory within the university. The wartime poster offers the opportunity to think through the failures of the neoliberal worldview rather than collapse into superficial postmodern synthesis. In the wartime setting, a group is formed that challenges the entwinement of instrumental reason, technology in the form of new information technologies, and domination. A dialogic of the synthetic and indeterminate caught up in the flexible specialisation characteristic of post-Fordist working practices is further questioned: Bobby Shaftoe’s wartime remembrances of Glory act as complex critique of Charlene’s poverty of memory, and the novel provides a more inclusive social mix between diverse groups and gender distinctions.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ A complete and closed system of reason/meaning is worked out in the novel that excludes certain characters from Randy’s larger group dynamic. In the wartime context a group is formed that counters the instrumental use of reason.

Finally, and in a counter to diversity projects, Joel Pfister argues that Mark Edmundson in his *Literature Against Philosophy, Plato to Derrida: A Defence of Poetry* (1995):

Rolls up his sleeves as literature's public defender [...] irritated by the idea that theory and historicism presume to tell literature more than it knows about itself [...] Edmundson treats literature as an Emersonian individual whose aesthetic complexity has often been violated rather than clarified or enriched by theory and history.¹⁸²

Bobby Shaftoe reflects Edmundson's indomitable source of Emersonian human self-interest, which cannot be bought off by the big psychic melodramas of Hollywood and military industrial economy.¹⁸³ These social insights were still in their infancy in Hitler's totalitarian system, but guided the work of many later social theorists and orators that could appeal to hidden forces that could motivate men's actions. Bobby Shaftoe, Lawrence, Randy and Goto Dengo will not relinquish their hold on unique and individual takes on freedom. These characters—rather than exemplify social science's introductions into literature or Derrida's philosophical-cum-literary understanding of a community or social system bereft of any possible meaning—give voice to Jefferson's American ideal of a genuinely free society composed of a hierarchy of self governing units.

Because there is movement and fusion of American telos in characters that feed into *Cryptonomicon's* modern American and contemporary environment I have attempted to discern on which side of the postwar divide these characters rest. In chapter two I take a different approach to

Figures such as Bobby Shaftoe, Goto Dengo and Lawrence Waterhouse in turn forge transgenerational links and blood ties to Randy and his Epiphyte Corps group. Goto Engineering is to form a humane encounter with Epiphyte Corps. Amy is Douglas Shaftoe's daughter. He in turn is Bobby Shaftoe's son. Bobby Shaftoe and Lawrence Waterhouse are to challenge Comstock's instrumental use of code breaking exploits. In the contemporary setting Randy's bildung begins as the novel sets him apart from Charlene's anti-intellectual use of reason. Bobby Shaftoe disconnected from Himself in the early stages of the novel loses connections with his young nursing student girlfriend Glory. The rest of the novel for Shaftoe is surrounded in a tale of mock-tragedy where we are forced to confront the horrors of war through a complex creation of aesthetic distance. Randy is held in a similar suspended viewpoint as he is separated from the social constructionist view that avoids involvement with humanist contact. A reconnection with Himself is Poulet's point of view, and can be very useful in analysing searches in the novel. Poulet attempted to find within a phenomenological method reconnection with Descartes initial or naked moment. Poulet looked to restate unity in lieu of the New Critic's position concerning the biographical fallacy. Rather than this turn on the theological or the cosmological the inability of individuals to make connections in the novel points to how theory (Andrew DuBois states how the New Criticism was not devoid of theory) has obliterated the author's art, and more importantly a literary community of interpretation.

¹⁸² Pfister, "A Usable American Literature," 581.

¹⁸³ Shaftoe refuses the idea that while left stranded on Guadalcanal instead of a "giant lizard [...] he killed that Jap in hand-to-hand combat [...] the whole giant lizard thing is a classic case of projection" (114). Ronald Reagan is comically brought into the substitution of Freud for Marx (more possibly Lacan) as a source of social theory for war. He interviews Shaftoe (the sole survivor after a Japanese onslaught that takes place on the island) only for Shaftoe to rebuke the heroic status being offered to him (109-110). The novel sets out no further morale booster for either the Hollywood war machine and the culture industry or the extension of the canon debate into an erroneous politics of mass cultural production (110).

my reading of *Cryptonomicon* to suggest that it is a novel informed by culture wars. I further look to see what national form of cultural identity takes hold in the novel suggesting that its alternative states sometimes transposed in a singular character sometimes distributed across the whole text can find alignments with McGurl's social systems reading of postwar literary experience, and how a novelist is no longer acclaimed for their ability to transcend cultural particularity but a compelling aesthetic vehicle for its appreciation.

Chapter 2. Culture Wars

As long as America loves authenticity, my home state of Kansas is going to be symbolically preeminent.
Thomas Frank¹⁸⁴

Introduction

Having attempted to establish how *Cryptonomicon* manifests the truth of traditional history is its meaningless and how this reading places it in the acts of postwar literary deconstructions, in this chapter I will argue how its writing becomes shackled to the 1990s debates about the culture wars. Culture wars were the spilling over of the literary academy's attempts to politicise the cultural field. As suggested these debates had moved on from the conflicts in the faculties and resurfaced in the postmodern discursive bloc. Seeing how *Cryptonomicon*'s writing believes the academic's present an almost lunatic disbelief in the physical world I will draw out some themes to demonstrate how *Cryptonomicon* attempts to extricate itself from their postmodernist views on the social construction of reality. The manifestation of its own theoretical explanations about the truth of wartime history is its meaningless becomes a crudely inaccurate formulation to take the postwar critical left's position. Because *Cryptonomicon*'s writing believes that there is an objective reality to be had this reading can offer its writing as vexed. It ultimately manifests the conditions that chapter one argued that it stands against: the notion that there is any worthwhile truth in the validity of objective historical knowledge for the claiming of an objective truth about reality. Such is the influence that novel places on the academic's ruination of traditional political methods in their versions of leftist cultural criticism *Cryptonomicon*'s returns to the realist oriented ends of criticism retains the elements that equate it with a nineteenth-century science fiction dystopia. The academics in the storyline have become the spokesperson of the popular affirmation of technological processes. This, as we shall see, is something *Cryptonomicon*'s writing tirelessly-exasperatingly attempts to put right. Its returns to the aspects of realism offer the opportunity to draw parallels with John Guillory's reappraisals of literary and cultural studies in this chapter. I will invoke Guillory's deep corrections on the literary and cultural studies approaches to the social environment that, in turn, offers a reflection that *Cryptonomicon* indirectly condemns the academics philosophical incompetence and their faulty, politicised and co-opted forms of pseudo-realism.

Giving an account of the intellectual commitments that became attached to the 1990s culture wars, I argue, is not to overlook a specific sociological symptom that can offer a judgement for *Cryptonomicon*'s vexed forms of writing. I will argue, in part, it adjusts its forms of experimentalism - attached to its attempts at politicised acts of interpretation - in order to separate

¹⁸⁴ Thomas Frank, *What's The Matter With America*, 28.

its antirealist commitments from the idealised interdisciplinary enclosures of postmodernist literary criticism. The culture wars in the 1990s, as we shall see, moved out of the debates ranged between the two faculties, moving into what were being considered citizenship concerns in US contexts. The literary academy's attempt to politicise the cultural field stimulated a diverse range of views both inside and outside the university. Richard Rorty, as we shall see, offered his own expressive version of literary theory. He was quick to argue that there was still an independent reality having condemned Stephenson's earlier book *Snow Crash* for taking what he argued was the critical left position towards politics and culture. As we shall see, *Cryptonomicon's* speculative writing although still radical has changed in emphasis since the publishing of *Snow Crash*. It restates the theory function of science studies. Therefore, the truth of history does not become its meaningless but is offered through scientific and more explainable terms. *Cryptonomicon's* ability to reason through science changes when its acts of deconstruction are turned on the old world wartime legacies of science, technology, and reason. Charlene's university history, in these terms, is still offered in terms of its meaninglessness. When offered alongside a history of individual code breaking exploits we shall see how a history of ultra-violent white racism becomes explainable. The type of belligerent Anglophobia that I established exists in *Cryptonomicon's* writing in chapter one, where one history can be made sense of while on the same level another history offers the plausibility that it makes no sense, offers the acts of deconstruction in terms of a literary history more equable with the American form although now in a more radical ambiguous form, where men of science are known for getting things done.¹⁸⁵ I will conclude this chapter arguing postmodern or antirealist epistemology had become unintelligible when in conjunction with the term America.¹⁸⁶

Rortyism

Richard Rorty became an exponent of a certain brand of literary theory. Key to understanding Rorty's poststructural pragmatism is postmodern relativism, which Hilary Putnam somewhat comically branded as Rortyism. Although heavily involved in the movement of literary theory and the conflation of European poststructuralism and American pragmatism, which John Diggins argued was an invitation into the abyss of postmodern relativism in the US, Rorty argued throughout the 1990s for more patriotism, and that the academic left should finally put a

¹⁸⁵ In chapter three I will argue *Cryptonomicon* offers the opportunity to reappraise its methods of deconstruction in a framework that is endemic to American contexts that is no longer consonant with reality in the terms of the mobilisation of curiosity for the ends of successful social integration. In short, we will see how *Cryptonomicon* offers the opportunity to explore the scope of successful social integration techniques in an older form of Renaissance writing, which was powerful to ward off those old world powers that did not combine the processes of modernisation with the principles of liberal democracy.

¹⁸⁶ A simple way to put this is in Bercovitch's account, Kafka's "Investigations of a Dog" illustrates that, though the "dog's interpretations [...] mask the rules" of the music that the dog so desperately wants to comprehend, "they reveal the world he inhabits" (980). In short, *Cryptonomicon's* rhetoric can offer a deeper appreciation of assimilation.

moratorium on theory.¹⁸⁷ Worn down by canon deformation, he was not the only literary critic to react in such a way. Overt proto-Foucauldian macrocritical leftist readings and a Derridean philosophical-cum-literary-rhetoric-political teaching framework had radically reconceptualised an American culture of criticism. In the recently compiled *Cambridge History of American literature*, Gerald Graff—although not denying that these antifoundational views found salience in American contexts—argues that many theory claims were too grandiose, and largely unsustainable in the American public-political sphere. These views, which many on the conservative Right saw as threatening to American notions of selfhood, were eked out in university departments over many years. Before the burgeoning Continental philosophy came under intense public and media scrutiny Foucauldian views were exercised routinely by many Anglo-American critics that looked to deconstruct classical canonised texts as authoritative career statements over American interpretive selfhood. These movements in the literary humanities are now being reconsidered in the US as positions of overstatement and too narrow for the terms of successful social integration.¹⁸⁸ In the 1980s the Yale Group was one of the main proponents of deconstructive literary theory. This group became indirectly linked to the new historicism and the rhetorical reading of de Man. Both views reconsidered the technology of America as a technology of oppression, and both were connected to canon change that linked together different emancipatory social movements in the US.¹⁸⁹

There are many reasons why postwar American liberal scholars in the North American academy, schooled in deconstructive literary theory and the new historicism, sought to rearrange terms of debates against greater forced oppressions. Not all were directly political. Under Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence, the school's radicalism did not cease to focus on literature's potential for negation and resistance. All it did was to assess the prospects for negation and resistance differently. To illustrate Bloom's point David Shumway's comment proves useful. He writes:

The proliferation of interpretations under the New Criticism had already occurred and the rise of theory was beginning to add many more. Still, there were texts, like F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941) and Robert F. Spiller's *Literary History of the United States* (1948), which were understood to define the field. This shared sense of field definition made it possible to judge relatively easily the import of new contributions that accepted its boundaries, but it

¹⁸⁷ Diggins, *On Hallowed Ground*, 18. Guillory writes in American contexts "theory is last if not first literary theory. See, Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 177.

¹⁸⁸ Works of those who were and who were not defenders of theory are largely considered in terms of an impasse in the US and many readers now look through theory claims. For instance, Walter Benn Michaels deconstructs the idea of race as a cultural construction in *Our America* (1997). For obvious reasons those that defined theory in terms of multiculturalism form a hard-headed approach to such views held on assimilation and separation. Allan Bloom's aggressively titled *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) being one of them. For views on a disabling commitment to theory either for or against, and the above comments on Michaels see Hungerford's, "On the Period Formerly Known as Contemporary," 412-413.

¹⁸⁹ Steven Greenblatt and Elizabeth Gallagher were largely the purveyors of Foucault's poststructuralism, which came to be known in the US as new historicism.

also shaped and made intelligible those that challenged them. Early feminist studies, such as Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975) and Judith Fryer's *The Faces of Eve: Women in the Nineteenth Century American Novel* (1976), were radical in their gender politics and their focus on women writers, but they continued to read literature in ways made familiar by the previous generation.¹⁹⁰

In the 1990s a group of Americanist scholars came together to take account of insufficient trans-cultural readings of Foucault's theory of power. Foucauldian Leftists were seen to preserve the transcendental performances in the basic concept of power, while driving from it every trace of subjectivity. As such, his political program, grounded in the notion that all knowledge rests upon injustice, was seen as a moralising tautology increasingly incapable of recognizing itself as such. The unearthing of de Man's wartime writings made sure that debates concerning the substitutions of the economic and political programs of welfare state liberalism and socialism for tying the aporias of language to the theories of power and theory of individual powerlessness became correlated to what in the US became known as the culture wars.

It was Richard Rorty who argued most publicly against what a "Gothic" or "cultural left" made of the philosophical framework of Derrida and Leftist views of Foucault. He writes "emphasizing the impossibility of meaning, or of justice, as Derrida sometimes does, is a temptation to Gothicize – to view democratic politics as ineffectual, because unable to cope with preternatural forces."¹⁹¹ Rorty attempted to develop a new pragmatic solution to historical contingency based on the concept of Enlightenment modernity. He looked to reiterate the literary modernists' problem of self-grounding whilst applying a check on corporate capitalism in attempts to keep a sense of American fraternity intact, no matter how fragile.¹⁹² Rorty opposed poststructuralists for what he saw was their nihilistic assertions upon the loss of transcendence. He argued how the promulgation of an ethics of difference for political reason failed to uphold systematically cultural appeals over more traditional politics. The abstract quality of these appeals could only be upheld systematically by culturally contextualizing them, and thus making their validity contextual. Many critics followed Rorty's line of thinking, arguing that using theories of power as a relevant critique of white western liberal humanism led to an unplanned response to conservative laws of government, and did little to

¹⁹⁰ See, Shumway, "American Literature Coming Apart," 657-658.

¹⁹¹ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 97.

¹⁹² Rorty saw the damage that ensued from the need to constantly play on the overstatement and the reconstruction of the individual in a way that avoids the nostalgia for an undeconstructed self, and looks to place a moratorium on theory. *Cryptonomicon* holds an uncanny position within these debates. In one understanding its experimental language fits with spectatorial left issues as it tackles problems with postwar ideology. On another understanding the language experimentally criticises the scope through which modern liberalism engages with power. At the social level Charlene's generational privilege for Randy is ominous as she and the other academics have lost sight of Randy's selfhood. It is the effects of their research that typifies his potential space in culture, and it is their research that the novel argues is held in the grip of market optimisation.

achieve any recognizable aims. Within the heyday of appeals that stressed equality as well as mutual recognition, neoconservative politics was gaining greater clarity and force.

Frank Lentricchia notes that Jonathon Culler's book, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (1975), "was a key moment of incursion by the apparently dispassionate discipline of structuralism into the humanist-dominated literary-critical establishment."¹⁹³ Canon or theory wars indicated the academic Left's abandonment of the American humanist tradition. When Stanford in 1988 dropped a required freshman course in Western culture those vocally defending the new style of literary professionalism celebrated what they thought was an effective political organisation that would finally discredit a pre-Sixties Left. James T. Patterson writes:

Conservatives mobilised to battle against liberal faculty members at universities such as Stanford, where in 1988 discussions took place that later resulted in the widely reported dropping of a required freshman course in Western culture. It was replaced by a variety of humanities offerings that though including many Western classics were a little less Western centred. Anguished defenders of the Western canon including education secretary William Bennett explained that Stanford was trashing Western culture. Stanford faculty members retorted by hailing the changes as enabling at last a birth of multiculturalism within the core of university courses.¹⁹⁴

Issues surrounding historical contingency were raised and the implicit understanding that any moral hierarchy was better than that of white European males. The old Americanist literary establishment previously considered historical contingency as a "cosmos ruled by fortune" where virtuous, communal or civic acts were "required to sustain republics."¹⁹⁵ With the ascendancy of poststructuralism and the new academic notion of historical contingency, Marxist historicists, feminists, and socialists (and a few classical republicans) were given a wider theoretical base through which to take on the liberal establishment social order. Because there was increasingly less ontological difference to be made between art and ideology, Modernist literature was seen by many as pervaded by imperialism, racism, sexism and heterosexism, and had failed to realize its adversarial promise.

Fluck gives some indication to how the New Historicist intellectual line in criticism dealt with unseen politics of power in the university. He writes

Henry James became a favourite target for [...] New Historicism for the reasons mentioned in Ruth Bernard Yeazell's review of two books on James by Jonathan Freedman and Ross

¹⁹³ Culler cited in David Ayers, *Literary Theory: A Reintroduction*, 95.

¹⁹⁴ See Patterson, *Restless Giant*, 256.

¹⁹⁵ See Malachuk, "Loyal to a Dream Country," 89.

Posnock: Both writers strenuously resist any attempt to understand the artist as somehow transcending the forces of his culture, a mystifying move that they identify with the triumph of high modernism.¹⁹⁶

For Fluck, “in New Historicism [...] the writers of the American Renaissance [...] precisely because of the power of their works are actually especially effective transmitters of systemic power effects.”¹⁹⁷ Canonised texts of American Literature as the embodiment of a single quality of literariness were questioned, attacked and revised. Under politicised culture-critique, the existing American professoriate were considered the direct producers and beneficiaries of governing (aesthetic) norms of behaviour, and the aura of rarity they imposed became increasingly less appealing to a radical group of Modern Language scholars. Over time the New Historicism eventually became exacerbated in the US when aligned with the historical “fact” of de Man’s concealed “Nazi past.” Ayers commenting on “PC Wars” writes “it has been suggested that the 1988 controversy surrounding the concealed Nazi past of Yale deconstructionist Paul de Man had attracted attention to the shenanigans of theory and may have prompted a new scrutiny of University life.”¹⁹⁸ In these contexts the first meaningful salvos of American-styled culture wars had been fired.

In a 2005 edition of *The Yale journal of Criticism*, Sean McCann and Michael Szalay analyse politicised culture critique in the aftermath of poststructuralist theory in the humanities. With poststructuralism losing its hold on humanities disciplines, their concerns were to focus on lasting 1960s humanities theory and countercultural legacies that fed into the American University. Behind McCann and Szalay’s central argument is the claim that, in the decades after the 1960s, a debilitating version of the New Left’s cultural politics became a central feature of the era’s dominant literary ideology, evident most powerfully in the therapeutic ethos of postmodern fiction. Postmodern politics were seen to have pervaded American culture of an assignation with authenticity, and postmodernists were seen to have paradoxically neglected to account for value judgements in their own work. Using Mark McGurl’s contribution to this debate McCann and Szalay draw our attention to the current marginalization of experimentalism in the humanities by attempting to undo debates hinged on an American Left which had been allowed to build a favoured status in the postwar university. Taking issues with lasting countercultural movements and legacies they write:

McGurl reveals the manner in which Little Tree deftly draws on the conventions that enable Native Americans to represent both sides of this ambivalence, and he shows the way that

¹⁹⁶ Fluck, “Romance with America,” 15.

¹⁹⁷ Fluck, “Romance with America,” 4.

¹⁹⁸ Ayers, *Literary Theory: A Reintroduction*, 165.

Carter's novel dramatizes the development since the 1960s of a thoroughly institutionalized and anodyne cultural pluralism. McGurl details the set of assumptions that allowed many academics during the 1960s to locate their politics in the kind of content they taught in the classroom. Generations of teachers turned to *Little Tree*, he points out, largely because its appreciative rendering of Native American life enabled them to overlook the forms of socialization important to their own institutions.¹⁹⁹

McCann and Szalay reconsider McGurl's argument not for revelations of Forrest Carter's "long career as an ardent propagandist for segregation and white supremacy" (which implicitly it also is), but rather his emphasis on how postwar American literature and a culture of criticism must begin to be spoken of as a product of the school.²⁰⁰ In doing so they argue:

McGurl shows how the turn in emphasis during the 1960s from activism to culture ended up changing the terms of political engagement within the institutions of higher education. The turn to culture, he argues, coincided with a relative shift in interest from the politics of access to educational institutions to a politics of representation and identity conducted *within* these institutions.²⁰¹

As noted in the introduction, McGurl does not follow earlier literary critics by unloading his "political aspirations onto the delicate filaments of language, literature and culture" but wants to "shift these discussions to the actual institutions, technologies, and practices from which postwar American fiction emerges."²⁰² This dialectic, as I have previously noted, is to renovate the terms behind the successful assimilation techniques that are now being deployed for the contemporary graduate scholar of literature in the US. In sum, McGurl replaces the rhetorical question for the real political one. In the twenty-first century what sort of culture do Americans want to foster?²⁰³

Cultural materialist arguments can still provide an important supplementary argument for McGurl's analysis. For instance, Spanos argues how the "corporatised university" in this period began "competing with the culture industry in the global marketplace."²⁰⁴ Rather than protect the cultural studies field from market optimisation Spanos views the "annunciation of the end of history" in the turn from deconstructive theory to cultural criticism as erroneous. Spanos, concerned with new cultural linkages to privileged Left-oriented thinking, wishes to return to the deconstructive initiative with fuller awareness. His point is not my point to argue here, but it is worth noting that he sees the turn to cultural criticism as no accident, enabling the "systematic obliteration of the

¹⁹⁹ McCann and Szalay, "Paul Potter," 215. McGurl, "Learning from *Little Tree*."

²⁰⁰ McCann and Szalay, "Paul Potter," 215.

²⁰¹ McCann and Szalay, "Paul Potter," 215.

²⁰² McGurl, "Learning from *Little Tree*" 254. McGurl, *The Program Era*, 30.

²⁰³ As I have previously noted McGurl adds a dialectical arrangement to the previous cultural materialist arguments that have been so powerful in defining the postmodern field. See, Michaels, "Is There a Politics of Interpretation," 255.

²⁰⁴ See Spanos, "The Question of Philosophy and Poiesis," 165.

memory of the Vietnam war.”²⁰⁵ Spanos, like McGurl, links 1990s cultural criticism with the corporatized university as it became caught up in the cult of the celebrity (academic star system) vying for consumers with the culture industry. McGurl understands this shift, which illustrates the shift from the dominant hegemony of theory (or as the academics in the novel understand this as having no arguable beliefs only differences in subject-position) to the dominant hegemony of a revised analysis for textual and historical study within the institution of the academy very differently, and uses it to argue how the university “stepped forward in the postwar period both to facilitate and buffer the writer’s relation to the culture industry and the market culture more broadly.”²⁰⁶ The University for McGurl was already a part of corporate restructuring and he argues how many academics have failed to realise this important potential as a way out of the current pluralist agenda.²⁰⁷

The turn to the mystification and to postmodern writing according to Thomas Frank in his retrospective look at 1990s culture wars also pervaded culture of its assignation with authenticity.²⁰⁸ He argues how the conservative right rallied support for its initiatives and how college professors from the coast suspended traditional routes to justice, which fed into the right’s fight to retake control of moral high-ground. He writes:

²⁰⁵ Spanos, “The Question of Philosophy and Poiesis,” 153.

²⁰⁶ I have set out in the introduction to this thesis how McGurl returns to the replacement of questions about assimilation with a heightened respect for difference as part of a progressive educational act. See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 15.

²⁰⁷ McGurl’s sense of auto-machia, which Bercovitch argues from Mather through Emerson served rhetorically to resolve the conflicts inherent in the meaning of free-enterprise, rather than protect the validity of cultural knowledge from market optimisation takes the art impulse that is connected with the social instinct to transmute oppositional forms of dissent (compensating for the betrayals of the post-Revolutionary generation i.e. *Cryptonomicon*’s writing in the art impulse that was linked with the social instinct that sought the call for radical but always explainable progressive social change - a changing yet persisting narrative -- persisting *because* changing (flexible, adaptable) -- that shaped a living culture) into a “jeremiad against the misdirected process of the dead present, and an act of prophecy which guaranteed the future by celebrating the regenerate Americanus.” Writing in the style of the auto-machia McGurl supplements an important element. The adding of the dialectic to his argument rather than be enfolded completely in Bercovitch’s way of arguing for another competing interpretation in terms of the profoundly destabilising energies developed in a particular utopian consciousness now masks its conformity not in terms of oppositions between ambiguity and dissent but in a productive rewriting of what Bercovitch argued was required to integrate those two kinds of representation. Bercovitch writes, “What forms that integration will take will in large measure determine the extent to which we will achieve what I called an integrated narrative.” McGurl’s critique, I want to argue, is not simply a competing claim on postnational narratives but an actual held belief about what language is, what it’s for, and what it can do, a creative supplementing of the rules of engagement in terms of Bercovitch’s scholarly American literary practice, and a realistic assessment of the culture’s strategies of mystification. See *The Puritan Origins*, 184-185.

²⁰⁸ Because Frank’s book is permeated with aspects surrounding the people’s relationship with authenticity, and because I offer a reading of authenticity in relation to humility in the concluding sections of this chapter I choose the quotation below where Frank chooses to show how those that opposed forms of liberalism did so in this way. “Most Red Americans can’t deconstruct post-modern literature, [or] give proper orders [...] But we can raise great children, wire our own houses, make beautiful and delicious creations with our own two hands, talk casually and comfortably about God, repair a small engine, recognise a good maple sugar tree, tell you the histories of our towns and the hopes of our neighbours [...] calculate the bearing load of a roof,” and so on. See, Thomas Frank, *What’s The Matter With America*, 21.

For the conservatives politics is something different: politics is about blasphemous art and crazy lawsuits filed by out of control trial lawyers running down America [...] Politics is when the people in small towns look around at what WalMart and ConAgra have wrought and decide to enlist in the crusade against Darwin.²⁰⁹

Dropping school standards and subsequent postmodern relativisms fuelled rising unrest in traditional heartlands against what they saw was a moral crusade by the liberal left. For a while these views became a hot-button topic in US media debate. Graham Thomson unearths meaning behind the press and media reaction to postwar radical liberalism. He writes:

The use of the word *kulturkampf* is interesting. Literally meaning “cultural fight,” it was a term originally used at the end of the nineteenth century to describe Otto von Bismarck’s battle with the Roman Catholic Church for control not just of economic and political power, but for control over intellectual and cultural power too. The word has been supplied to the US by social conservatives like Pat Buchanan, but has more readily been translated “culture war” to describe the battle over social and cultural power between those on the Left and the Right [...] [T]he social conservative backlash against the 1960s was every bit as important an element in Reaganomics as was the supply-side economics aimed at turning around the American economy.²¹⁰

Character assassinations in *Cryptonomicon* correlate to the American Right’s attack on Leftist conceptual thinking of know-it-all college professors. Rorty at the time argued how these campus radicals were so busy unmasking hegemony in the present that they have no time to discuss what laws need to be passed in order to create a better future.²¹¹ Because of the Left’s unplanned response to conservative laws of government Rorty argued how they failed to get to grips with a rising tide of corporate populism and reactionary conservatism. In their link ups with theories of power this left a critical new Left with no place to go.

Informed by the culture wars, *Cryptonomicon*—rather than condemn outright the entwining of instrumental reason and domination and the uses put to the men in the wartime story—shifts its concerns to how individuals like grad student Charlene come into a revolutionary-styled being in contemporary US culture. In a series of persistent attacks, its narrative circulates around just how far the academics’ uses of postmodern relativism (83) was taken in terms of condemnations of cold war consensus politics and the invention of America, or more abruptly, in the academics’ view the invention of white male and misogynistic America. In Randy’s ritualistic flaying at the dinner table, where he is routinely stereotyped as a white elitist male technocrat, he is dispossessed of an originary political rhetoric in the post-political turn to identity. He is embittered and dragged between the two poles of canon battles in the culture war debate, as *Cryptonomicon* is in general. I

²⁰⁹ Frank, *What’s The Matter With America*, 239-240.

²¹⁰ See Thompson, *American culture in the 1980s*, 9.

²¹¹ Rorty *Achieving Our Country*, 139.

deal with the author's shuttling between two nationally-inflected positions in chapter three. Antagonism held towards the academics' unwillingness to make value judgements centres on Charlene's crowd's upper middle class liberal ideals (27), insufferable political correctness (80), and academic jargon (52). The academics' radical remaking of a multicultural perspective that would take it away from the cloying one New England mind is given the postnational draw of the new Americanist status in *Cryptonomicon*. These now not-so-new Americanists based their revisions in part on the radical historical revision of American literary history. The group that constitute Leo Marx's "Great Divide" in American scholarship are tellingly presented in *Cryptonomicon* as an academic crowd (80). As such their claims on US public policy and political status are reflected negatively. Marx worked on the principle that literature worked towards realizing the adversarial in culture; *Cryptonomicon* follows Marx's ethic, seeing now another dangerous era for literary studies as Anglo imperialism ever was.²¹² The school, from Randy's perspective, has distributed and regulated access to a favoured new form of cultural capital. Under a consensus view of a truly representative canon free from social bias the academics' are no longer concerned with Randy's pre-Sixties sense of self or educational upbringing, and, rather like the Second World War veteran in the poster saga, they willingly consign him to the ashbin of posthistorical discourse.

Randy's knowledge and moral authority is seen as a by-product of lasting systemic effects of power. *Cryptonomicon* paces the poststructuralist assault on the American Way until Yale professor Kivistik becomes somewhat synonymous with Guillory's account of de Man. Kivistik "as the name of theory" holds the key to unlocking public access to scholarly acts of interpretation and appreciation in the American context. Randy testifies to this spurious state of affairs. "Kivistik was too big and real [...] [and] probably more influential in the real world than Randy would ever be" (80). The novel, although referring to Kivistik's power in the University, attempts to take back some of the academic charisma attributed to real Yale school scholars and isolates their power within the culture of the school. Although we are told that where Randy came from no one had been taking these people seriously for years, we are never quite sure where Randy really comes from, and his ambiguity can remain an irreducible literary presence in the text. The academics, on the other hand, are locked down into a form of 1990s culture wars enmity and an accompanying ontological stasis. Rather than being considered a character that confirms negation and ambiguity of literary-based critical knowledge as an invention, behind which lies something completely different from itself, Randy becomes reflective of how New Critical formalism distanced literature from ideology. This type of conceptual distancing is put to use overtly as Kivistik comes to the west coast to recruit

²¹² See Marx, "On Recovering the "Ur" Theory," 124; 130. See also Fluck, "Romance with America," 2.

Charlene to prestigious north coast Yale. Cosmopolitan coastal region types, especially of the New Haven, New England type according to Thomas Frank, underestimated old traditional media dominances including the literary journalistic styled backlash to the celebrated overburdening of conventional American identity.²¹³ The academics attempting to take on the culture industry (and remnants of a literary class of American journalists) results in them being largely worse off, and we are told in no uncertain terms that they are driven to police the diminished borders of their territory within the university. As a result, active feminist Charlene and her academic group are undermined in *Cryptonomicon's* US pluralist group context.

Rorty argued cultural Left-oriented thinking offered very little in the way of resistance to economic selfishness as they taught Americans to recognise otherness. As I have tried to show McGurl turns this simple statement around for the benefits of the whole postwar experience that describes a partially democratised modernism. While the academics are fooling around with their technological image of the veteran, the novel relays different types of integrated constellations of machines and materials-handling systems that went into the restructuring of post-Fordist labour processes.²¹⁴ These processes result in real American social and corporate class abuses around the world. Avi painstakingly reminds Epiphyte Corp's tech-minded group members that the world is where their I.T. applications make sense. "He taps the whiteboard. In the real world. You know, the big round wet ball where billions of people live" (188). Because we are also told the Philippines are an "Arday R-D-A-E., Rapidly Developing Asian Economy" (30) deregulation initiatives in the 1990s come to the fore. In the US these corporate initiatives went largely unchecked and allowed for the explosive growth of telecoms industries. These industries, Frank argues, encouraged "a staggering amount of fraud and overconstruction" as companies went on their way to amassing vast amounts of wealth across the globe and in America.²¹⁵ Possibly an overstatement on *Cryptonomicon's* behalf, and confirming to how it is implicitly tied to the conservative response and backlash imagination to culture wars, it ties scandalous telecommunications abuses not only to capitalistic moguls and nefarious business types who want to make information a market commodity abroad, but to the public intellectual who was capitulating to a networked intelligence. When tackling themes of Randy and Avi's displays of economic selfishness, or inferences towards academics Nina or Charlene's uninhibited displays of sexuality the novel's focuses isolate radical and enlightened liberal worldviews within the school culture, showing how the modern academics offer little resistance to social injustice and state of moral decline on a global scale. Similarly, the academics' mass intellectuality is increasingly reconsidered as being less communicative and informational

²¹³ See, for instance, Frank's chapter on an inland red space and a coastal blue one, "Two Nations," in *What's The Matter With America*, 13-27.

²¹⁴ See Rupert for this account, *Producing Hegemony*.

²¹⁵ Frank, *What's The Matter With America*, 41.

nationally. They are in turn reconsidered as succumbing to the rhetoric of free information. Randy and his band of nerdy hackers, on the other hand, although not completely free from the spurious “explosive growth in telecoms” (30) are presented as ingenious freedom loving types who have not lost the art of critical thinking. When posing a resistance to theory and when viewed through the emergence in the 1990s of a novel such as Tom Brokaw’s *The Greatest Generation* (1998) a certain ancestral worship can account for an implicit structure in the text, which can bring to the surface more of the American pragmatic mind behind lasting legacies of French literary theory.²¹⁶ Wartime data encryption and themes of the informalization of cultural knowledge, although maligned in *Cryptonomicon*’s contemporary and wartime settings (as allusions to America’s National Security Agency [proto-imperial power] and Charlene’s ineffectual digital media studies show), is still viewed as a positive useful tool through which to found new democratic projects.

Rorty’s various *New York Times* op-ed pieces increasingly called for the rebirth of a new sense of hope and optimism for the young American. Rorty was concerned that a corrosive postmodern moral scepticism would tumble back into moral authoritarianism. Recriminations to antirealist or postmodern epistemology and Leftist agendas were slowly building. These linkages were to become hugely significant to the conservative backlash to modern liberalism. Legal scholar Robert Bork’s polemical book *Slouching towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (1996) highlighted two main themes that many conservatives bemoaned in the 1990s: America was in decline, and liberals were to blame for culture wars that were splintering the nation. Although Rorty argued values were not eternal, paradoxically in a time when “*Values Mattered Most*,” he believed, like William James before him, that values were only ever dropped when they no longer made a practical difference.²¹⁷ The enlightened worldview of the academics’ postmodernist abstractions make no practical difference to Randy’s previously held mess of opinions (that is if we do not count the splitting headaches he gets when he is around these people). Rather than being brought to a new state of evolutionary thinking in new Americanist antifoundationalist tracts and the “new style of literary professionalism” designated as theory Randy deigns to leave America instead. Leaving one America and finding another in the form of “America Shaftoe” tells the reader a lot about the novel’s literary and political pretensions and who it considers is to blame for an increasingly shrinking public sphere.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ McGurl illustrates a certain implicit structure held in *Cryptonomicon*’s overtly pluralist strain of postmodern fiction arguing that behind certain character’s back stories are “men of science that were known for getting things done.” See, McGurl, “Pluralisms of Postwar American Fiction,” 39.

²¹⁷ Frank, *What’s The Matter With America*, 6.

²¹⁸ See, Sean McCann and Michael Szalay, “Do You Believe in Magic? Literary Thinking after the New Left,” 455.

Rather than offer Fredrick Jameson's postmodern waning of affect in American contexts, or the academics' paradoxical criticizing the rhetoric of free information as they themselves plug into useless Internet enthusiasms of the 1990s a complex fascination emerges with old solid dominances of technologies and the human machine interface. *Cryptonomicon*'s formal appraisal of objects returns its literature to a source of previous American literary productions. Classical masterworks from Emerson to Whitman are not just a symptom of racism, empire, or heterosexim, but nativist attempts to extricate independent forms of thought from the high abstractions of old world categories. My case is not to argue whether these classical American writers actually achieved a truly independent mode of thought only to state that the emergence of a US canon was in part to dismantle the notion of old-world tradition. We will come to see how these American writers types of formal alignment became a powerful cultural symbology when read through the Puritan vision and its rhetoric.

Cultural criticism takes a detour from literary postmodernism in *Cryptonomicon*'s almost Luddite type cultural criticism of technology. Amy's Company "Semper Marine Services" (106-107) is synonymous with *Semper Fi*, an old Marine Corps motto, meaning "ever faithful" and signals how discrete functions of technology and human and machines interact. This is quite abstruse in historiographic metafiction. Deep-sea diving is literally brought to the reader's attention as a functional (not fictional) process, leading to a more realistic, less sceptical approach to governing America's historical past and present relationship with technology. Amy's relationship with technology is unlike Charlene's postmodern ephemeral embrace of spectacle events and TV media images. Diving takes a lot of in-depth and self-taught knowledge learned over many years, and a lot of dives. Randy is to learn each diver is dependent on the other, yet each dive is very specific to each diver (457-458). Self-governance, like the aura of rarity (authenticity) in this relationship, between the human and the machine, remains an integral act in the novel, and each diver's discrete relationship with technology stands against the image-critique of the academics and their decentring of the unified subject as legitimate source of moral and cultural authority. Charlene's relationship with new technologies, like that of Kivistik's is glib, abstract, and routinized. In the no-longer-pastoral space of the university, the aura of rarity is now construed as a power-structured relationship where power is as much as inside one as outside one, and the will to appropriate indoctrinated into the Yale professor Kivistik. Nativist independence (and therefore realism), on the other hand, is often the starting point from which *Cryptonomicon* jumps off to make its most revealing juxtapositions.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ For an altogether different appraisal of *Cryptonomicon*'s convoluted configurations and how they do not spell out a return to the humanist ideal see Hayles' reading, as she expresses its narrative through a dialectical exhaustion expressed through oxymoronic knots. Katherine N. Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer*, 132.

Cryptonomicon not only poses resistances to the deconstruction of the aura of rarity in Charlene's feminist and gender corrective to patriarchal ideology and technobureaucratic constraints on the global labour workforce, but also to sympathy-training. Readers' relationships with Epiphyte Corp's group members should be solidified, however, their relatability is often compromised in the novel. Randy and Avi and the rest of the Epiphyte group are rarely construed as likeable characters. For instance, Tom Howard and John Cantrell intend to be cryogenically frozen at the time of their deaths. A similarly gross or hedonistic impulse is characterised in the "rendering of Manila Bay" in digitised "3-D graphics" (102). This is traded as vulgar in the novel, more so as it is to impress a future business clientele made up of hoods and villains that want a piece of the Intel Epiphyte Corp is selling. Epiphyte's computer graphics replace what the novel still sees as very important: old-fashioned maps. These are given great significance, and although fraught with their own problem of imperial conquest, a map is the kind of technology that required a certain amount of determined effort and a notion of being in the world, rather than the sixties postmodern existentialist drama, which reappears in the novel in the posthumanist excessive loosening of constraints of what it means to be an American and basically human. The novel delivers the notion of being in the world more emphatically and pragmatically to the rest of Epiphyte Corp's group, through the more embodied experiences of raped women, pillaged villages and seared or burning flesh in wartime.

In many ways, the novelistic or literary historical perspective pulls out realist terms of virtuous memory, and not the ghostly memory in the history of new historicism. Epiphyte Corp's stylish graphics are overlaid with more solid geometries such as the solid dominances of old communication signals like the "signal fire on Corregidor" (94) that were used to deliver messages from island to island in the Philippines. Rather than trace the Philippines' forgotten pasts to bring what McCann and Szalay call a type of postmodern "imperfect justice" to counter the direct excessive rationalism of the wartime military elite, *Cryptonomicon* implicitly builds through a Pacific revolutionary discourse fraught with US relationships and new technology.²²⁰ Air to ground Internet conference calls, video phone links and GPS receivers are rehashed with old tech methods of communication and imperialist data flow such as "lines of sight." Erecting a rooftop antenna on a "non-descript four-story office building between Fort Santiago and the Manila Cathedral" (103), a history of communication is not obliterated in the novel. Rather, this scene brings forward a low-tech encounter to counter the excessive posthistorical image-critique in the academics' complex politics of historicism and enlightened upper class views on new media technology and the Internet.

²²⁰ See, McCann and Szalay for how high-minded irrationalism is beginning to come unstuck in intellectual areas of life sometimes known as the literary humanities. "Magic," 451.

In short, the novel seems intent on extricating itself from the postmodernist versions of literary and cultural criticism transformed into theory.

Although hugely sympathetic to many New Left objectives, Rorty in response to culture wars, posited damning critiques of Foucauldian leftist views. McGurl picks up the study of apocalyptic French philosophy that became the norm for essential preparation for Leftist initiatives in the US. Likening Forrest Carter to a “red-neck Paul de Man” McGurl argues how theories of pedagogy play a central and ambivalent role in the countercultural imagination, as they do in the tradition of American liberalism more generally.²²¹ Before McGurl’s attempts to deal with the political nature and intercultural interdependency of literary discourse and how the culture of the school and the apparatuses that surround it are intuited by that particular culture are introduced into the economy – not that culture’s autonomy, Guillory linked together the notion of the school and the literary curriculum as a site of political practice.²²² He argued how these under-theorised teaching projects culminated in the dismantling and redefinition of literary English. What is becoming increasingly clear in the twenty-first century (if we take a line of thought from Guillory’s line of questioning) is that the movement away from literary English, at least in liberal arts contexts, was not as academics had hoped but rather the replacement of *literariness* in new forms. Guillory writes, “it is not clear whether a cultural studies curriculum has been conceived which does not replicate the theoretical hermeneutic paradigms of literary interpretation.”²²³ Rather than turn that discipline over to language and rhetoric and recognizing how the school appears as both the central institution of repressive socialization and, more positively, as a promising means to fashion a more diverse and yet harmonious society McGurl’s reading of *Cryptonomicon* makes a compelling argument for how a regional faculty philosophy and an embedded literariness return in a larger socially differentiated cultural industrial system.

Theory wars take a different turn in Sacvan Bercovitch’s dissensus model. A new group of Americanist scholars were brought together to placate the impasse that had built up around postnational narratives in the US. The dissensus model is not without its problems. Jane Tompkins had earlier critiqued Graff’s conflict-oriented attempts to move beyond culture wars as a typically

²²¹ McGurl, “Learning from Little Tree” 244.

²²² As I attempted to show in the introduction McGurl links more productively the spontaneous philosophy of cultural critics with their surrounding environments. Guillory, on the other hand, saw the most recent version of cultural criticism and its “spontaneous character [...] [as] [the] calling into question of common sense [that] is nothing other than the common sense (or “consensus”) of the literary professoriate. Like the common sense of the laity, it circulates as what is given for this discourse community. See Guillory, “The Sokal Affair,” 477.

²²³ Guillory argues that it is not culture’s autonomy that we should seek but how cultures are inseparably interdependent both at the moments of a cultural work’s production and at that of its consumption. In short this interdependency finally trumps the laudable objective of affirming cultural diversity as a factor in Americanist studies. The notion of an inseparably interdependent nature can only be given to free people that are independent (dependent people do not have free choice to enter into an interdependent relationship). See Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 265.

male centred approach. It is Tompkins' less permeable cultural boundary distinction that separates Charlene from Randy. Illustrating a more recent concern surrounding dissensus and the marginalization of experimentation in the humanities, Lauren Berlant's feminist realist sentimentality and female complaint genre tackles the default gender of the American citizen. Berlant is concerned with how dissensus largely returns to debates centred on American books.²²⁴ Berlant saw quickly the backlash imagination brewing behind the newly emerging predominance of the word nation in the 1990s' turn to culture. She argued how many critical theorists had adopted a labile and optimistic culturalist perspective, as it was the Right who grasped more significantly language as a political and communicational tool for domination. Not wishing to return to an antebellum liberal sentimentality and unreconstructed Romanticism, Berlant moves her frames of reference from inhibited sexuality to the realms of affect and emotion. Carrying on the work of Eve Sedgwick, Berlant, like McGurl, looked to reunite Leftist initiatives around integrative modes of analysis for cultural politics and the aesthetic. Berlant, as we shall see, however, was only to offer a competing act of interpretation for a mode of oppositional dissent so that her project of the unfinished business of sentimentality in American culture could not be easily worked into Bercovitch's paradoxical forms of ideological dissent. The point is not to draw out Tompkins' or Berlant's enriching points of argument here on a postcolonial matrix of repudiation in US literary studies today. Rather, it is that from the perspective of dissensus, many scholars have implicitly decided to reunite the Left around real politics, and the return to history and commonsense values over and against cultural politics and those who have buttressed it with empty formulas of sociological political rhetoric.

Previously, both Harold Bloom and Rorty noted that those that practiced Foucauldian Leftist views from within the radical caucus of the Modern Language Association had in turn formed a "School of Resentment."²²⁵ Rorty's contention was that a nation could not reform itself unless it takes pride in itself or its Great writers. Stephenson, for Rorty, was morally averse to both. In a culture morally held to be in precipitous decline, Leo Marx developed a similar line of questioning. He wrote, "those who write in the unintelligible jargon of critical theory have developed a hatred for America so visceral that it makes one wonder why they bother studying America at all."²²⁶ Drawing attention to the image-critique and academic jargon of Charlene's group, Randy becomes indignant to the way academics recklessly treat the Second World War veteran, seeing in their critique of him a distinct failure of the imagination. The academics' conformist politics and their long-standing devaluation of the aesthetic reflect an increasingly frustrated America, beset by optimistic pluralist

²²⁴ See, for instance, Berlant, "Intuitionists: History and the Affective Event," 845.

²²⁵ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 126.

²²⁶ Marx, "On Recovering the "Ur" Theory," 130.

criticisms of the Baby Boom Generation. The novel portrays this generation in defeat and clothing its resentment of this fact in jargon. Included in this generation is the figure of grad student Charlene who, post-Vietnam, offers an image critique of the US as being a universal cipher for an ever-expanding source of evil. Before rallying to the point of what evil really is, *Cryptonomicon* deals with the academics' hostility towards the US largely through Randy.

Randy had spent a lot of time around these people, and thought he'd gotten used to them, but during those days he had a headache all the time, from clenching his teeth, and he kept jumping to his feet in the middle of meals or conversations and going out for solitary walks.
(76)

Doing their best to alienate Randy, the academics invoke what Rorty calls "the state of the soul of those people who had learned from Jameson and others they can no longer enjoy the luxury of the old-fashioned ideological critique, the indignant moral denunciation of the other."²²⁷ Randy, for his pains, on the other hand, "decided to get patriarchal with Dr. G.E.B Kivistik" (83). This act is the resounding nail in the coffin of his and Charlene's relationship and precipitates her moving out of the house she shares with him and into the one in Connecticut with the Yale professor (578).

Randy saying something undiplomatic is brought into 1990s conservative jeremiads surrounding family decline in America. Randy's previous attempts to be polite with the other academics, we are told were largely a "fruitless tactic to get the attention he craved from Charlene" (53). His unrequited love stands for a novel turning away from dispassionate posthistorical critique when invoked into family spheres. Notwithstanding Berlant's image of a "national supericonicity" for Randy, Allan Bloom fired important shots (Bloom did not consider himself a conservative) in culture wars, arguing how moral cynicism had destroyed loving relationships, and how commercial pursuits had become more highly valued than love.²²⁸ We see in Charlene's relationship with Kivistik, and her spare time pursuits of "sea kayaking and going to foreign films" (59) extensions of Allan Bloom's reading of useless classroom erotics. Bloom's saving of historical Romance by making it non-heretical to Christian theology can be reconciled in Randy's "romantic enthusiasm" for a foundational and optimistic faith; a religious faith which has been unceremoniously dumped by the academics.²²⁹ Crossing Randy's indignation felt towards the academics' secularization of chemistry professor Scott and his wife paediatrician Laura (584-585) with Rorty's emphasis on the moral scepticism of the liberal poststructuralist invokes culture wars' stances on moral decline.

²²⁷ Rorty *Achieving Our Country*, 126.

²²⁸ Berlant, *Queen*, 2.

²²⁹ For an understanding of how literary history now stands to profit from a closer engagement with religious studies, see Buell, "Religion on the American Mind," 33-34. See also Amy Hungerford's attending to literature in religion that focuses on fracture and materialism not as ends in themselves. Hungerford, "On the Period Formerly Known as Contemporary," 414. See Rorty *Achieving Our Country*, 126.

Professor of Law and Ethics Martha C. Nussbaum extended an impassioned plea to push Rorty's notion of patriotism out of national public forum debate. In her adherence to multiculturalism, Nussbaum looked to reform the politics of nationalism in support of what Anthony Appiah called the "cosmopolitan patriot."²³⁰

A culturally conservative backlash spilled over into the public domain in the late 1980s and early to mid-1990s, as the Republican Party joined ranks to argue against counterculture radicals and poststructuralists. Republicans took on the academics (now with their unfortunate or marginalised elements of liberal pluralism) from the Right side of culture. David Blankenhorn, director of the institute for American Values, exclaimed in 1993 "America's central problem was family decline." He added, "it's not the economy. It is the culture."²³¹ Jeremiads about American decline seemed to hit a larger cultural nerve. Culture wars were, according to leading conservative and political historian Gertrude Himmelfarb (and a few liberal writers), cutting the nation in half. Many postmodern academics saw this as a conservative ploy to hike up unrest and were openly dismissive of these attitudes. Thomas Frank argued how liberals refused to take the backlash seriously. He writes, "they believe it is nothing but crypto-racism [...] or the random griping of religious rednecks, or the protests of "angry white men" feeling left behind by history."²³² Guillory took out his socioanalysis on the school culture at the time Republicans were winning the vote, to argue that academics not only missed their own institutional location in canon debates, but also failed to theorise adequately in response to their project. Around this time the democratic vote was under increasing strain, which finally led to the Republican revolution of 1994. This in turn helped to shift the Democrats to the Right.²³³ Rorty had warned of such epistemological shortcoming if one wanted to branch out of the institutional domain and into the wider cultural field. While scrutiny surrounding de Man's anti-Semitic writings had already boiled over in the public sphere into culture wars stalemate, Guillory showed how the defence of or resistances to theory had little if anything at all to do with political questions relating directly to assimilation (who should be in or out of the canon) or cultural degeneracy. Like Richard Ohmann before him Guillory reconsidered new directions in historical, political and literary scholarship taken in the US since the 1960s. Guillory argued how it was the emergence of a distinct canon of theory and its historical conjunction with a newly trained academic elite that follows a primary literary response to ensuing "technical" debates surrounding literature, which came to reify new languages of emancipation with the fracturing,

²³⁰ See Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Patriots," 22. See Rorty's views on cosmopolitanism and how he took issue with Nussbaum. Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 85-86.

²³¹ Blankenhorn cited in Patterson, *Restless Giant*, 256.

²³² Frank, *What's The Matter With America*, 8.

²³³ Frank, *What's The Matter With America*, 2.

from above, of the Standard of English.²³⁴ Using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, Guillory argued that academics were gathering (or being gathered) within the specificity of a new bureaucratic nomenclature that would serve the future technobureaucratic elite.²³⁵ In his most serious assertion, Guillory foresaw the purging of liberalism in American contexts, as academics were impoverished in 1990s corporate restructuring to the extent of being pushed into policing the territories of their own borders, in what was rapidly becoming a diminished, segregated and isolated institution.

Metafictional Paradox

Invoking the twenty first century concern over how university professors were becoming increasingly distanced from public debate, *Cryptonomicon* reflects how theory and its over-organisation in postwar US humanities departments overconstructed the potential to create difference in liberal culture, with disastrous effects. Charlene's semiotic reading of Randy's facial hair bears hallmarks of what the real Yale Group made of Derrida's anti-philosophy and Barthes' structuralist understanding of social space, in which the theory of the text can coincide only with a practice of writing. The novel shows how the academics, in their rush to move past Harold Bloom's influence, fall headlong into the anxiety of their own irrelevance. Randy's protestations to how Charlene's "statistics were gathered" are considered "counterintuitive" and the narrator tells us "Charlene was having none of it [...] she was in a big hurry to move on to the meat of her argument" (76). The theory of individual powerlessness that the academics project onto Randy is reflected back upon the academics in a negative way. This tells us how their countercultural visions have fortified in the university. The novel presents Kivistik's assumptions on the subject of the Internet as worthless (83) and which are largely turned towards antagonism with the State. Randy does not want to be empowered in the way these postmodern professors see fit. It is not so much their politics that is in doubt as the way the academics go about delivering them, and their habit of advancing careerism over the real social agendas. As such this Leftist agenda, as McGurl suggests, can be limited to the narrow few, and rather than offer a panacea for social ills is presented in *Cryptonomicon* as no longer in touch with the newly emerging electorate and the common voter epitomised in Randy.

Cryptonomicon's attacks on countercultural legacies spilling over into discourse ethics can be contrasted with Eric Lott's favourable observations on a countercultural Left. Lott challenges recent

²³⁴ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 203.

²³⁵ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 82; 264. See also Readings for a concise summary of Guillory's way of understanding cultural capital and the circulation of cultural value in relatively independent economies. Readings, *University in Ruins*, 108.

arguments against “blaming the counterculture for the cultural turn in Left political theory.”²³⁶ *Cryptonomicon* does not offer similar relief to the poststructuralists. Lasting countercultural energies are portrayed through Andrew Loeb and his exercise in “meta-historical scholarship” (57). Loeb’s research takes in the dietary habits of local American Indian tribes and relates directly to other terms of going native in the narrative. Frick a marine core sergeant in Bobby Shaftoe’s platoon turns Asiatic in a derogatory manner. His racial grief when leaving Shanghai is presented largely as the result of structural racism where according to Anne Cheng the racial other is at once rejected and retained.²³⁷ On the other hand, Bobby Shaftoe is genuinely curious about diverse forms of life as he walks into the Japanese restaurant in Shanghai: “and if he could, he wanted to spend a few calm minutes in here and learn a few things about it” (34-39). Diversity project’s partial substitution of Freud for Marx projects an understanding of Frick’s racial grief into what Cheng calls the melancholy of race. The novel’s juxtaposing of these two attitudes; the curious and sincere Bobby Shaftoe the racist undertones of Frick’s racial grief move into the contemporary sphere as the academics’ attempt to teach Americans to recognise otherness.²³⁸

Cryptonomicon rather than compound its interpretation of racial melancholia interprets away this sort of divineness. Charlene and the academics operate in the realm of the culture of the celebrity and invoke what Frank calls “a politics of the beautiful and the well-born where these people tell the unwashed how to behave and how they should stop being racist or homophobic.”²³⁹ The academics not only fail to see their own institutional location in canon debates, thereby despoiling any chance of meaningful interaction with Randy but fail to move past regurgitations of 1960s countercultural legacies as shown in their continued use of images of the man in the Gray flannel suit. McGurl argues how this type of dialectical adjustment to economic forms such as the information economy limits its reach as a descriptor of the environment, “and threatens to sell us short on a set of images of corporate life – in effect, the world of the man in the gray flannel suit – that have been out of date since the 1960s.”²⁴⁰ The novel in turn relays how “one evening when Avi and his family had been over for dinner, Randy had said, “I’m the beard, Avi’s the suit” as a way of explaining their business relationship, and from this point on Charlene had been off and running” (76). *Cryptonomicon* invokes interpretive lack not in Randy’s blindness to his not being able to see himself as a tool in the academic’s semiological rerouting of the postwar system but rather how they cannot fashion an adequate interpretive response for him from lasting countercultural legacies and post 1960s humanities theory.

²³⁶ See, Lott, “Chants Demagogic,” 471-472.

²³⁷ See Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race*.

²³⁸ See, Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 79.

²³⁹ Frank, *What’s The Matter With America*, 240-241.

²⁴⁰ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 14-15.

Notwithstanding the familial juxtapositions of the fatherless Randy and the many-fathered Avi, whose “wife had been pregnant almost continuously for the four years they’d been married” (30) Charlene reinvents the image of the family in her semiotic reading of Randy as relevant critique of past and postwar American abuses.²⁴¹ The academics’ need to play on the overstatement – “Charlene proved that having a beard was just one element of a syndrome strongly correlated to racist and sexist attitudes” (77) - is taken from the context of a defensive posture held within the university, and reflects the novel’s anxiety: that the people have become an abstraction in liberal progressive views on politics and global world reality. In their subsequent failure to keep abreast with economic selfishness in the US, Rorty argued that New Left academics colluded in proletarianizing the postwar bourgeoisification of the American white proletariat, which would culminate in a bottom-up populist revolt.²⁴²

Surrounding what Rorty argued was the cultural Left’s ineffectual politics (the homeless and residents of trailer parks were not considered other in the relevant sense according to Rorty) McCann and Szalay reappraise the academic visions with libertarian attitudes.²⁴³ Like Rorty, they infer that the literary academy of the time was largely complicit in eroding regulatory environments that existed previously between the nation, State and family stating that “theory [...] lent intellectual credibility to libertarian attitudes [and this] would dominate the literary academy in the last decades of the twentieth century and retain a predominant, increasingly sclerotic hold on the humanities to this day.”²⁴⁴ The turn to deconstructive theory and Cultural Studies projects in McCann and Szalay’s joint project become, as Rorty had forewarned, types of meaningless reform.²⁴⁵ Whether or

²⁴¹ The juxtaposition of family in this scene draws out a perspective on a classical liberal education and a progressive education now in its radical liberal incarnation. The school’s replacement of the family as temperance to radical views in other words has had little effect in the marginalization of this aspect of controlling forces of a central culture. It is left to Avi and the dispersed fictional form of the family unit to deal with the representation of the aftermath of the holocaust.

²⁴² In many aspects we can see how *Cryptonomicon* offers a bottom-up populist revolt to the liberal pluralism the academics transmit. Failing to find an independently critical stance the academics are attacked. Their liberal methodology intent on erasing all differences offers the presentist lapse as their substitution of moralisms for political ideas of truth are seen to have become co-opted in the university. *Cryptonomicon*’s closing the gap on the cultural elites in the American university offers an antitheory argument. Stephenson’s fictions intensify the debates surrounding postmodern relativism. As a barometer of what young technologically-minded readers want we can see that the restating of the case for realism is an elite culture’s responses to an emergent mass culture. McGurl in no uncertain terms links Randy to the American version of de Man. As a red-neck Forrest Carter becomes synonymous of the emergent mass culture technologically savvy but also, as McGurl sees it, less able to see the real gestures that link white progressives to a racial ideology in its own right. *Cryptonomicon*’s slotting itself into styles of other narration is conceptually flawed and politically troubling for McGurl as he sees forms of white philosophy resurface in its narrative. For the Rorty quotation see Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 83.

²⁴³ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 80.

²⁴⁴ McCann and Szalay, “Magic,” 18.

²⁴⁵ To get a further sense of a logic that can exist in *Cryptonomicon*’s writing, in another context Walter Benn Michaels writes: “Crudely (but not, I think, inaccurately) put, White thinks that recognizing history’s meaninglessness makes it necessary, or at least possible, for people to choose a history for themselves: since “there are no grounds to be found in the record itself for preferring one way of construing its meaning rather than another,” people should see themselves as

not Rorty in the 1990s has the “fetid whiff of [...] Lash in the 80s and Jacoby in the 70s” as Lott suggests, McCann and Szalay now extend with greater hindsight the liberal Left’s ineffectual politics, as poststructuralism begins to fray around the edges in US humanities departments.²⁴⁶ Linking together the works of McCann, Szalay, Guillory, Rorty and even Readings the postmodern academics miss the irrelevance of their politicised culture critique, insofar as McGurl argues, “American culture had become a corporate culture.”²⁴⁷ What we are left with in *Cryptonomicon*, in face of Rorty’s “noiseless Left” and Readings’s university, is Thomas Frank’s concerns on the culture wars. *Cryptonomicon*, in other words, is about blasphemous art, and politics is about crazy lawsuits filed by out of control lawyers (51-53). Randy, as a once liberal, Democrat voter, now looks with distaste at those involved with the liberal worldview, and once tolerant of other people’s worldview up to a point, he cannot stomach Kivistik’s propositional offering on issues surrounding US public policy.

Thomas Frank brings Randy and Kivistik’s cultural struggle up-to-date. Frank sees how America has been left in a state of permanent culture war, which he connects to countercultural movements of the 1960s, and know-it-all college professors of the 1990s.²⁴⁸ Frank attempts to sort out why once traditional Democratic heartlands turned into Republican hotbeds, and offers his view on a social conservative backlash to American liberal coastal excessiveness. For Frank, democratic heartlands like Kansas were left feeling isolated and bereft as university professors from the coast overburdened traditional identities and nationalistic civic views with their cosmopolitan views on race, ethnicity, homosexuality, environmental issues, identity, and culture. David Blankenhorn throws further emphases on an elitist liberal injunction into political history when he writes how “the hauteur of upper-middle class liberals and an elitist Left wing liberal culture [...] had captured universities, foundations, Hollywood and the media.”²⁴⁹ In *Cryptonomicon*’s contemporary setting, Hollywood is “merely a specialised bank” (79). In wartime it is a place where Reagan goes to “nail a starlet” (109). In either context, when the postwar university is competing with or resistant to the culture industry a certain amount of jacked-up narcissism and mini-dictatorship is an inevitable conclusion. The academics fail to register in their link-ups with celebrity news or media culture rising public contempt in heartlands for the Clintonite and New Democrat’s “patently phoney

free to “impose a meaning where none is to be found” (p. 130). Interpretations of history are thus political acts in the fullest sense—the products of political choices for which people should be held responsible. See Michaels, “Is There a Politics of Interpretation,” 252.

²⁴⁶ Lott “Chants Demagogic,” 471. McCann and Szalay, “Magic,” 455.

²⁴⁷ This becomes doubly important as themes of otherness take on different critical reflection in a culture that was now fully imbricated in a postindustrial which is also to say information and creative and experience economy. McGurl’s book *The Program Era* somewhat like Hugh Kenner’s study on the works of literary modernism *The Pound Era* (1971) acts as a heuristic device to track a period in which institutions not individuals come to the fore as the *sin qua non* of postwar literary production. See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 406; 368.

²⁴⁸ McCann and Szalay, “Magic,” 441.

²⁴⁹ Blankenhorn cited in Patterson, *Restless Giant*, 256.

compassion.”²⁵⁰ With the Left reuniting around cultural struggle Zbigniew Brzezinski writes what is one to think of Bill Clinton’s response in 1993 to a questioner who asked him on MTV whether he wore boxers or briefs? Perhaps thinking of the youth vote Clinton replied “usually boxers.”²⁵¹ As the radical academics take their politicised culture critique to Randy he is viewed as something akin to a cultural and political Neanderthal. To the academic crowd, he is the angry white male feeling left behind by history. Randy, after being stereotyped by the academics, cannot easily answer back for fear of being labelled a conflict oriented patriarchal misogynist or an “admittedly privileged white male technocrat” (620). Randy is resigned to the fact that he would never be as important as Kivistik in the public realm, a double pun as this is now a media realm.²⁵² Facing death by neglect in the postmodern age of media culture Randy distances himself from the public sphere and contemporary media frenzy surrounding anti-intellectual link-ups and new media by turning his back on software.²⁵³ His stance on the university’s embrace of diversity projects and the academic star system repositions in an aesthetic appreciation—the way New Democrats and the academic left did not take what lay at the heart of culture wars matters seriously i.e. the people.

Average white American Randy typifies the US public sphere and the group interest. Being white and having every available access to new technology, he is attacked by the academics. Noting the gaps between the academics’ non-formalist appraisals of him as they empty out Universal significance from a US wartime military veteran, *Cryptonomicon* poses a question that seeks to reintegrate the loss of a traditional self that Charlene’s particular strand of feminist identity politics seeks to celebrate.²⁵⁴ The academics form in “consensus clusters” (85) on the night when they attempt to rob Randy of his private link to knowledge of the world. They, on the other hand, no longer hold any significance for Randy’s economic vision or personal or familial links to selfhood. As he comes back to America to sort out his and Charlene’s personal belongings, “Randy has been classified as an abandoner, no better than a married man who ups and walks out his wife and

²⁵⁰ See Frank, *What’s The Matter With America*, 3.

²⁵¹ Brzezinski cited in Patterson, *Restless Giant*, 255-256.

²⁵² It is interesting to note that the “resigned pessimism” which Rorty attaches to *Snow Crash* is the same device which Stephenson uses to debase the postmodern academics suggesting in many ways of Stephenson’s failure to find an independent critical stance when taking its critique to both postmodernism and politics of modernity. See Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 10.

²⁵³ It is similarly interesting to note Randy’s disinterested acts with technology, such as him working hard to build things (usually software programs) without “being good for anything” (60), is often undercut with a dialectic of shame and pride “he was embarrassed at having wasted so much time and mental energy on the project” (60). McGurl argues how shame and pride, self esteem and self-hatred is a dialect that sits at the heart of American educational theory and practice. In this sense, *Cryptonomicon*’s writing becomes attached to what McGurl sees as the intimate attachment between postwar literature production and practices of higher education and in particular the writing program situated therein. See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 284; 368.

²⁵⁴ Guillory argued how those that fractured the Standard had dismantled the art of criticism. This caused him to reconsider the triumphalism attached to their discourse. He finally argued that criticism was still a relevant act and a relation between the aesthetic and the economic was much more interestingly and problematically engaged in eighteenth century moral philosophy than in recent neorelativist critiques. Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, xiv.

children-never mind that he was the one who wanted to marry [Charlene] and have kids with her” (584). The academic culture leaves Randy feeling bereft of any emotion, which the novel attempts to reinstate through his novelistic quest for Amy. Randy’s search to act out rituals of maturity and purification focuses on a strain of reactionary conservatism, and Rorty’s suggestion of a bottom-up populist revolt to a cultural Left reform program which no longer has power to illuminate situations and motivate actions. Randy’s inability (or unwillingness) to make the transition to postconventional identity structures, or any authoritative statement (save free consensus between as diverse a variety of citizens as can possibly be produced), sets up a clash between antihumanist discourse and what is now being considered conformist politics of postmodernism.²⁵⁵

Randy, unlike Charlene, can find no place in a new order of social relations defined by academic appeals to persuasion. *Cryptonomicon* hints at how a “new ethic of aggression” (synonymous here for militarism) is latently stored in politically correct views and non-conflict attitudes shored up by a politics of difference, identity or recognition. Attempting to draw Randy into their strange Marxist sociability, the radical intellectuals are gradually turning the proposition country of America into a socially conservative state. The socialisms of Britain and Europe, run through Charlene’s abstracted objectivity (which is pulled into a certain narrow-mindedness when framing her critique of the transnational or multicultural), masks itself in *Cryptonomicon* as false directives of a struggle for power. Charlene is, in turn, being inducted into the sleep of negation spuriously proposed by New England settler and Yale conformist Kivistik. This challenges assumptions about the academics’ complex politics of historicism and the newly abstracted objectivity that disembods local determinations in what the novel implies as East Coast villainy—and more specifically, Yale-styled Yankee imperialism. The novel never outright expresses movement towards a fully administered world of late modernity, but it becomes recognisable through the academics’ appeals to specialized production. The notion of the new executive authority of a Europeanized West is extended through Kivistik invoking concern surrounding an arty liberal crowd’s pathologization of previous executors of modernism. The social elite that Second World War codebreaker Lawrence Waterhouse finds himself having to perform for in the wartime story is relocated in the historical class system of the Anglo-American modernist church of impersonality, as the Oxbridge don waxes lyrically on information theory (123).²⁵⁶ The feminist corrective of male American anglicised patriarchal

²⁵⁵ In this reading we can see how the literary critique of intentionalism in the novel that returns to the nineteenth-century realist promise of an objective reality now turns into a case of idealism in the novel. Which case of idealism or realism is more true is not the argument I make. They both become rhetorical and in Benn Michaels’s argument should be replaced by the real political question: “What sort of culture do we want to foster?” See Michaels, “Is There a Politics of Interpretation,” 255.

²⁵⁶ It is possible to draw out a principle in *Cryptonomicon* from Guillory’s terms in that it sets out from class to make condemnations on racial and sexual discriminations in the US public sphere. Although *Cryptonomicon* is thoroughly

ideology that lurks behind a specific type of necessary eloquence in the US is reconsidered as having lost some of its urgent appeal as political mode for understanding American society and culture. Charlene's antihumanist jargon is given a negative or comical framework, suggesting that her liberating response to an American nation judged by its literature has been commandeered by powerful social networks and clever players in the new system, who are busy turning the postmodern pedagogic relation (characteristic of the ambivalence Guillory saw in de Man's literary pedagogy) back into a site of subjective calculation.

The academics' politicized image-critique is reconsidered largely a dispassionate surface attempt to deal with deep social issues such as internal colonialization, information economy, posthistorical discourse and transnational capitalism in New Media spaces. Randy's indignant attitude towards the academics, software and the Internet reflects significantly on the digital revolution as it deterritorializes human relations.²⁵⁷ To distance Randy from such views, *Cryptonomicon* makes him ill-prepared for the proposition of a new technological sublime. The novel removes him from Charlene, under the pretence that she finds more comfort and security in Kivistik. Randy's movement through the novelistic space, leaving America and making contact with others, recreates the three-dimensional topics that act as a literary foil to America's newest cultural reform movement.²⁵⁸ However, because Randy is largely unreflective, naive and idealistic, and disconnected from the nexus of money and media, he draws reflexive emphasis towards a figure that the academics believe has been cocooned from America's recent cultural past. This reflexivity is never made overt to the character Randy, and the main reflexive emphasis draws focus towards those that have abstracted the political and historical subject from any forms of a universal history. Questions are raised as the academics seek to challenge, non-aggressively, a culture of American criticism previously critical of patriarchal aggression. "Conflict," the novel tells us, when it is "acted out openly and publicly, was a male model of social interaction – the foundation of patriarchal society which brought with it the usual litany of dreadful things" (82). Although this whole scene is comically set out to draw us into the farcical nature of 1990s American postmodern media culture and culture wars there is seriousness being built up and resistance to the way in which the intelligentsia's image of the Second World War veteran is abused, abstracted and denuded of historical meaning. In this scene, the novel lays claim not to an understanding associated with root causes of a society's ills--aggression typically associated with --males--but to crisis in historicity,

postmodern in this sense it fails to find an independently critical stance that will move it away from Bercovitch's way of understanding of the American ideology.

²⁵⁷ Rorty offered a distinction between "know-nothing-criticism" directed at the American academy and "insider criticism." To react with indignation was part of the former. See Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 127. *Cryptonomicon* never reacts with an outright indignant attitude or if it does so its dissent is modified within the narrative.

²⁵⁸ See Guillory, "The Sokal affair, for the differences between cultural studies and cultural criticism and how these two modes become inseparably linked in the postmodern discursive bloc.

as the academics deploy impersonal rhetorical tropes and deterritorialized networks to denude the veteran of meaning. Although the academics are acting in a non-conflict zone to counter the aggressive rhetoric of capitalist globalization, this scene challenges thirty years worth of theoretical expression, as it became culturally and technologically arranged to challenge history and the canon as a vehicle for progressive social change.

History Against Theory

William Bennett and Lynne Cheney, among many other neoconservatives, took great offence at the debunking of the canon, believing in part that this destroyed the American dream, based as it was around certain fundamental ideals. Ayers sets these debates out in a wider context, as he joins the chorus across the Atlantic to now reconsider twentieth century literary theory. In part, canon dismantling, akin to destroying Western philosophy, found voice in 1980s Foucauldian nonsubjectivist literature. Rorty placed almost insurmountable significances on damage done by this literature to democratic liberal ideals without reformist Left agendas. The reformist Left, in Rorty's view, came undone in New Left agendas: where the Old Left sponsored sixty years of liberal reforms, he argued that "the New Left botched the job." The culture wars, although largely forgettable for both Thomas Frank and McGurl—albeit for differing reasons—are the grounds from which Rorty believed reliable partisans of the New Deal rallied to the standards of conservatism to abase themselves at the throne of big business. The setting up of divides in the novel between New Right and Old and New Left politics, postwar secularism, radical campus college professors, popular resistance movements, and the current mass media are centrally thematic to *Cryptonomicon*. In reluctances to embrace technology as a way forward for America, Randy is to throw focus on the ambivalent professional-managerial aspect of modern academic liberalism. The novel reinterprets this malady, to suggest that what is being translated into practice in America amounts to an erosion of hard-fought freedoms. Kivistik's proposition, as he looks to recruit Charlene to Yale, holds America tight in the grip of the postmodern pluralist condition, and what is fast becoming seen as a flawed multicultural democratic reform experiment initiated from within humanities disciplines in universities.

The notion of culture spelt out by Charlene's group tells of the end Readings's modern University system, or at least of its uses of culture as a useful and meaningful humanist term. Charlene places herself somewhat as a guardian of true culture, of which the extant regime is merely a false or ideological version. The notion of culture spelt out in Bobby Shaftoe, on the other hand, can forestall the rush to move past instructive values of the past. John Diggins argues against such thought, which has gone into criticising America as isolationist and exceptionalist. He writes,

“much modern thought and meaning which theory critical of the enlightenment produced draws no distinction between force and persuasion, the exercise of power and the exercise of legitimate authority.”²⁵⁹ *Cryptonomicon* draws parallels towards such a reading, as Shaftoe at the beginning of the novel reminds private Wiley, “if he refrains from running over the coolies they will have some explaining to do” (3). *Cryptonomicon* not only defamiliarizes the racist slur from institutional use and postmodern intensification of Old Left affirmative action policies, but is sceptical towards the end of man as a freely determining subject, or, that forms and structures of power eventually reconstitute themselves. Shaftoe, in other words, does not signify the end of man (man here as synonymous for subject-centred reason at the core of western humanism, conflated with terror) by not *telling* Wiley to run over the coolies, but signifies that the understanding of the phenomenon of power suggests that its activities signify the very definition of man. If not a willing humanist subject – Shaftoe is the one that most knows what he is doing and he also fully understands the contingencies of each and every situation he is mercilessly flung into, he is still a classical liberal humanist subject more than he is riven by textual undecidability.²⁶⁰ He fights against the relativisms of truth, never failing to recognise a philosophical sensibility beyond what postwar academics see as insufficient understandings of the workings of power.²⁶¹

The mixing of fiction and function is given a classical (or national) symbolic orientation in *Cryptonomicon*, which can put it at odds with its postmodernist counterpart of mixing high art and low diction. The return to realistic end-oriented literary forms can be argued for or against. Spanos, for instance argues against this type of enterprise, seeing this largely as the failure of critics to think through what deconstructive literary theory offered by way of revolutionary portent.²⁶² On the other hand, the return to realism, for Hungerford and McGurl, allows new challenges to be met in the

²⁵⁹ Diggins argues “as a politician Lincoln was a pragmatist willing to adjust to events and to adapt different policies to different circumstances, ever ready to revise positions based on new developments, and determined not to see America bound by the dead hand of history. As a philosopher, however, Lincoln was a moralist and even an absolutist, unswerving in his belief that natural rights are inalienable and hence inviolable, that the Republic’s founding principles have the capacity, if properly understood, to remain immune to change, and that meaning of right and wrong is not relative and dependent upon time and place.” In Shaftoe’s nature there is this call to Lincoln style permanence. As a life threatened in the face of the postmodernist notion of contingency Shaftoe turns separation and dissolution into a symbol of national unity. See Diggins, *On Hallowed Ground*, 18; 37.

²⁶⁰ Shaftoe may not know what the objectives of his missions are but he forms the precondition of being free by virtue of understanding what is happening to him. However, as Michaels argues to install free choice at the heart of interpretation which seems to us free (like voting) are not, and hence there is no politics of interpretation. The point again being that this type of freedom to choose has proved unsuccessful in terms for the successful mobilisation of curiosity as the ends and means for successful socialisation. See Michaels, “Is There a Politics of Interpretation,” 258.

²⁶¹ It is worth adding this comment on Lincoln from Diggins in relation to a philosophical ideal latent in Bobby Shaftoe. Diggins writes: “More than a century ago, Lincoln had to wage intellectual war against this kind of reasoning, for the denial of truth and the claim that all beliefs are a matter of circumstance was precisely the position that Southern politicians took to defend slavery. The defence of slavery [...] articulated in [...] the realities of the plantation replaced the ideals of philosophy [...] Lincoln rejected such claims arguing for a larger national consensus – the philosophical cause of liberty accessible to each and every human being [...]. Without a philosophical sensibility all politics would be power and America would be unable to recognize the goals that it is failing to achieve.” See Diggins, *On Hallowed Ground*, 19.

²⁶² Spanos, “The Question of Philosophy and Poiesis,” 153.

university. As distinctions are spread farther afield in a more complex social reality, *Cryptonomicon* offers a way to read these debates on social differentiation, as its objects are isolated in what it portrays as the chronic shortage of functional –not fictional—process. For instance, Lawrence Waterhouse, in no uncertain terms, is a wartime killer and American. Like everyone else in wartime, he is carrying a gas mask, but his “looks different from everybody else’s because it is American and military” (137). The functionality of objects which isolate discrete systems (and the author’s discrete yearning for authenticity) comes into plainer view when the novel traces comparative emotional relationships straddling postwar political and cultural links to postwar intercultural independency.

Randy’s generational privilege and immediate ties to new technologies is enough for the academics to put him in the same morality league as unscrupulous cold war types and business moguls. It is the type of excessive technocratic rationalism of figures such as “LIEUTENANT COLONEL EARL COMSTOCK OF THE ELECTRICAL Till Corporation and the United States Army, in that order,” who we are also to learn is the “Cold War policy –guy—the brains behind Vietnam” (127), that fuelled postwar academics with anger and with rage, and where patriotism in the US lost a sense of its classless innocence. What new Americanist scholars found particularly vulgar was not only that the entwinement of instrumental reason and domination translated, into practice, as dangerous politics, but also that its continued misuse in the political sphere under classical ideals translated into the institutional domain as high standards of European form. However, the academics are held in isolation, as they, in a new objectivist interpretive method (synonymous with militarism), enforce “with a kind of neo-Puritanical rigor” (585) the foundational crushing global hegemonic of the US and Comstock’s dangerous politics onto Randy. What was once an unfortunate legacy has transformed, in turn, within the academics’ vision, into an underlying structural racist, sexist, heterosexist, and misogynistic America. The novel follows suit, yet the European-run state response to despondencies of Second World War is divided and separated in *Cryptonomicon*, and attacked for holding America to just one more socially binding norm. Simpleminded militaristic chauvinisms are in turn isolated into discrete systems and into cultural particularities. The academics become so concerned with stating their case, that they are seen to have eroded any possibility of negation in American (literary) contexts. *Cryptonomicon* is to separate Randy’s transgenerational links and ties from the continued overburdening on ideas on truth and what classical ideals represent. This allows it to separate itself formally and philosophically from the academics’ absorption and recycling of European theories of structuralism and poststructuralism that resurfaces from American contexts as deconstruction, new historicism or feminist theory.

Atlantic Crossing

Mark McGurl attempts to understand what are now becoming, for him, boring contradictions in cultural materialist arguments over postwar American Literature. For McGurl *Cryptonomicon* informs a socially penetrating investigative critical enquiry into the global nature of modern systems. He gathers up the constellation of postwar aesthetic problems in systematic terms. Like Gerald Graff and John Guillory before him, McGurl sets out a form of consensus for the contemporary period. He starts by dismantling one aspect of postmodern theory. For McGurl postmodernism is better understood when read through processes of reflexive modernity. He follows Niklas Luhmann's systems theoretical approach, claiming no epoch break has occurred regarding the system of society which would justify claiming a transformation from a modern to postmodern society. From this standpoint, McGurl creatively revises postmodern readings of post-1960s American Literature into concepts he names high cultural pluralism, technomodernism, and lower middle-class modernism. Introducing his concept of technomodernism he writes:

What Roth knows about Jewishness, and Morrison knows about the African American experience, writers like Powers, DeLillo and Pynchon know about the second law of thermodynamics, cybernetic causality, communications and media theory [...] and it is on the basis of this portfolio of technical-cultural capital that they, too, are put on the syllabus.²⁶³

McGurl argues that by tweaking postmodern literature as it intersects with information technology, a more interesting examination of narrative fiction and the literary canon can emerge in the postwar period.

McGurl sees in *Cryptonomicon* what he calls "schematic symbolising," taken from high culture and literary modernists, and begins to reevaluate aspects of its racialised narration.²⁶⁴ Unearthing a superficial postmodern synthesis, McGurl argues how *Cryptonomicon* "holds only a superficial narratological allegiance to racial otherness." The "almost impossible blood ties" in the novel for McGurl function as a discourse of difference, but simultaneously act as counter to the "uselessness of the arts" as a domain for making social and political claims on cultural forms.²⁶⁵ McGurl implies *Cryptonomicon's* overtly pluralist fiction stems from it being held in a version of cultural pluralism that was originally taken from a faculty philosophy of regionalism.²⁶⁶ In the postmodern strain where *Cryptonomicon* would be gathered alongside fictional works of Barth, Powers, DeLillo and Pynchon, it is an underlying regionalism that draws the machine to itself, and confronts an ethics

²⁶³ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 62-63.

²⁶⁴ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 70-71.

²⁶⁵ McGurl, "Pluralisms of Postwar American Fiction," 39.

²⁶⁶ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 59.

forming under the aegis of a discourse of difference with “its own unmarked dialectical reverse.”²⁶⁷ This abnormality, McGurl proceeds to argue, is a way in which the modernist aesthetic can be seen to ramify throughout the niche fiction of the post-1990s marketplace. In other words, McGurl offers *Cryptonomicon* not through the postmodern theory of justice but as a formalised aesthetic appreciation of how Lyotard’s games of perfect information are played out in an otherwise efficiency-oriented university environment.²⁶⁸ Seeing no way out from the single closed game of national culture mutations of the subject in French theory are annexed to a new style of literary and sociological engagement in McGurl’s analysis, and *Cryptonomicon*’s attempt to counter the devaluation of the aesthetic in academic studies is, according to him, relevant to a reading of how beauty-as-superiority reappears in the university, driven by the rhetoric of excellence.²⁶⁹

McGurl’s crossing of a systems theory analysis with the system of monetary capital allows us to see more clearly into Guillory’s thought experiment. Guillory argued, in relation to arguments ranged over aesthetic judgment and metaphysical pretensions and political biases, that “the point is not to make judgment disappear but to reform the conditions of its practice.”²⁷⁰ McGurl offers his analysis as he recognises that there is something afoot that transcends diversity as a factor in US based national studies. Just as crucially, McGurl can link together thoughts and debates taking place on both sides of the Atlantic in terms of revaluating the modernist literary aesthetic, and the open and radical affair of textuality. Patricia Waugh has recently argued new critical debates as a welcome return to the sense of the enormous humanising potential in English, and supplements Amy Hungerford’s comments on the period formerly known as contemporary. These two critics see new adventures in literature, as now it seems modernism was not what they were talking about, or at least if it were, then they needed a different context to do further talking.

²⁶⁷ The machine represents McGurl’s concept of systematic creativity in which he attempts to “realise a diverse aesthetic democracy” out of a “constellation of aesthetic problems” within “the aesthetic-institutional totality that they compromise.” See McGurl, *The Program Era*, x; 64; 74.

²⁶⁸ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 407.

²⁶⁹ I concur with Amy Hungerford when she argues that McGurl’s work is implicitly guided by Pierre Bourdieu. See Hungerford, “On the Period Formerly as Contemporary,” 413. On salvaging institutions and not poststructuralism for the Left McGurl writes: “At a time when the institutions inhabited by literary scholars and their students are under various forms of existential threat, and absent the likelihood of an anticapitalist revolution, this focus on liberation now seems much less urgent than the need to safeguard a stable institutional home. Of course, we remain rightly concerned with the social exclusions and other ills enacted by literary institutions, but their disappearance would not represent an answer to those dilemmas, only a disinvestment in literature. Sociology is the discipline most capable of theorizing the need for institutions, and a sociological approach to the literary institutions of the present will help to establish the existence of literary fiction as what Durkheim called a “social fact.” To see itself reflected in the mirror of sociology will allow literary studies to rediscover the institutionalism which it practices everywhere except in the critical arguments that it makes, where institutions so often figure as the enemy. It will allow literary studies to practice, in a mode proper to a time of reflexive modernity, a more reflexive institutionality.” See McGurl, “Ordinary Doom, 337.

²⁷⁰ See Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 340.

Resistances are currently being made to this growing edge of scholarly work that began in the 1990s in the US. However it is becoming increasingly evident that scholars that look to reevaluate the teaching and readings of literature and fiction bequeathed to a postwar generation of scholars, students, and activists will not go away, and that by reading creatively, they are beginning to reform the conditions of critical practice in the humanities.²⁷¹ Hungerford argues how for a generation in graduate school with theory at or just around its peak,

English was an export discipline with semiotic analysis entering history and political theory in the US through the work of Michel Foucault and Hayden White. Now English is importing, though again, in a way that honours the enduring value literary study places on close reading.²⁷²

Before moving on to how new directions in literary studies affect rhetorical and fiction studies in US humanities contexts, Readings argued that by Guillory looking to “universalise in reality the conditions of access to what the present offers us that is most universal” it was only seemingly possible to become Kantians after Marx.²⁷³ McGurl’s analysis offers a compelling and completing framework to Guillory’s critique on the problem of literary canon formation and refinements now being made inside and outside the institution in relation to the system of monetary capitalism. His revaluation of postmodernism opens onto new debates concerning literary scholarship and educational practices in the humanities and, in doing so it offers a convincing way to re-approach traditional aesthetic questions, and Waugh’s welcome return of the redeemable properties of the aesthetic.

McGurl avoids the cultural materialist argument. His starting point to reconsider the context for postmodernism is to first historicise the contemporary period by relocating the broader phenomenon known as the “turn to theory.” His realizing of an aesthetic democracy within the institution overcomes the pluralist overconstruction of potential space wrought on top of C. Wright Mills’ account of the cultural apparatus. Waugh is fully onboard with McGurl’s type of creative thinking and crafty reading. What she accounts as “crafty” can be read into how McGurl astutely situates his approach to making “literary experience relevant to a world that has many other things to do.”²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ The notion of reading creatively is best expressed as Michaels writes, “The act of creative supplementing would thus be an act of creative writing, producing not a new interpretation of the [...] text but a new text.” This is a long argument but argues for the case of how acts of interpretation is not freely chosen as say voting. Creative supplementing is one way in which to move around this impasse in acts of interpretation as the interpreter does not simply reinterpret meaning but changes it.

²⁷² See Hungerford “On the Period Formerly Known as Contemporary,” 417.

²⁷³ Readings argued that the “apparent plea for the relative autonomy of the aesthetic turns out to be a strong privileging of the economic base.” See, Readings, review of *Cultural Capital*, 325. See also, Readings *University in Ruins*, 110.

²⁷⁴ The crafty element of this sentence is to take on the mass vanity and anti-intellectualism now being reconsidered largely as a reckless attitude that allowed resurgent forces of corporate populism and reactionary conservatism to gain moral high ground in the public sphere and arguably where the academic left shot themselves in the foot as they failed

Mass vanity and anti-intellectualism, according to McGurl, failed to bring any meaningful intervention into further incursions of consumerism into the academy. McGurl is not politically depressed, seeing that if the world has many other things to do, then so has literature. McGurl believes that it is only right to protect the academy in this context. Failures of the cultural Left, if not embraced by McGurl, are tackled in a rather compelling (if not correspondingly bleak) way. He finds theoretical models and literary debates such as the “aura of rarity and the benefits of sympathy training” ultimately reductive. He looks to expend more of the University of Excellence’s Capacity to waste in a culture has become a corporate culture.²⁷⁵

A pre-McGurl reading experience is attached to the academics in *Cryptonomicon*. They are largely portrayed as holding onto post-Marxist philosophies, making their way through previous visions of collective selfhood, with dialectical adjustments on McGurl’s thinking on the information economy. What was finally extrapolated in campus wars was a critique of aesthetics from a critique of the canon. The academics in *Cryptonomicon* are made to reflect in Guillory’s terms. They take the “refusal of aesthetic value on the grounds that aesthetic value cannot be distinguished from any other values in the social realm not even economic value.”²⁷⁶ *Cryptonomicon*’s academics fashion their debates from significances of what an old modernist context was *purportedly* to look like, but from their postmodern perspectives—and the novel gets stuck in this critical progressive debate. To McGurl the postwar experience was an inversion of the reality that was promoted in postmodern fiction, and that postmodern fictions were the fictions of what postwar poets and writers had learned from school. Those that found collective voice in the shared subjectivisms of the 1960s countercultural legacies were showing, in other words, what they had learned in school.

Guillory argued that neoliberal critiques failed to historicise the concept of value itself, and this had resulted in impoverishment between the aesthetic and the economic. McGurl reapplies limited postmodern terms on the information economy as restrictions that plague postmodern and cultural materialist critique. He does not find within *Cryptonomicon* a cultural materialist critique of

to respond adequately to the nature of their own project. However, as Readings was seemingly right to contend it is “only when social equality has been set aside does aesthetic judgement become free.” See, Readings, review of *Cultural Capital*, 325. See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 70. See also footnote 284 for how McGurl moves beyond politics in the guise of epistemology in its precious form.

²⁷⁵ McGurl’s analysis makes use of Readings’s concept of excellence. To clarify what excellence is Readings writes, “most of all, excellence serves as the unit of currency within a closed field. [This] allows the a priori exclusion of all referential issues, that is, any questions about what excellence in the university might be, what the term might mean. Excellence is [...] a means of relative ranking among the elements of an entirely closed system: For the universities meanwhile, the survey [on excellence] affords the opportunity for each to clarify its own vision – and to measure itself against its peers. Excellence is clearly a purely internal unit of value that effectively brackets all questions of reference or function, thus creating an internal market. Henceforce, the question of the university is only the question of relative value-for-money, the question posed to the student who is situated entirely as a consumer, rather than as someone who wants to think.” See Readings, *University in Ruins*, 27.

²⁷⁶ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, viii.

existing conditions, fitting it instead into his larger project. We read through McGurl's creative reading what implicitly surmounts to mass intellectuality, and casualised or underpaid socialised labour power in the university. This is also a way of saying that he offers a response to Guillory's unmarked horizons of the canon debate, where libertarian attitudes and the capitalist culture of ambition and competition became streamlined in the production of a new university elite. McGurl ties postwar American Literature to shifting institutional processes and to the politics of the school, a relation that emerged between American higher education and the political sphere in the 1960s and 1970s. Making links to Guillory's thought experiment where the system alone gives meaning to intellectual production is hugely significant, as McGurl's project, playing in what Guillory argues is the game of culture, presents less dire consequences for the losers in the borders of a system that are strictly drawn. In other words, and in Guillory's terms in the facing of crushing defeat to capitalist economics, the best way to "socialising the means of production and consumption would be the condition of an aestheticism unbound, not its overcoming."²⁷⁷ Readings saw problems inherent in fixing culture as a closed system.²⁷⁸ However McGurl responds to Readings with a closed systems analysis of the postwar literary period, which is largely turning out to be very productive. McGurl approaches culture wars more soberly than most, arguing how the appearance of new subfields in the humanities, involving social differentiation and their associations with race and ethnicity, does not exhaust institutional meaning.²⁷⁹ As the educational system cashed out in the post-1960s workplace, stepping up to the plate to compete with the culture industry in the global marketplace, McGurl argues in a productive way how institutional process become part of postwar educational practices and these practices are now wholly referential to something else outside the university system.

What begins to emerge in the abandonment of previous historical and political claims on the function of cultural norms in society, as the academics in *Cryptonomicon* turn towards the movement of theory and its jargon, reflects more negatively and less productively McGurl's healthy concern towards political language, which has been abridged in postmodern discourse. Charlene is characteristic of how the American intellectual failed to develop her knowledge in new (Continental) formations of power, and as Readings would argue "the contemporary global development of capitalism as *jeux sans frontiers*."²⁸⁰ Caught in the coils of consumerism historical materials in the US that moved on difference, identity, and multiculturalism are being productively challenged as extensions of program eras or literary cultural capital. What *Cryptonomicon* draws

²⁷⁷ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 340.

²⁷⁸ See, Readings, *University in Ruins*, 108-110.

²⁷⁹ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 57.

²⁸⁰ See, Readings, review of *Cultural Capital*, 325.

attention to, as the academics fail to theorise in response to their project, is that America is becoming an increasingly shrinking space for relevant public debate (on modernist topics).

It was partly through de Man's legacy in the US that the idea of negation or subversion became considered a (liberal) illusion. De Man's literary –pedagogy—reading semiology, rhetoric and –literature—sought to replace Anglo-American authorial notions of selfhood held with interpretive criticism based on a process of negative totalisation. De Man's pedagogy soon became entrenched in the North American academy, where Derridean critics of consciousness in literature became a self-serving group, tying the aporias of language into theories of the text. McCann and Szalay argued that

Theory in American departments of literature played a pivotal role in the transformation of the profession of literary study – lending credibility to its claims to technical expertise and simultaneously legitimizing a change of values whereby the field's long established defence of the ineffable powers of literature, once stonily associated with tradition and the right, came to seem instead the face of a new style of progressivism.²⁸¹

The liberal pluralist critique of the school curriculum appended to Charlene's posthistorical discourse signals the text's wider pre-occupation with this type of American criticism, and its relationship to wider discourses of social value, post-civil era identity politics, along with an intensification of political models such as affirmative action.

A Concern for the Redeemable Properties of the Aesthetic

Linking my reading of *Cryptonomicon* to Guillory's sociological analysis of theoretical pluralism (as it became transferred from the institution to the wider non-academic terrain) allows me to reappraise McGurl's recent interdisciplinary analysis of the conditions of production and consumption of postwar American Literature. Although McGurl concentrates on the school's specific sociological conditions in these areas, he reads these conditions to understand and redeem aesthetic transformations of American fiction in the second half of the twentieth century. Bobby Shaftoe stands somewhat in an appositional reading alignment in the novel to McGurl, as he becomes a different type of American redeemer of American aesthetic experience. Tied to Georges Poulet's notion of a redeemer (because he cannot have a past or a future, being separated from Himself, this self now separated in the apocalyptic idiom of French theory) he is transferred to a phenomenological reading position, and the unity of the past that was, in turn, unified in the mind of the American author. Poulet is a pivotal, literary-historical figure in the US literary tradition. It was his *Phenomenology of Reading* and foundational unified concept of consciousness that became

²⁸¹ McCann and Szalay, "Magic," 455.

discredited in the 1966 John Hopkins lecture. This lecture introduced high French theory to the US literary establishment for the first time. McGurl's interdisciplinary analysis, on the other hand, in which he undertakes to argue how literary modernism, through the creative writing program, throughout the niche fiction of the post-1960s marketplace, redeems what is Anglo-American aesthetic experience from contemporary fictions, which were emphasized to perform more directly cultural work. McGurl does not return to the type of humanism that I want to read into *Cryptonomicon*. For reasons already set out, reading fictions in the in the French theoretical strain for McGurl no longer has purpose in literary studies or politics in general. Context and meaning has changed for McGurl, and the rhetoric and standard of excellence he argues "seems for now to be holding educational institutions together fairly well."²⁸² McGurl extends Guillory's analysis, tackling problems of higher educational practices that emerge either alongside or within politicised culture critique, and offers examples of *Cryptonomicon* that will set out his conceptions of technomodernism and high cultural pluralism. His quotation here is worth considering in full. He writes:

We have barely begun to register the full significance of the great transformation in higher education for postwar American literature. This is not to say that that dominant contexts and themes that have been delineated by its critics and historians up to now are unimportant, as the earlier chapters of this book amply attest, the multiplying of ways and means of high technology and mass mediation, usually analyzed under the rubric of postmodernism, must feature centrally in any comprehensive account of the field. So, too, the systematic incorporation and reproduction of cultural difference in that field, represented pre-eminently, though not exclusively, by the rise to prominence of the ethically or racially marked writer, is of obviously fundamentally importance to postwar literature. The interacting aesthetic formations associated with these socio-historical phenomena, which I am calling technomodernism and high cultural pluralism sit at the peak of prestigious postwar literary production. the advent of television; the Cold War; the civil rights movement; grassroots and academic feminism; the sexual revolution; the faltering economy of the 1970s; the conservative retrenchment of the 1980s and the gradual dismantling of the liberal welfare state; the ubiquitization of computers and the Internet; globalization, and many more besides, can and should assert their rightful claims on the attention of the literary historian. But the fact is that, at least insofar as we remain interested in literature per se, the rise of mass higher education in the postwar period might well claim an objective priority over all these other elements of sociohistorical and political context, if only in the literal sense that it is something we should account for first if we are to understand postwar American literature in genuinely historical materialist terms. This is not so because it is either inherently or ultimately more important than the rest, but because the university has been the indispensable and all but omnipresent institutional mediator of the relation between postwar text and postwar context.²⁸³

High cultural pluralism and technomodernism, terms McGurl prefers over multiculturalism and postmodernism, are noted by McGurl for their extractable, redeemable aesthetic qualities. As such he uses these concepts not only to challenge the current antifoundationalism found in modern

²⁸² McGurl, *The Program Era*, 407.

²⁸³ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 283.

liberalism and current cultural studies projects but also to realise his diverse aesthetic democracy in the institutional a priori of the institution. His terms reflect creatively upon what is now considered the poverty in the humanities, of being able to reimagine the relation between the cultural and the economic in social life. His efforts are worth reading at least for that much.

McGurl's reading of *Cryptonomicon* as a strand of technomodernism is made easier by Neal Stephenson's critical attitude towards a code of liberal heroics that would reaffirm national cultural identity and Leftist liberal anti-imperial positions, and points to how the novel adapts McGurl's conflation of cultural pluralism and regionalism. For instance, unfettered individuality, usually associated with the heroic quest of the solitary white male, is spoofed—yet the converse position (the gendered subject), as well as the neutral position taken by the academics, reflects only Readings's university, that has begun to behave more like a corporation than anything else.²⁸⁴ *Cryptonomicon* operates as a discourse of difference implicitly structured by McGurl's high cultural pluralist enterprise, where schematic symbolising taken from the high modernists is read through the text's pluralist concerns. In applying interpretive pressure to its "overtly pluralist fiction to make visible the machinery involved in its production of difference," it offers its engagements with information technology as a form of non-ethnic ethnicity. McGurl writes, "doing so, we see how even the whitest technomodernism can function as a discourse of difference, producing a symbolic placeholder for a paradoxically non-ethnic ethnicity, that might as well be called (with apologies to John Guillory) technicity."²⁸⁵ McGurl finally sees *Cryptonomicon* as symptomatic of specific sociological conditions of production and consumption, and of a specific institutional-aesthetic totality that is currently, in certain sections of the literary academy, being converted into a mode of historical judgement.

McGurl's analysis is one way in which we can read the novel as redeeming aesthetic experience from previous literary productions and readings that directly relate to or perform cultural work. Impossible blood ties in *Cryptonomicon* signify retractable aesthetic qualities for McGurl. However, what is more prominent throughout the novel is how the modern liberal imagination fails to disclose itself as ideological, specifically when it produces an imaginary separation between the cultural and the public sphere. And in a more mundane humane offering, *Cryptonomicon* is reflective, rather than symptomatic, of cultural and literary national imagining of the 1990s era in both academic criticism and its discontents. The imaginary separation enables liberal subjects to experience the otherwise threatening contradictions released by the cold war consensus as the

²⁸⁴ Readings did argue for some points taken from his evaluation of the logic of excellence in terms of gender. See, *University in Ruins*, 126.

²⁸⁵ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 62.

negative capability of a whole self. The academics bringing forward contemporary views on historical contingency is the failure to rethink the notion of an incomplete self, and in this vein, they surrender the theory of the *Ur* coding of American literary and liberal history to what the novel presents as an elitist corporate standard. The major concern for *Cryptonomicon* is not debates in academia per se, but rather that the harsher realities of neoliberal economics and neorealist critiques that have taken a sclerotic hold on the American university system centre in the institutionalizing impulses in Europe. The mass intellectuality the academics bring to the reading of American literature is very different from the one that American literature from the very beginning set out to do. *Cryptonomicon*, as we shall see, in this reading becomes very ethnocentric in an old Americanist aspect.

Offering the opportunity to explore McGurl's analysis, *Cryptonomicon* can hardly take a similar "reflexively reflexive" position. Using Langdon Hammer's concept of the culture of the school to account for the production of postwar American literature has two relevant uses for McGurl.²⁸⁶ The first is to diversify his argument from Guillory's, and the second is to give a new context of meaning in which to define what modernism looks like in the twenty first century. As Charlene's group become less and not more informational less and not more communicational, *Cryptonomicon* presents itself as having a democratic job to do for all races and nations. A grand or focalising narrativising agency that can redeem the aesthetic from Charlene's cultural radicalism is not held together in McGurl's liberating response to Readings, but in an old Americanist strain. There is a sense of adversarial potential in *Cryptonomicon*'s language and art that uses foundational myths and symbols to critique a lapsed productive critique on the family institution and the nation. *Cryptonomicon*'s preoccupation with signature, how it focalizes on these characters, reflects how pluralist strategies (the overstated or outlived claims of performance, contingency and indeterminacy) helped to eliminate the regulatory environment that previously existed between the state, the nation and the family. In the process, the academics' specialised conception of art was seen to exhaust existing critical vocabulary surrounding race and ethnicity. *Cryptonomicon* adds to its critique the ruination of Charlene's globally oriented and Leftist discourse within a corporatized university system, aligning the spread of the casualisation of the academic labour force to pervasive forces of capital that centre in Europe.²⁸⁷ This, in turn, the novel links to Old World Marxist rhetoric and Charlene's posthistorical discourse. In this reading, (and like McGurl's but following a

²⁸⁶ See Hammer, "Plath's Lives: Poetry, Professionalism, and the Culture of the School," 61-68.

²⁸⁷ Critics such as Bruce Robbins had argued that the shifting of employment away from tenured faculty to a contingent workforce is a real concern, and needs to be reconsidered creatively. *Cryptonomicon* can hardly be asked to confer to this type of thinking, but rather reflects instead Guillory's unforeseen horizon of canon debate, as the academics in the novel sit in what they believe is a sheltered ivory tower while politics and commerce are elsewhere. See Robbins, "Celeb-Reliance: Intellectuals, Celebrity, and Upward Mobility."

different tack) *Cryptonomicon* is implicitly structured by (or intersects with) latent republican sentiments formed within commitments (in a canonical sense) to the constitution of what America was or was about to become. The academics' dismissal of a previously true American system rekindles the question of nationalism, which David Shumway argues "was the strongest ideological force behind the emergence of American literature as a discipline...and the very basis on which humanities disciplines had been organised from their beginnings in the late eighteenth century."²⁸⁸

Blaming the System

Of my two readings of *Cryptonomicon* I also begin to ask questions surrounding notions of feeling, affect (theory) and pedagogy in order to interrogate what McCann and Szalay offer as the libertarian turn in American literary and cultural criticism. Randy is fundamentally dispossessed of his Americanist nationalist civic values by default of his bourgeois humanist reason—this much is certain in the novel. In light of Charlene's gendered subject position, his unfettered individuality and moral authority, representative of a patriarchal order, has been relocated in the academics' overconstruction of potential space. Within this relationship, Randy's realist logic of representation comes into conflict with something that cannot be encompassed within its benevolent orbit. To explain what this benevolent orbit is, the academics round upon Randy for espousing views straight out of a Horatio Alger novel. Without reading too deeply into Alger's social reform experiment, Randy condemns the academics telling them "just because it's an old idea, doesn't mean it's wrong" (85). Of course, Charlene's revisionist approach (overtly structuralist and poststructuralist, and concentrating mainly on America as a proto-imperial power) not only challenges nineteenth century reform movements, but also, according to the views of McCann, Szalay, and McGurl, forms an integral part of the counterculture imagination and countercultural writing. Expressed in Leo Marx's terms, the movement was to re-evaluate the role of traditional models of resistance and social reform, and notions on national identity in the US. Charlene reads postmetaphysical epistemology at a middling university and I have shown how her love of theory is given a spurious characteristic. The erotics that surrounds the discipleship of de Man can be traced to ambivalent theories of pedagogy that McGurl claims is an under theorised element in the 1960s countercultural imagination and countercultural writing. We see how this under-theorised element in the novel has nothing in common with democracy. Charlene surrenders her life and mind to a man. Glory, on the other hand, does not need to be defended by any one man. The novel challenges proposed solutions of postwar academics and their thinking on the information economy, suggesting it is not Randy's calculation of self-interest that is at stake (as part of an elite scientific caste this could always be the

²⁸⁸ Shumway, "American Literature Coming Apart," 660.

case) but their own interests.²⁸⁹ Without a code of liberal heroics for the grand-narratives of history, the novel reflects a “retreat into professionalisation” capturing this mood, both inside and outside the university.²⁹⁰

Placing an ontological concern into *Cryptonomicon*'s aesthetic forms, Charlene's retreat as a form of political depression offers the opportunity to appraise new resurgences in the institution towards public commitment. This is if one does not want to follow or realise the diverse aesthetic democracy model of McGurl. “Juxtapolitical” is a term used in Lauren Berlant's women's culture genre, and works alongside the public space to register a historical commitment to the social space that sits *alongside* the political. Berlant's constructivist view of compassion (her starting off point) reflects “compassion's ineffectiveness or failure to be a good in itself.”²⁹¹ Berlant's “affect formalism,” where she gets tough on compassion in order to avoid the returns to unreconstructed American antebellum sentimental liberalism, attempts to redefine public engagement in what John Johnson calls a “renovated trauma studies.”²⁹² Berlant, it can be argued, resides outside McGurl and Hungerford's notions of “long modernism,” and what it looks like now, from the middle to the late twentieth century. In Johnson's terms, Berlant “moves towards a synthesized completion of several strands of contemporary theoretical discourse, including Marxist historicism, everyday life theory, and a renovated trauma studies.”²⁹³ My point here is not to thoroughly go through Berlant's complex formal challenges, seeing what kinds of frameworks it offers for a reading of *Cryptonomicon*, but to argue that, when read through the novel's attacks on the academics, Berlant's toughening view of compassion is taken as recriminatory evidence or a rear-guard action of an otherwise depleted Left, a Left whose countercultural response to capitalist economics found last redoubt in the American university system.²⁹⁴ This last stand, which was isolated (even purged, some would say) in US American humanities contexts, with the help of culture wars of the 90s, is

²⁸⁹ Paul Giles argues that “if a self-regarding contempt for the supposed anachronisms of English as a subject provided the initial impetus for American Studies programmes in the 1970s, as Ickstadt suggested, what greased their wheels in the 1990s was, above all, money. In what might be described as its comfortable middle age, American Studies in this country consolidated itself by accumulating substantial income from state agencies like HEFCE and the QAA, from RAE and TQA exercises, a cycle whose success was paradoxically assured by the way American Studies continued vigorously to protest its own embattled, minority status.” Giles, “Transnationalism in Practice.”

²⁹⁰ Readings writes “[t]he university no longer has a hero for its grand narrative and a retreat into professionalisation has been the consequence. Professionalisation deals with the loss of the subject-referent of the educational experience by integrating teaching and research as aspects of the general administration of a closed system: teaching is administration of students by professors: research is the administration of professors by their peers [...] Significantly, the synthesizing evaluation takes place at the level of administration.” See Readings, *University in Ruins*, 126.

²⁹¹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 9.

²⁹² Johnston, “The Intuitionist and Pattern Recognition: A Response to Lauren Berlant,” 867.

²⁹³ Johnston, “The Intuitionist and Pattern Recognition: A Response to Lauren Berlant,” 867.

²⁹⁴ My understanding here does not have to be carried forward in absolutist terms. It can be carried forward in terms of dissensus agreement or performative resistance to reactionary politics to theory in its contemporary guise.

reinvigorated in Berlant's "Late Liberalism."²⁹⁵ Berlant's political Leftist initiatives (overtly and quite unashamedly Deleuzian and Foucauldian) undoubtedly still find linkages with antirealist epistemological views of postmodernism. Berlant is obviously not getting with the program of what the school tells us.

In spite of the negative aspects postmodern linkages now hold in American contexts, affect theory as a renovated trauma studies continues to have a prolonged shelf life in humanities contexts—predominantly, that is, as a route to “discussing the relationship of biological response and ideology, of emotion and social construction.”²⁹⁶ Berlant, it seems, was one step ahead of the game of culture in the backlash to academic theory, and what even McGurl argues are the “crude” conversions of postwar literary production (i.e. historical materialism into a mode of aesthetic judgement).

In my reading and as a whole, *Cryptonomicon* plays on the other aspects of Berlant's cultural studies understanding of an otherwise defeated culturalist pluralist response, by tying Charlene's academic jargon with its “heavy load of shadings and connotations” (52) to old world institutionalizing impulses and what comes with them: the betrayal of Americanist foundational myths, and, more importantly, the dismantling of the “the no-saying in modernist literature.”²⁹⁷ However, *Cryptonomicon* does not shy away from blaming the system, as it ties the republican civic ideals and values to the sadistic socioeconomic identities that emerge in the Manifest destinies, and the Second World War (and Cold War) ideologies. In other words, it is also critical of the system of American empire. For instance, Coastal Indian tribes—“the Cavuse” and “the Salish”—are mentioned, albeit somewhat vaguely, in terms of Andrew Loeb's “metahistorical scholarship” (and, for Randy, what sounded like the “beginnings of a pretty cool game” [57]). Similarly, Pacific military bases like “the big military base at Cavite” (42) are mentioned, which take in a huge amount of historical and imperialist data, beginning from Spain's imperialist conquest of the Philippines to the United States takeover of Cavite in the battle for Manila bay, and the subsequent use of Cavite as a military landing strip used extensively during the Vietnam War. *Cryptonomicon*'s knowingness can be seen as part of the dominant antihumanist stridency that gripped both the

²⁹⁵ Berlant in her preface acknowledges “the Late Liberalism Group” See Berlant, *Complaint*, xiv. Paul Fry in a series of 2009-10 lectures condemns critics like Judith Butler for latent attempts to culturally concretize moral appeals to equality as well as mutual recognition and appreciation of different forms of life. Fry takes John Guillory's text to be the watershed for high theory in North American literature departments. See for instance Paul H. Fry, “Introduction to Theory of Literature,” *Open Yale Courses*, October 2009, <http://www.apieceofmonologue.com/2009/10/open-yale-courses-theories-of.html>

²⁹⁶ Wanzo, “Against Proper Affective Objects,” review of *The Female Complaint*, by Lauren Berlant, 967-978.

²⁹⁷ See Fluck, “Romance with America,” 3.

American public sphere and academic contexts (but now it seems mainly academic contexts) in the 1980s and 1990s.

According to Fluck, New Americanist and diversity studies were prone to demonstrating how empire (and everything that goes with it) stood at the centre of American literary history. *Cryptonomicon* bears all the hallmarks of a Pynchon or DeLillo novel, as it challenges the wartime and imperialist policies of Roosevelt and Churchill, and instrumentalist uses of men in wartime. However (and putting aside for the moment McGurl's analysis of *Cryptonomicon's* intimate relationship with postwar literary production and the practices of higher education) like Lawrence Waterhouse's community, the community of the Native American is not turned over into a politicised culture-critique for a middle-class counter-culture mainstream. Loeb's character caricatures the radicalized revolutionary primitive tribe of student youth and counterculture appropriations of Native Identity, as he makes out to re-enact dietary habits of Native Indians or "playing Indian." His parents also present a dysfunctional element of the 1960s intermixing of corporate and counter-cultural identities. Andrew's father is a lawyer. "After getting Andrew back from his mother in a bitter divorce battle his father showers him with material possessions and hires some fringe psychotherapists to hypnotize Andrew and get him to dredge up repressed memories of unspeakable and improbable horrors" (61). *Cryptonomicon* can be given either a reading that tacks it to what McGurl calls a coercive cultural pluralism (multiculturalism) and/or structural racism. At what level of interpretation we are to account for its difficulty is a tough task, and something I touch upon in the following readings.

The first way to approach *Cryptonomicon's* reading difficulty, perhaps through what Hungerford argues is the "hefty postmodern slabs that formerly sat on the syllabi as proof of difficulty," is by relating it back to how McGurl sees theories of pedagogy playing an ambivalent role in the countercultural imagination, and modern liberalism in general.²⁹⁸ *Cryptonomicon* does not miss this under theorised element, playing on the elements of western cultural pluralism as synonymous with coercion. It critiques seriously a certain form of compositional doubling as Sergeant Frick, a wartime marine "turns Asiatic" (39), reflecting how the history of global relations (i.e. historical knowledge) is the "moral equivalent" of the history of Western states. In turn, *Cryptonomicon* jokingly criticises the countercultural imaginary and countercultural writing that McCann and Szalay express in theory (literally) "presided over the intellectual marriage of professionalism and a newly fortified version of the ethos of the counterculture." They go on to note this marriage "[through] theory would dominate the literary academy in the last decades of the twentieth

²⁹⁸ Hungerford, "On the Period Formerly Known as Contemporary," 418.

century.”²⁹⁹ The point here is that the misrecognition and mistreatment of otherness in *Cryptonomicon* is built not from the marriage of theory and professionalism (i.e. Charlene and Kivistik), but rather from an old Americanist strain, and a textual double structure when read through the possibility of the older liberal values of negation. Working on the myth symbol school legacy that American imperialist relations were not structural or constitutive to the idea (and the ideal) of America but rather the unfortunate legacies largely left over from the old world, we see how *Cryptonomicon* presents itself in this vein. For instance, property relations in *Cryptonomicon* are seen as a lasting legacy of the old bourgeoisie. The novel attempts to overcome this unfortunate legacy by destroying Randy’s Old Victorian house, placing it within old world legacies and pasts. Also, Yale sits much closer to the old world and the institutionalizing impulses that centre there. In turn, the academics come from these places of old world interest, with what the novel presents is the faux radicalism of the conference circuit. California is the farthest place west of colonising instincts, and perhaps the last place to be affected or colonised by the pervasive forces of old world capital interests. California is, of course, one of the most commercialised states in the US, yet it is the corruptive forces of capital which are at stake here, and not capital liberalism per se. Roots and legacies still find their way back to the old world in *Cryptonomicon*, and in my reading, these unfortunate legacies have taken hold of the double meaning of the American text, signalling the lapsed possibility of negation.

Blaming the system in an old Americanist strain can also be found in attacks on Charlene’s academic crowd’s abstract denunciations on “the Spectacle” (51).³⁰⁰ Their attitude in *Cryptonomicon* is that nobody is free from perspective, and they highlight the contemporary inability to set out moral claims that will make much of a practical difference to anyone, let alone Randy. In short, Randy is going nowhere if he stays with Charlene. He is backed down into such a state of enmity when the academics attempt to rob him of foundations, that he resorts to using a Master-Slave dialect. His possibility of negation shattered, he is confronted in a relation of opposites (80; 84). Charlene offers no help to Randy, and she is placed as subject to Kivistik’s conditions of Reason. In the scene where Randy is attacked and largely ignored by Charlene, she is humbled before Kivistik, and being made so, she symbolically transfers the brutality of man into American public space. In this reading, *Cryptonomicon* invokes new and old sentiments of pragmatists William James and Rorty. Placing classical and new pragmatism together, Daniel Malachuk argues that both men argued for “a religion of humility before Contingency [which] is

²⁹⁹ McCann and Szalay, “Magic,” 456.

³⁰⁰ *Cryptonomicon*’s attacks on the academic’s understanding of the spectacle does not ultimately rest on a Stewart Home type critique of Debord’s theory but rather it suggest that those that have understood the nature of the spectacle have only done so in order to reinvest it with what the novel portrays is their already co-opted criticisms and as such their dissent has become or is already commodified. See Home, *What is Situationism*.

better than one of humility before Reason.”³⁰¹ Characters in *Cryptonomicon* such as Randy, who, although are not immediately likable and thus force us to reconsider the value of the modern literary text, allow us into the world of the anti-intellectual consensus of a broadly defined antifoundationalism, and its partial capture by an upwardly mobile faction of the new middle class.³⁰² He and other characters can represent what James Wood calls a “true fiction” that is worth knowing in all his fullness and complexity, to oppose what the narrator presents.

Cryptonomicon's stabs at the academics' handing over the possible hope for negation in literary studies to the will of one man (Kivistik) finds common ground in Guillory and Rorty's critical views on how American politically progressive social reform movements were left with an unplanned response to conservative laws of government. The liberal Left, following the leap of many “AD” scholars, sought to face down racial and other discriminations in Cold War American consensus politics, tracking, in cultural and public spheres, systemic effects of American sadisms and social biases towards women and non-white ethnic citizens. *Cryptonomicon*, although not dealing with Cold War ideological containment directly, highlights the coming inception of these new separated spheres for communication, and their blighted aftermath in 1990s telecommunications scandals. The informationalization of cultural knowledge, which robbed the American individual of aesthetic appreciation, tantamount to an annihilation of critical thinking in Andrew DuBois's view, became another bargaining chip for capitalist economics' continuing spectacular dominances.³⁰³ Charlene's posthistorical attitude, in which “to stand in awe of nothing is the only way to feel really good about yourself” is a rebuttal seemingly of nothing, yet seemingly conserving of old world legacies.³⁰⁴ *Cryptonomicon*, on the other hand challenges a classical Anglo-

³⁰¹ Malachuk, “Loyal to a Dream Country,” 112.

³⁰² In a borrowed insight taken from William James's pragmatism we can see how Charlene's pacifism is linked to militarism as moral equivalent. This is quite complex but in the moral equivalent the academic's conserve militarist's and not the pacifist's non-conflict beliefs and covertly inscribes them to work with new realities. Randy, on the other hand, is the other spectrum of this moral equivalent which is the American equivalent of an open door policy or what others label its imperialism. For notions on James's moral equivalent see Malachuk, “Loyal to a Dream Country,” 89-113. Also, as the academic's attempt to force the Hegelian dialect on Randy's subject position and aspects of self-management they largely remain ignored or inconsequential when they attempt to come into the place of their conquest. “Lying on his bed at 3am in the Manila Hotel” after his bust up with Charlene, Randy thinks that rather than his outburst of indignation being an “attempt to turn their weapons against them [...] [it was] more likely out of the uncontrollable urge to be a prick” (84). Randy, in short, will not mediate the academic's reason through his relationship of being a slave and thus the academic's are shown as attempting to master the negative capability of the self to project this self elsewhere only to master the truth of themselves. Those that follow the Hegelian dialect gives expression in *Cryptonomicon* as how its form closes out those that find hollow victory if their point is only to master the truth of themselves. Leibniz's critical monism is also a critical reflection that can surface here.

³⁰³ Without aesthetic appreciation, the American mind, DuBois argues, has capitulated to the tyrannous world Michel Foucault depicted in *Discipline and Punish*. However, rather than conform to this type of collective *Cryptonomicon* restates a case for a return to aesthetic evaluation and appreciation. See Dubois, “Introduction,” in *Close Reading: The Reader*, 34.

³⁰⁴ Malachuk “Loyal to a Dream Country,” 109. See also Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 125.

American centre, reformed within corporate liberalism, showing how the military industrial complex was covertly adapted to a larger cultural industrial informational system.³⁰⁵

Cryptonomicon, rather than use the metafictional form to isolate new postconventional identity structures in rhetorical reading strategies, isolates in intensely experiential sequences Charlene and her crowd's movement away from common feeling and experience. Their performative appeal to inequalities of access to material goods are singled out as having removed from America direct action, the reading of books (such as Randy's reading of books to learn computer language), and the act of critical thinking. Amy (America Shaftoe) helps to restore the complex balance between artists' appreciation and intuitive feeling in Randy, as Charlene's pluralist agenda has turned into one of contrasting absolute ideals. In this reading, what we see began in the new Left agenda of multiculturalism and subsequent postmodern ideas on truth have swept with a sneer, much like the Second World War veteran, Randy's transient experience into the ash-bin of posthistorical discourse.³⁰⁶

Paying particular attention to institutional processes, Guillory implied that discourse ethics non-finite responsibility towards the other, and the feminist corrective to patriarchal ideology (among other legitimate concerns) became institutionalised and depoliticised in the context of the school. He writes:

What the project of canon-critique still lacks is the analysis of how the institutional site of canonical revision mediates its political effects in the social domain. There is no question that the literary curriculum is the site of political practice; but one must attempt to understand the politics of this practice according to the specificity of its social location. The specificity of the political here cannot mean simply a replication of the problem of representation in the sphere of democratic politics and therefore it cannot mean simply importing into the school the same strategies of progressive politics that sometimes work at the legislative level. Should we not rather rethink the whole question of what the political means in the context of the school as an institution? The institutional question bears directly on the current impasse at which the pluralist agenda is lodged, its vacillation between integrationist and separatist institutional strategies between the incorporation of noncanonical works into the curriculum on the grounds that such works ought to be canonical and the establishment of a separate or alternative curricula which continue to be presented as non-canonical in relation to the traditional curriculum.³⁰⁷

McGurl builds on Guillory's reading of the school's embracement of diversity. His reading puts it at odds with previous readings of postwar aesthetic dispositions forming under the aegis of an ethics of difference (basically what we mean when we say postmodern fiction). Although McGurl puts

³⁰⁵ See Melanie Waters for unscrupulous information gathering methods of Hoover and Roosevelt and state-sponsored surveillance. Melanie Waters, "Those Times," 186-187.

³⁰⁶ Frank argues how Democrats in the 90s were giving blue-collar voters the brush off "ousting their issues, with a laugh and a sneer, to the dustbin of history." See Frank, *What's The Matter With America*, 244.

³⁰⁷ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 8.

self-expression back on the table of diversity studies, he elicits no immediate or unreconstructed romantic attachment to the cultural theoretical transformation of the self-present experience of literature.³⁰⁸ McGurl, although standing in opposition to certain kinds of ethnicity and culturally representative ethnic studies struggles, proffers a meta-commentary on such terms, ideas and debates--whilst also adding some new terms of his own. McGurl changes multiculturalism into high cultural pluralism, which offers a greater account of multiculturalism through the standing of the school, while not reducing it to terms of the previous assimilation-separation debates. Whether McGurl's systems theory analysis is a useful term for further readings of postwar American fiction is another matter entirely. However, McGurl's reading moves towards a re-understanding of this period. In some American corners, and not taking such an objective step backwards as McGurl to refashion notions of self-expression or reading the self as self presence in postwar American fiction, politicised culture critique and deconstruction techniques were seen to have robbed the American mind of the art of classical interpretation and appreciation. The robbing of the mind of Randy's creative classical values is attacked in Charlene's contemporary attachments to classical and modern understandings of power. Charlene's turn to Kivistik and away from Randy reflects how the historical outlook of the novel critiques a cultural Left point of view which capitulated in more ways than one to a 1960s liberal Left's defeat to capitalist economics. This is tantamount to saying, as Hungerford does, that "the second half of the twentieth century sees not a departure from modernism's aesthetic but its triumph in the institution of the university."³⁰⁹ The novel is complex in this regard, as it taps into the metafictional historiographic method, rather than literary perspective, to critique the new historicist critique of the aesthetic. Similar to how Jonathon Franzen connected the big ambitious social novel to postmodernistic expression, the metafictional form drops out of meaningful sight. Franzen's taking of this approach is well documented. Behind the use of theories of power as a relevant critique of white western liberal humanism is an unplanned response to conservative laws of government. Alongside opening *Cryptonomicon's* historicist recovery to McGurl's extended analysis, I explore in the last reading themes and debates of what has happened in cultural theory, and literary response to greater forced expressions since.

³⁰⁸ Because McGurl is breaking new ground whenever he mentions concessions to the authorial self he qualifies his return with what other may still consider a return to a naive humanism (see Waugh). McGurl often expresses his comment "goofily anachronistic" when attempting to reinstitute the self in the reading process yet McGurl persists expressing how authorial intrusion or the presence of the authorial self can be built back into storylines "at least as a function of process." McGurl writes "the literary historian does not commit too large an offense against the church of impersonality when he attempts to reverse-engineer the process of formal impersonalization." In short McGurl re-examines what happens when matters of distinction are distributed across a closed system that posits an outside to itself. See McGurl, "Understanding Iowa: Flannery O'Connor," 542. See also McGurl, *Program Era*, 409. See also how many attempts to build a way out of poststructuralist theory understood as a series of improvisations on the post Kantian form of university metaphysics are now using such words as "goofy" or "baggy" or "crafty" to relate to postmodern fictional stories and their writers, in order to designate a shift from the experimental and discursive mode to a more nuanced and practice-oriented engagement with liberal philosophy and creative energies of humanism.

³⁰⁹ Hungerford, "On the Period Formerly Known as Contemporary," 418.

Two Conclusions

Both McGurl and Guillory's arguments bend towards a similar conclusion: that an analysis between literary production and the practices of higher education is the best starting point to reconsider postwar American literature. McGurl finally takes out his meta-perspective on *Cryptonomicon* to read creatively not negatively further incursions of consumerism brought into the academy. I, on the other hand, read *Cryptonomicon* as blaming the institution for its reading in the French theoretical mode. It is, therefore, productive to see how it challenges the middle-class liberals, by posing challenges to their discourse as susceptible not only to celebrity media news culture (mass vanity + anti-intellectualism = jacked-up narcissism and would be mini-dictatorships), but also to a discourse of mastery in Old World contexts. This betrayal is often quite awkwardly portrayed in Charlene's liberally progressive educational strategies to denude the Second World War American historical subject of any referential meaning. From *this* betrayal of national principles, *Cryptonomicon* offers resistance to the study of cultural works as a practice of reading and writing from a corrupted model of the university system, and offers opportunities to reappraise the backlash to Foucauldian Leftist centred views. It also offers opportunities to reappraise the backlash to those views hamstrung by a disabling commitment to theory and its jargon, which rounded upon the author as a modern invention through what is now considered highly contentious (and politically suspect) uses of history.

McGurl's reading of *Cryptonomicon* creates a problem around being able to lay counterclaims to a neorealist critique attached to the culture of the school. McGurl relocates the turn to theory not in its original context or meaning, but in its adaptations into America. To get his point across, he likens Forrest Asa' Carter to a "red-neck Paul de Man." In doing so, it can be argued, he places *Cryptonomicon* within an updated analysis of postwar American Literature, and thus it no longer seems necessary to read a novel in a way that expresses it, avoiding what were once considered necessary linkages between Leftist politics and postmodern epistemology. McGurl's argument collapses the Renaissance creativity that the author, I argue, is attempting to reinstate in processes of reading and writing. In McGurl's understanding, *Cryptonomicon*, conversely, offers the opportunity to reappraise the notion that when all had been said and done in the New Critical idiom, it stands as a cultural monument not to previous literary production (which it also does in using the schematic symbolising of white modernists, and which invites in Guillory's terms research into processes by which cultures are formed and how they constitute themselves by reference to each other), but to his analysis of the "increasingly intimate relation between literary production and the practices of higher education." This, McGurl argues, "is the key to understanding the originality of

postwar American Literature.”³¹⁰ The novel, in other words, sets up a discourse of difference between the automated community of the technocrat and the automated community of the academic crowd—yet, rather than saving previous literary production from antihumanist or postmodern epistemology, can still be read through the intimate relationship that developed between the institution and postwar American Literature of which, McGurl argues, *Cryptonomicon*'s baggier brand of technomodernism forms a significant part.

³¹⁰ McGurl, *The Program Era*, ix.

Chapter 3. Dissensus

Without a desire for the political there is no democracy.
Lauren Berlant.

Introduction

In this chapter I will demonstrate how *Cryptonomicon's* tension-fraught concerns about Randy's lost art of appreciation reflect a shift away from the authors and critics that were directly responding to themes of inauthenticity and undecidability. Through Randy's staking a claim for his own individuality yet also how he alternates with other characters rather than this offer further reappraisals of the posthistoricist substitution of identities for arguable beliefs we will see how his subject position is given new ground for textual appraisal and historical study. I will offer the readings of the four primary texts not in the deconstructive mode where no decision can be given on the bases of what seems to be true but in the search for reaffirming frameworks and integrative narratives endemic to American contexts. Because my focuses turn not on the sociopolitical content of art's meaning but art as a meaningful form of criticism, and how this relates to the dynamics of a national cultural identity in the US this will lead me to reconsider in what ways the characters in *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle* begin to rewrite their politicised acts of interpretation. This will be more specifically addressed in terms of how these characters' relationships, as the subjects of recent specialised Americanist studies, bind their attachments to ideas of truth within initiatives that are unique in their focus on national politics, a doctrine of individualism, and literary production.

The emergence of a women's culture concept in *The Baroque Cycle's* three volumes invoke Lauren Berlant's challenges to Bercovitch's a priori determining apparatuses in his notion of a single US public sphere. The intellectual capacity of Bercovitch's study to recall all differences in his nativist rhetoric is a highly convincing argument. His approach precludes the search for radical teaching methods and alternative perspectives on American culture, thought, and language. Just as Bercovitch argued that ideology in its narrowest sense could be linked to a consensus of a marginal or maverick group Berlant argued albeit indirectly in its broadest sense it brought back fundamental tenets of the constitutional framer's acts. In these terms we will see how ideology critique is given new aesthetic variants for the conflicts that reaffirm the dominant nationalist hegemony in the US. Berlant argues this hegemony is still masculine and still white. A key aim of the chapter is also to re-engage with an apparent certain weariness surrounding the project of exposing and demystifying the ideological forces at work in American art and culture. Taking into account Berlant and Bercovitch's concerns their readings draw out a conflict of interests over the competing modes of interpretation that I want to argue underwrites *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle's* modes of

experimentalism. A further aim of the chapter is to lift the tension ridden state of *Cryptonomicon*'s writing out of a deconstructive mode of analysis tying it more concretely to Bercovitch's dissensus thinking to demonstrate how *Cryptonomicon*'s character Randy's "private insecurity is proportionate to public affirmation."³¹¹

Through my reading of *The Baroque Cycle* I will invoke Berlant's female complaint genre to demonstrate how an ongoing range of the sentimental in liberal culture has been re-masculinised in a more effusive version of itself. In the mouths of conservatives she argues compassion only implies a social relation previously trapped by the discourse of a liberal culture. Berlant's academic relations between compassion and the range of the sentimental in liberal culture offers the opportunity to reappraise the uses of compassion and sentimentalism and how they manifest in two very distinct public spheres in *The Baroque Cycle*. The male-female distinctions of characters that are made unclear in Louis XIV homosocial-homoerotic publics at Versailles are nevertheless still maintained by both men and women in their attitudes towards one another in terms of compassion. We will also see how the compassions ranged across these floating binaries become co-opted forces in the changeover to Britain's newly liberalised industrial public sphere. Connecting *The Baroque Cycle*'s themes of difference through notions of compassion, which is cold and mechanical in the voice of Eliza and the liberal sentimentalism, which implies only one relation among other when placed on the plight of the workhouse character Hanna Spates I want to argue is a way in which we can read through the late twentieth-century debates on the laudable objective of affirming cultural diversity. This, as I will argue, led Berlant to repudiate a male order that in a high stakes game crossed over into the middle ranges of the sphere of feminine or female intimacy to enforce a certain tacit dominion.

The continuous resistances by the female complainers in *The Baroque Cycle* to both sets of ruling orders invoke Berlant's engagements with the expansion of the dominion of Bercovitch's pluralist paradigm, which in something like another routinisation of change has absorbed in a pluralistic semiotic the fractures of the US social hierarchy. *The Baroque Cycle* offers its female complaint in which to register, by paying attention, how in system's undergoing change attempts to reroute the women's culture concept away from their respective frames of ideological oppression these systems

³¹¹ In her review of Sianne Ngai's, *Ugly feelings* Eu Jin Chua frames authorial anxiety better. Chua writes: "[for] "Ngai the projective configuration [that] anxiety assumes becomes inextricably bound up with the male analyst's quest for understanding or interpretation"(215). That is, according to Ngai [...] anxiety is the characteristic affect of a certain kind of male intellectual who desires to shore up his masculine agency. To put it in briefest terms, this is because anxiety, as in psychoanalytic delineations, has to do with the projection outward of the repressed internal psychic irrationality at the heart of the knowledge-seeker's subjectivity that would otherwise contaminate the rational objectivity of the knowledge sought." The male's side I will argue is the prosaic side of dissensus criticism. See Eu Jin Chua, review of *Ugly Feelings*, by Sianne Ngai.

refute and absorb subversive cultural energies collapsing the stakes of an as of yet better un-lived sense of survival into the healing structures of the dominant male society. Through my reading of *The Baroque Cycle* we will see how this great cyclical process is driven by male fantasy quests and female homoerotic desire.

Conflating together Berlant and *The Baroque Cycle's* cultural work on how the range of the sentimental becomes a co-opted site can offer productive results for cultural work done on the continuing dominance of the white male hegemony. Bercovitch's formal reappraisal of the American rhetoric serves to exacerbate this resistance by co-opting the pluralist semiotic needed to reframe better as of yet un-lived senses of survival for women's partial and contradictory interests. Bercovitch's more informed way of understanding criticism's ideological and social imperative, notwithstanding Berlant's female complaint genre's ambivalent formal withdrawal from the desire to be politics, will offer a final opportunity to reappraise *Cryptonomicon's* relinquishing terms such as conservatism and liberalism, capitalism versus socialism, or, freedom versus statism for an approach that I want to argue is more organicist, and largely more nationalist centred.³¹² The overt desire for the political in terms of Stephenson's writing is evident in terms of the inscription of literary semiology in the American university. The 1930s liberal crusade of planned social programs has somewhat come to an end and what is left is the ineffective mainstream politics of the academics as they turn to methods of postmodern theory and criticism for moral and political guidance. I will argue that Randy's refusal to be assimilated into Charlene's discipline of semiotics, and the novel's attempts to re-vision a version of America as a unique centre for the free and open exchange of information, offers the opportunity to explore Bercovitch's desire for a more expressive substantiate form of social integration for America society and a less expressive desire for the political. With no means for Randy to combat the academics strong logic of difference through their theory of the performativity of political discourse I read *Cryptonomicon* in conjunction with the three volumes of *The Baroque Cycle* in this chapter to show how new bases were being provided for movements beyond an amorphous opinion culture and what was becoming a sterile form of academic cultural politics.³¹³ I begin my analysis in this chapter by offering in

³¹² Berlant uses the idiom of love to disrupt political discourse, as a means of thinking through non-sovereign social and subjective formations. Love, for Berlant, is transformative, a site for a collective becoming-different, that can help to inform alternate social imaginaries. A woman's imaginary culture in *The Baroque Cycle* recreates such an imagery of love in an alternate fashioning from the male dominated discourse. This, in turn, is to ward off what in another context Berlant writes is "a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility."

³¹³ One of the main concerns in *Cryptonomicon* is the idea of difference without disagreement. However, in order to have such difference there first of all has to be the obliterating of things to disagree about. The novel is quite complex in this sense as we can read it as forming a strong anti theory argument to theory that looked to step outside of practice in order to govern practice from without. In large part the novel looks to deal with such heinous effects of theory as to have nothing left to disagree about is to take a position without reference to anyone else's experience. Using the horror of the camps to find difference without disagreement is an erroneous principle as the novel attempts to show how and using Raymond Williams's terms there was as many individuals that died willingly in World War Two as there was

nativist terms the search to devise a new rationale for an integrated curriculum of textual and historical study in US contexts.

The American Ideology

In the heyday of high theory the American literary and cultural consensus was at a crossroads. On the one hand, there were books like Allan Bloom's aggressively titled *The Closing of the American Mind*, and on the other the liberatory program of the cultural Left. A group of Americanists were brought together to redeem traditional aesthetic questions from the post political-academic upheaval of the late 1960s. In the same breath as these upheavals, Sacvan Bercovitch aligned the recent impact of European critical theories and looked to find a solution to what he saw was a current blight on US literary scholarship.³¹⁴ Ideology critique in its 1980s radical cultural incarnation, and as a constituent part of literary study, was all but dropped as a singular way of tackling problems inherent in the way the United States was believed to have appropriated America. Bercovitch remodelled his version of consensus to restore the principles of balance and excellence to the postwar university system. The concept of dissent would be the best new revisionary alternative to carry out both a function for redeemable civic values and rejuvenate literary and cultural practices for the 1990s Americanist. This would show how middle class liberalism constitutes itself in America to rejuvenate the active principals of debate. Postmodern ideology critique, in short, metamorphosed into a reshaped classical ideological mimesis, and the American form could now absorb in a pluralist semiotic the fractures of US social hierarchy. This transformational structure was accommodated within a certain embeddedness of the classic American literary master-works, where the term America stood for both fusion and fragmentation. Making a project out of the

those that committed the worst atrocities. Herman Goring in the novel is an atrocity maker. Bobby Shaftoe, Lawrence Waterhouse, and Goto Dengo although flawed heroes and thus arguable in terms of the posthistoricist substitution of identities for arguable beliefs take an imperfect form of postmodern justice to these scenes. Also the novel will not stand to use theory to govern practice from without. Alan Turing is cast as a forlorn figure in the novel as he attempts to step outside social systems with his highly abstract takes on information communication. He believed the way to transcend European systems of mastery that directly involved him within fields of oppression was to build an even greater theoretical enterprise than the one his mind and body was trapped within. In short, we see how the novel offers a more sober accounting of how theorists cannot stand outside the systems in which they eat, breathe, sleep, and basically live in. This inability to escape closed systems is a prevalent concern in the US humanities. This concern, I want to argue, is due to the nature of inequality in both Britain and the US and how it has increased significantly across all social spectrums in the 20 or 30 years of theory and politicised culture critique. Returning to closed systems analyses is way in which to see how something transcends diversity as a factor and can have implications for re-reading the lack of social mobility and persistent inequalities in social domains. Without repeating the past is to see it from a condition of hope. Bercovitch prefers not to take a direct political attitude to the public domain from his reading of Early and Classical American Literature. In short, he seeks to argue how consensus by ideology one must first accept the concept of authority and then confirm to authority in order to surpass its limitations. As we shall see, many of the men and women in *Cryptonomicon* work within the confines of authority to bring about the new conditions in order to form a newer revolutionary consensus. As we shall also see, Bercovitch argued that it was only from consensus that one could operate in history and thus perhaps alleviate or at least hold up literary and cultural studies as having something important to say on rising inequalities in the US (and in Britain). Berlant tracks Bercovitch's stance by offering her politics as juxtapolitical. Juxtapolitical is simply her way of saying that conflict not difference was needed to attach the humanities to the social material engagement that can reintegrate the lived existences of our private experiences.

³¹⁴ Bercovitch, "Preface," in *Reconstructing American Literary History*, x. Hereafter abbreviated "Preface."

problem of dissensus was seen as a way students could get a hand on the increasing polarity of interests offered through a broad range of debates offered in the university. Rather than attempt to heat up the antagonism in the canon wars, Bercovitch offered a way forward for reading and interpreting views on cultural difference. It was Bercovitch's powerful reading of the American ideology that put an end to the overt deconstructionist and emerging new historicist claims, which were made on the basis that American literary history was reductive and parochial. Bercovitch's newfound diversity in ideological analysis interpreted away the problem of whether students wanted to be empowered in the way that many postmodern professors believed.

The main concern, as Bercovitch saw it, was that the postmodern critique of American ideology precluded dialogue, and thus missed a large part of what American literate culture was saying to itself.³¹⁵ Bercovitch decided to act upon what he saw was the problematic of the transformational environment and transformative politics, terms that were becoming increasingly interchangeable with literary theory and cultural studies analyses of key literary texts. Similarly, Gerald Graff, argued against prominences of literary and cultural theory, seeing how cultural politics had left the originary political rhetoric in America in a general state of paralysis.³¹⁶ Putting together the new *Cambridge History of American Literature*, Graff and Bercovitch mounted the official challenge that would grab consensus back from conflicting postmodern demands. Literary theory's concepts of negation and ambiguity, for Graff and Bercovitch, if not already institutionalized in an important sense (in the university) were now returned to the academic negotiating table, as an aspect of the doubleness in articulation in American literature. Bercovitch writes:

The American way is to turn potential conflict into a quarrel about fusion or fragmentation. It is a fixed match, a debate with a foregone conclusion: you must have your fusion and feed on fragmentation too. And the formula for doing so has become virtually a cultural reflex [...] It amounts to the hermeneutics of laissez-faire: all problems are obviated by the continual flow of the one into the many, and the many into the one.³¹⁷

With little or no commensurability to be found between postmodern academic scholars, and with the steady increase of the proliferation of new spaces in the university, Graff and Bercovitch argued that their compilation would see a common sense dialogue strike up between Americanists, and shared broad tendencies between these scholars would restore principles of research excellence and balance to the university. The restoration of active debate among Americanists and other scholars would provide a key issue to take from this collective. Americanness would be another.

³¹⁵ As a rejoinder to this Bill Readings argued the dissensual process belongs to dialogism rather than dialogue. Readings, *University in Ruins*, 178.

³¹⁶ Graff, "Response to Readings."

³¹⁷ Bercovitch, "The Problem of Ideology," 649. Hereafter abbreviated "Ideology."

In 1996, Bercovitch took his dissensus model to the film remake of *The Scarlet Letter*.³¹⁸ Culture wars had become citizenship concerns in America, and Bercovitch turned political scientist Michael Sandel's observations on the postwar, and more specifically the Reaganite strand of individualist democracy, into a narrative re-vision for his paradoxical dynamics of dissent. Sandel argued how political culture in the US was becoming increasingly isolated and fragmented, and Americans were no longer able to make protean connections that would attach them to US lifeworld networks. For Sandel, what had once stood as a normative case for hope and optimism (the civic conception of freedom) now stood between "our current culture of extremes."³¹⁹ Postmodern fragmentation had devalued the rights of American citizenship, and the American intellectual in these decentred spaces had, according to Graff, "enabled bureaucracy and its pseudo-meanings to become the dominant metanarrative in the university."³²⁰ Taking his forms of compromise and constraint to Sandel's study on the contemporary erosion of civic values, Bercovitch marked out the profundity of American dissent. Dissent, he argued, was meaningful in that it could interpret away the authority of consent, and thus was an example *par excellence* of the coming together of the American form and the American way. Making a virtue (and now a new national virtue) out of a period of dissensus (although the national-utopian promise was now couched in revisionist terms of a profane nation and liberal decline) Bercovitch would rejuvenate the background context of the new pluralism. America as "a laboratory for examining the shifting connections between politics and cultural expression" would alter the course of postmodern fragmentation.³²¹

Graff's own arguments for teaching the conflicts beyond culture wars and Bercovitch's narrative revisions took the phenomenon of the 1960s movement of humanities arts theory and ideology critique into a broader pluralist strategy for the Americanist. Dissent was to be not what it was, but the new marker of difference and the expression of a particular national utopian consciousness developed within the premises of American liberal culture.³²² In many aspects, these arguments moved aesthetic radicalisms away from their transcanonical and deconstructive stages, to an integrative mode of US literary and historical analysis, which supported a narrative of America. Moving beyond the idea where one has to be right all the time and veering away from postmodern relativisms would put an end to shortcomings of traditional ideological analysis, and an occasion for *détournement* whilst challenging American poststructuralists who had made their interdisciplinary

³¹⁸ Bercovitch, "The Scarlet Letter: A Twice-Told Tale," 1-20.

³¹⁹ Bercovitch, "The Scarlet Letter: A Twice-Told Tale."

³²⁰ Graff, "Response to Readings."

³²¹ Sacvan Bercovitch, "Afterword," in *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, 419. Hereafter abbreviated "Afterword."

³²² Readings's main gripe with dissensus scholars is that they gloried in it. See Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 167.

sources of contact with the nation largely unintelligible.³²³ Bercovitch turned away from overt postmodern scepticism, and the dominant New Historicist claims that art is nothing but ideology. His nativist critique of a new American myth in the making, linked to a dual aspect of the modernity of American literature, was to become the new basis for rhetorical study and cultural and social analysis in the university.

As one of the twenty-one spokespersons chosen for the project of dissensus Myra Jehlen argued that if fictional characters from Ahab to Hester to Huck were to actually realise the power of their individualism, this would be taboo to an organically cohesive whole, and thus make unintelligible the national-utopian promise.³²⁴ For Jehlen, American bourgeois values were not thrown back on themselves like they were in Europe. If this were so, she argues, it would imply an “un-American mutability.” She argues that it was not so much as there being no radical dissent in and against America for classical writers, only that the term America was the *only* term to rally against. Thus she writes “the myth that American liberalism allows for all possible surface adjustments in the system thus obviates the need for basic ones, was too strong, even for the national heroes, and especially for the historical dialect they would have energized.” For Melville, “it is almost inevitable that however glorious the Spirit of Equality its incarnation in the Captain of the Pequod must become Satanic.”³²⁵ The formal structure surrounding Randy (an ordinary American so unexceptionable that he is to become exceptionable in the American grain) is largely driven by Jehlen’s culturally affirming values. His liberal tolerance, which the academics literally hand back to him in the dialogic (rather than a dialogue) of a deconstructed selfhood, is as ideologically contained as their competing types of radical social consciousness that the novel portrays as largely borrowed from Europe.

Through a nativist-rhetorical understanding of Randy, and through his continuing resistances to Charlene’s systemic individualism the novel adheres to Jehlen’s structuralist point of view that makes oppositional alternatives in the American form virtually unthinkable. Neal Stephenson has often been criticised for his poor endings. I argue this has little to do with his open discursiveness, and a lot more to do with the American form, which he lives alongside, sleeps, eats, breathes, and writes under. Using the dissensus model to illuminate Randy’s radical ambiguity in the text and in combined aspects of sacred and secular authority (Protestant nonconformity/theory of natural rights) Bercovitch argues, “conflict is obviated [...] by the alternation of the one into the many and the many into the one” (Bercovitch alludes here to the conjuncture of affective subjectivity as *sin*

³²³ See Readings, *University in Ruins*, 167-168.

³²⁴ See Bercovitch, “Ideology,” 634. See also Myra Jehlen, “The Novel and the Middle Class in America,” 130. Hereafter abbreviated as “Middle Class in America.”

³²⁵ Jehlen “The Novel and the Middle Class in America,” 130.

qua no of the union, and the post-union rhetoric of regional and continental incorporation).³²⁶ The automated community of Randy's technocratic crowd is often presented in alternation between heroic individualism (of the union) and their interests released into the very concept of nationhood. It is Randy's group dynamic, in this sense, that sets up a conflict of interests, and with it a microcosm of the concept of America, via the rhetoric of regional and continental incorporation via nationhood. *Cryptonomicon* sees the posthistorical University as no longer holding the promise of being the microcosm of the nation-state. Epiphyte Corp members' distinctive and radical individuality stands opposed to systemic individualism, as each member (Eb, Tom, John, Beryl, and Avi) has conflicting stories to tell—yet is also highly dependent on it. Taken separately, Randy's group offer a form of radicalism, however, under *Cryptonomicon*'s Epiphyte Corp moniker, the group is empowered by and actually transmutes into a vehicle of socialization. Epiphyte is a mixed metaphor, meaning, in botanical terms, a plant that grows on its host (dependent) but does not rely on the host for sustenance (independent). Thus Bercovitch's understandings of ambiguity and negation in Randy's grouping become harmony-in-diversity and diversity-in-harmony, which combines the conditions of modernization in the United States with the principles of liberal democracy. And vice versa, in *Cryptonomicon*, these conditions redefine the trend towards the new pluralism, as Randy's disappointments with democracy in the form of "Charlene's group" (76) do not induce disidentifications with its potentiality. In fact the novel looks to redeem past American abuses through his leaving America to come back to it again in the end. Charlene and the academic crowd, on the other hand, are never treated in this way. Their group is too exceptional, and their interests and consensus on pluralism is too narrow and too self-serving to be incorporated into the American form. This group effectively becomes synonymous with the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century European model of the class-for-itself system, and more saliently, Alvin Gouldner's concept of cultural capital tacked to the emergence of a professional managerial class.³²⁷ Tracking Emerson's words, the academics are presented as "the eager persons [who] make themselves ridiculous." Emerson observed "that in the history of mankind there is never a solitary example of success – taking their own tests of success."³²⁸ In too much of a hurry to move on to the meat of her argument and flushed by her own successes to hear Randy's side of the argument on her academic research methods, Charlene's critique of the American Way is folded into Randy's cultural particularity and artistic appreciation of her. Remodelled against old world class concerns, *Cryptonomicon*'s historical and romantic perspective now takes place from within the American

³²⁶ Bercovitch, "Ideology," 435. Also contrast this with Charlene's understanding of conflict. Also, the fictional Dr. Daniel Waterhouse reflects this understanding in many ways and a thesis could be delivered through him alone on the classical American Renaissance and the emergence of a national form. See *The Baroque Cycle*'s three volumes.

³²⁷ Gouldner cited in Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 342.

³²⁸ Cited in Myra Jehlen, "Middle Class in America," 131.

ideology. As we will see, in a nativist or regional understanding *Cryptonomicon* offers further scope to examine McGurl's aestheticizing of postwar American literature.

Graff had previously offered an older radical interpretation on American literary consensus, steeped in the ideological origins of the American Revolution. However, he moved his terms towards Bercovitch's critical readings of Hawthorne, Melville and Emerson. Their works in the collective, alongside other antebellum dissenters such as working men and women's suffragists, Bercovitch argued, spanned the whole breadth of the American ideology. Brought to the academic negotiating table dissensus Graff argued could unite discourse in a new humanitarian roster. Together with the ideological foundations of national emergence, the classical response to the promise of America was constituted as "an example par excellence of the successful interaction between restriction and release, rhetoric and social action."³²⁹ Bercovitch's powerful reading, as Jehlen came to argue, saw America conceived not so much in liberty, but in liberalism.³³⁰ Taking the powerful symbology of America and criticizing it from within became the new redefining mode of literary and historical praxis, and deconstructionist and New Historicist scholars were forced to temper their interdisciplinary and experimental approaches to American literary history. Similarly, linkages between liberal pluralism and Leftist discourse were no longer seen as necessary or urgent, in fact, these ties became to be seen as ultimately damaging and harmful when related to the concept of formal freedoms. Bercovitch's aspect of a new pluralism, in a self-consciously American literary renaissance, was the preferred option to restore principles of hope and practical political intelligibility to the postwar university.

Americanist literary scholars Left and Right, conservative and radical, were to put to use the insights of recent theories. Making culture work was very much in-keeping with the earlier American literary renaissance consensus formation. Bercovitch argues that the Renaissance scholar's ability to persuade themselves, and others, that their symbology is the last best hope of mankind was a virtue of the self and the nation.³³¹ Bercovitch took the inability to transcend dominant forms of national emergence to be a patriotic obligation, declaring his own ideological dependence to the originary political rhetoric of the Declaration. Thus, the American way, even when in uses against itself, became the new scholarly insight to take to literary and historical modes of analysis. Scholars, in short, embraced "the need for narrative form which, in texture and substance, would embody the questions they shared, and on the central importance of history in

³²⁹ Bercovitch, "Ideology," 636. Robert Tally also picks up on this point of the view within the United States that discourse of the national self-image of a world leader designed for export to the rest of the world truly represented freedom and equality through the lens of high literary art. See Tally, "Post-American Literature."

³³⁰ Jehlen, "Middle Class in America," 127.

³³¹ Bercovitch, "Ideology," 636.

dealing with those questions.”³³² America was both a source of conflict and a right unto itself. Through a combination of mutually antagonistic outlooks, Bercovitch’s model of ideological consensus would create the new national voice out of dissent. He argued how it would be a greater act of self-assertion for the American to recognize their limits to be true to what they most deeply were, while keeping faith in their boldest convictions. In many aspects, like Rorty and William James before him, Bercovitch—to solve the current identity crisis in the US—offered humility before a cosmos with the old world terrors that were enforcing what was happening in the inner cosmos of America.³³³ America, in short, was being fuelled with the desire of the nation to recommit itself to the promise of a conflict-free and integrated world.

Jehlen adds emphasis to Bercovitch’s New Harmony. American liberalism would inform cultural analysis of the historical novel as primary text and archive. She writes that “at least through the nineteenth century the dominant culture seems to have been able to co-opt alternative and oppositional forms with unusual effectiveness, to the point of appearing to preclude their possibility.”³³⁴ As we will come to see, Lauren Berlant, in her trilogy on *National Fantasy*, works from Bercovitch’s calling for “a fresh perspective [...] on the *limits* of nativist modes of analysis,” yet holds a synthetic and eclectic (not integrative) principle up to the nativist perspective on the historical narrative.³³⁵ Her raw and tentative approach aligns itself to not being underwritten from Bercovitch and Jehlen’s production of a complex Hawthorne, and an inescapable telos of the American Way. Berlant’s concept of an intimate public seeks to offer more than a typical avant-garde deformation of the American form, as an intimate public is Berlant’s way of reproaching citizen-building, which she sees heading towards a monoculture—and with it, a desperate desire to return to an order of things deemed normal, and an order of what was felt to be an everyday intimacy.³³⁶ Moving out from under the moniker of the politics of representation, which was being drawn into stalemate in the Right’s conceptual war on Left thinking—this resulted in rage at stereotyped peoples who appeared to have changed the political rules of social membership—she draws her influences from Sedgwick, Derrida, Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, and, implicitly, Deleuze. Her poststructural variant on Bercovitch’s seminal cultural critique of American myth merges the ethical interests of women, the body, technology, and the sphere of subalternity, to

³³² Bercovitch, “Ideology,” 635.

³³³ For this understanding see, McClure, *The Late Imperial Romance*.

³³⁴ Jehlen, “Middle Class in America,” 127.

³³⁵ Bercovitch, “Ideology,” 652.

³³⁶ On the concept of intimate publics Berlant writes: “The concept of an intimate public thus carries the fortitude of common sense or a vernacular sense of belonging to a community, with all the undefinedness that implies. A public is intimate when it foregrounds affective and emotional attachments located in fantasies of the common, the everyday, and a sense of ordinariness, and where challenging and banal conditions of life take place in proximity to the attentions of power but also squarely in the radar of recognition that can be provided by other humans [...]. [T]he women’s culture concept grows from such a sense of lateral identification. See Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, 10. Hereafter abbreviated *Complaint*.”

generate relief from the political aspects of new historical convergences of the social and the economic objectives in the institution.

Before turning to Berlant's challenge to what she sees as codifications of cultural studies in the North American academy, *Cryptonomicon* offers an intriguing introspection on Bercovitch's culture of consensus model and Guillory's socioanalysis of the culture of the school. *Cryptonomicon*, in general, promotes the postwar drift of the modernist aesthetic, yet Randy generally blames his feeling of being under threat on post-1960s countercultural activism and ideology critique emerging out of unbounded frontiers of thought and language. The emphasis here is mainly negative, and is a resultant effect of what I will consider Bercovitch argues is the model of ideology inherited from the social sciences.³³⁷ Randy's opposition in *Cryptonomicon* is not in opposition to the American or national ideology (although it is), but works in tandem with an ideological response that precludes all oppositional forms of dialogue with unusual effectiveness, its surface structure being so accommodating. The academics' conflation of political and rhetorical terms, through what the novel presents as social conditioning quasi-Leftist discourse, become therefore unintelligible to Randy, and, as such, he sees everything reduced to sinister modes of normalization. Randy, in his frank ethnocriticism of European socially binding norms, points to Jehlen's structural condition of the American middle class, and the way in which it achieved its hegemony differently from that of Europe. In the following section, I offer a view of *Cryptonomicon* failing to find an independently critical stance within the American form, yet in doing so throwing focus upon postmodern politics and what a generation of postwar literary critics taught in the classroom, along with how postmodern critics became caught up in rhetorical considerations as institutional concerns.

From the rights of diversity into a Rite of Cultural Assent

The turn to more indigenous cultural work in the North American academy, which made for what Paul Giles has recently argued as a new American exceptionalism through the easy elision of the national and transnational, took place largely in the late 1980s.³³⁸ The trend towards pluralism in the cultural turn in the humanities brought forward a new set of interdisciplinary questions and cross-generational reference points. Rather than create another clashing prescription that would further heat up the antagonism with the American poststructuralists, Bercovitch wrote:

On the contrary: I believe that ideologically-aware analysis will show the special capacities of language in some sense to break free of the power structures, which the

³³⁷ Bercovitch, "Ideology," 637-638.

³³⁸ Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections*, 14.

language seems to reflect, and so will help us see more clearly, what we have found to be extraordinary, irreducible, and uncontained about our major texts.³³⁹

American poststructuralists and deconstructionist critics were pushed to new revisionist frames of textual and historical reference in order to continue working in the un-American grain. Bercovitch spelt out that what results from reading and interpreting a group of American classics is a “new framework for examining our tradition of literary dissent and its problematic relation to America.”³⁴⁰ Only then, Bercovitch implied, would it be possible to evaluate the shift in “the literary centre of gravity from the nationalist orientation of the American Renaissance to the transatlantic enterprise of a later era [...] and the neglected emigrant ethnic writing of the early twentieth century.”³⁴¹ Bercovitch sums up the extraordinary force of the Young America movement, arguing that although an American “work of art may be transhistorical or transcultural or even transcanonical it can no more transcend ideology than an artist’s mind can transcend psychology.”³⁴² Notwithstanding Giles’s understanding when he argues that this leaves little national space in nineteenth century for “the sphere of subalternity,” Bercovitch’s revisionary intervention into canon and culture wars brought downward pressure on transformative politics of the cultural Left.³⁴³ Targeted in its narrowest sense by Bercovitch, postmodern politics was the basis of ideology as “the ground and texture of consensus.”³⁴⁴ His canonical rhetoric of art and expression overturned this aspect of cultural pluralism to become the valid culturally representative and defining historical term for communicating the continuing present of immediate experience in the North American academy.

America in Crisis

Bercovitch’s model became an encouraging methodological and practical approach to take to ward off crisis concerns in American literary and historical scholarship. It also intersected saliently with political scientist Sandel’s crisis concern with the two representatives of American culture. Bercovitch aligns Sandel’s model to conditions of possible conflict in American national culture. Both saw, from within their respective spheres of influence, that a strand of Reaganite individualist democracy had been carried too far, and each looked to curtail what they saw was the current cultural extremity in Leftist liberal thought. Bercovitch argued that, beginning from the political upheavals of the late 1960s and followed by the recent impact of European critical theories, these ongoing influences had extended into the indeterminate nature of discourse in the present, which

³³⁹ Bercovitch, “Ideology,” 639.

³⁴⁰ Bercovitch, “Ideology,” 436; 428.

³⁴¹ Bercovitch, “Ideology,” 652.

³⁴² Bercovitch, “Ideology,” 639.

³⁴³ See Paul Giles, “Antipodean American Literature: Franklin, Twain, and the Sphere of Subalternity,” 22-50.

³⁴⁴ Bercovitch, “Ideology,” 635.

was now becoming problematic. Sandel was similarly concerned with cultural and political fragmentation, seeing how it was creating a culture where everything in the middle was becoming lost, isolated or disconnected. Sandel illustrates how Bercovitch's literary model of dissensus could take on embedded nationalist significance. New points of lateral identification could be formed between national rhetorics of an earlier age and social action for the reproduction of a new homogenising sense of US state citizenship. These points of lateral identification were to symbolise, for Berlant, a potent reversion to the Constitution Framer's early state settlements on subjectivity.

In his production of a complex Hawthorne, Bercovitch implicitly argued for the scholarly rebinding of the fabric of American identity. Using Sandel's terms on the fractured philosophical dualities of the American representative Bercovitch conceived his narrative re-vision to heal the fracture of US social hierarchy. In patriotic memory, obligation and desire Bercovitch's reading of Hester Prynne illuminates my reading of Randy as he is left feeling isolated by the dogmatism of Charlene's adamant approach to social norms. Bercovitch sets limits on Charlene's postmodern scepticism, and looks to reform the repressive and the economic functions of art that begin in her suspicions of the formulaic, natural, and the already-said. Like Hester, Randy's art "gathers meaning through acts of communal interpretation" which Bercovitch writes:

Is not conservatism on Hawthorne's part, any more than the movie's defiant Hester signals subversion. Rather, the contrast represents two alternate routes of the American Way, then and now. Both of these are foundational to the very meaning of America, whether as a melting-pot or as a patchwork quilt. One route, the one taken in the film, leads towards the individual fulfillment (for self and family) [...] the other route, the route taken by the novel, leads towards the good society. This implies self-fulfillment, but it often comes into conflict with adamant individualists [...]. Appropriately, Hawthorne presents the individualists in the novel through images of containment and in situations demanding negotiation.³⁴⁵

Rather than describe a European avant-garde deformation of form through his flaneur-type acts of walking and cabbing in Manila, more emphases are derived as and when Randy leaves his academic partner and her friends. Randy's leaving America finally leads the story into one of American socialisation moulded, ritualized and controlled in its rich and intricate system of meanings.

Randy's character gauges a triumphant undercurrent of democratic liberalism as the farthest point in the development of the Anglo-Saxon race free from the push and pull of ideological inferences drawn from more than one or two party alliances. Rather than the colonial power structure that included Whigs and Tories alike, he is to take the expression and negotiation of real diversities, and

³⁴⁵ Bercovitch, "The Scarlet Letter: A Twice-Told Tale."

of genuinely richer and alternative responses to a more general situation. We see past Charlene's cognitive critique of him, and the American myth he is assailed to be a part of, as Amy tells Randy, "It's all part of you [...]. I don't have to get to know you in pieces, do I" (761). Amy is a character, in this instance, who attempts to see the complexity inherent in any social or capitalist system. In her response, she confirms art is a living response between humans and ideas, and accordingly, Randy is given no absolutes bigger than the absolute that literature is richer than any one critic or book could hope to muster. Conversely, from what can now be considered the academics' insidious extrinsic denomination on the America ideology, Randy is part of a brutal capitalist system of ideas in the service of evil. One of the problems with the "extrinsic approach," writes Bercovitch, is that it "sets the critic at odds with the work of literature."³⁴⁶ Through Randy we get to see into the American form, as well as a pluralist response that is a complex mixture of all major nominations in the emergence of US nationhood. Thus, he or it cannot be represented accurately by determining to one functional role or another in the narrative. He is both passive and active to equal degrees, and this is not always a simple straightforward analysis reduced to Marxist base-superstructure analysis or poststructural variants on the same theme. In fact, within the dominant mode of capitalist interpretation, a lot of our understanding about Randy comes from his social relations, and more specifically his social/sexual relations with Amy and/or Avi. These acts of communal judgment are also heavily played out in other pairings in the novel. Bobby Shaftoe is a character that does not find release in a formal pairing, yet in Jonathon Arac's terms his conflict is pointedly circumscribed with a set of moral-economic-aesthetic imperatives.³⁴⁷ His counsel of despair, as he lurches from diversity to harmony and back again in order to find Glory, is to find affirmation in a benevolent overarching design.³⁴⁸ In this larger view of America as process, a continual harmony in diversity, diversity in harmony, Bobby, in losing Glory to leprosy, tries to impart knowledge to his son in any

³⁴⁶ Bercovitch, "Ideology," 638.

³⁴⁷ See Bercovitch's helpful commentary on Jonathon Arac's, "The Politics of the Scarlet Letter," in *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, eds. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen, 247-266, in Bercovitch, "Afterword," 435-436.

³⁴⁸ Bobby Shaftoe in his separation from Glory is fated to sit outside the closed system the novel constructs. His naked moment with Glory, in which he feels all his life until this moment was "wood behind the point of a spear" (49) not only critiques the triumphalist template but also critiques the narrow discursive category the academics place on the groundlessness and historical variability of literature. Bobby only gets to "come in Glory" once. From this point on he holds a connection to Poulet's Redeemer a soul lurching from one point to the next. Using the understanding of cultural entropy and Poulet's Redeemer we see how Shaftoe has no past and no future in Himself, and he must make a reconnection with his group. Being cast outside the group and finding no reconnection with Glory Shaftoe's life becomes a wasted life as he can find no connection with his past present or future. Making further connections to Poulet he becomes to define an existence of loneliness. He becomes Corneille's hero: "a being without a past." Poulet writes of this hero "but he is also without a future because he does not want a future. He could not desire any future without wanting himself to be something different from what he is, that is to say from what he wants." Shaftoe wants Glory but he cannot have Glory and thus he can never have a past or a future. Corneille's hero expresses "I cease to hope and begin to live." Poulet writes "but also by ceasing to hope he finishes with living." Connecting Shaftoe with a form of cultural entropy in the novel and Poulet's redeemer leads to a connection with Jonathon Franzen who writes: "Readers and writers are united in their need for solitude and their pursuit of substance in a time of ever-increasing evanescence in their reach via print for a way out of loneliness." The novel in Shaftoe's search for Glory can bring forward this loneliness that Franzen expresses. I trace Shaftoe's loneliness to Guillory's examination of the elevation of rhetoric as technical practice. See Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, and Franzen in Christopher Connery, "The Liberal Form: An Interview with Jonathon Franzen."

way that he can in the bombed out streets of Manila. Not “a word man like Enoch Root” (775) he gestures to his son not to throw anything away, and in this sense his character through the interactive elements of art, interprets away the sorts of divisiveness that leads to radical social change that he encounters in other places outside the US.³⁴⁹

Seeing *Cryptonomicon* trying to push past libertarianism in the Reaganite Era is not only to see it move out from under a culture of extremes in the US (where Nina or Charlene are presented as extreme forms of the sexual and counterculture revolution, rather than eroticized subjects who speculate that other forms of collective life might be imaginable even within America) but also to see it offer resistances to the ideological traps in European hegemony deployed in Charlene’s excessive postmodern theorising and end of history narrative. Bringing forward its Second World War transgenerational critique in Bercovitch’s terms, the novel questions the new spaces of the academics and the particular brand of transcanonical values they promote. In short, *Cryptonomicon* becomes a gatekeeper to a doubleness of articulation in American literature, marking transitional historical change and economic and social transformation for the ongoing preservation of American ordinariness. This national-utopian promise – the immigrant nation where every man is a King – is rooted in the rhetoric of an earlier America; a rhetoric that has lost its direct social function. It remains, though, in *Cryptonomicon*, an important staple of Randy’s (and Bobby’s) national self-identification.

Postmodern paranoid

Jehlen argued that from a “dangerously dualistic Hester on US literary writers created more relaxed protagonists who confronted a less objectionable south.”³⁵⁰ In this reading, where the South no longer serves culture directly, it operates as a shadow narrative in *Cryptonomicon*’s writing against the Yale Group. As *Cryptonomicon* fails to find an independently critical stance, the academics’ dream of a world literature can become no more than a merely a marketing gimmick to Randy; it is a kind of middlebrow literary tourism, which it attempts to put right by separating him from society and then bringing him back to it in the end. *Cryptonomicon* fails to see within its anti-American correctives on Charlene’s “neo-Puritanical rigor” (585) the Puritan ability to accommodate that stress within its own formal doctrine. In short, the American form transforms *Cryptonomicon*’s fully knowing condition into a symptomatic sense of the exilic one. In a diagnosis that is now taking place from within Bercovitch’s “indigenous residual culture” and “the ideology of the early

³⁴⁹ Bercovitch rejected in advance any possible grounds for the conversion of dissent (whether expressed implicitly by literary works or explicitly by political groups) into the bases for actual social change. American ideology refutes and absorbs subversive cultural energies, Bercovitch cogently observed, “harnessing discontent to the social enterprise” by drawing out protest and turning it into a rite of ideological assent.

³⁵⁰ Jehlen, “Middle Class in America,” 139.

republic,” Charlene is prophetically summonsed into the *integrative* narrative form where she is doubled in a form of exilic conversion.³⁵¹ Her political unintelligibility becomes a source of contradictory logic in the literary self-conscious of American Renaissance writers (fantasy projections of patriarchal fear about the imminent end of male hegemony within the political sphere rather than serious critique of that same patriarchal culture). And here we see how the novel is heading into an American form as a molesting vision. It is her new contradictory class structure that becomes reductive of a basic contextual liberal coherence. Rather than focuses being drawn on Randy’s localism or his sappy romantic need for integration, the novel tackles the academics’ systemic individualism, where the system becomes a deathly plane of regularity, and revolutionary immobility. What then becomes most compelling is the way in which *Cryptonomicon*’s metafictional energies are dissipated allowing us to trace through the compromised positions of its characters what its larger formal structure masks.

Repressing a nativist or nationalist imagery of dissent *Cryptonomicon*’s condemnations of Charlene’s political correctness (synonymous in the novel with the academics’ postmodern unwillingness to make value judgments) illuminates McGurl’s illustration of the paradoxical inversion of the entire postwar academic system of cultural difference. McGurl uses his concepts to show how the novel is not consonant with the reality of the cultural diversity in the institution and thus draws that system to itself “in a form of ontological prosthesis.”³⁵² The transatlantic enterprise of modernist themes of cultural difference in McGurl’s *The Program Era* is offered through *Cryptonomicon* on a larger scale than postwar experimentation. He argues “the elevated aesthetic ambitions of literary modernism [...] conjoins the project of authentic self-expression with the machinery of the program [...] The investment in this experiential authenticity is strong enough that the agency of this machinery is generally repressed.”³⁵³ In this context, *Cryptonomicon* draws the American ideology to itself in a dynamic paradoxical inversion of The Pound Era. *Cryptonomicon*’s attempt to enable a textual performance of vocal authenticity, what McGurl calls its “technoromanticism,” reflects how postwar American fiction as a whole repressed the dominant American form.³⁵⁴ More specifically for *Cryptonomicon*, we see how it moves the pluralist anxieties on the page squarely towards the footing of Europe, where a non-interventionist society is now characterized in accordance with Graff’s “deceptive Left-Right antithesis spawned by academic consumerism.”³⁵⁵ This deception, in turn, is reflected in the novel as the product of a spurious European socialist hegemony. *Cryptonomicon*, via its characters now accommodating the

³⁵¹ Bercovitch, “Ideology,” 642-643.

³⁵² McGurl, *The Program Era*, 62.

³⁵³ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 230.

³⁵⁴ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 230.

³⁵⁵ Bercovitch, “Afterword,” 419.

structure of the self-enclosed closed system of the American ideology in human thought and consciousness, tackles the faux radicalism of contemporary academic business culture where aspects of their professionalisation are clearly failing to deal with loss of the subject-referent of the educational experience. Randy, Bobby, and Lawrence's interpreting away metaphysical outrage to positive ends in Jonathon Arac's "hermeneutics of laissez-faire" resists the abandonment of a white cultural homogeneity, thereby drawing a structural aspect of the American process to the surface. In doing so, and with McGurl's systems theory reading now attached, it invokes the powerful symbology of the American form that enables the cancellation of Charlene's European socialist knowledge both past and present, which the novel accrues as lying behind postmodernist techniques.

Bercovitch's background coherences of new trends towards pluralism offer Charlene's post-Marxist solutions as the ideological traps of American civilization (civic liberties, democratic living, humanitarianism, and optimistic literature). Randy circumscribes her political unintelligibility in the old world class positions, and what are now best described as the residual and the emergent forms circumscribed in an American mono or metaculture. *Cryptonomicon* now offers the American Renaissance criticism on the ideological origins of the American Revolution. It is a process that reverts to what Graff calls the "East egg" and "West egg" of the British colonial power structure, which the novel presents as a worldly disaster.³⁵⁶ Graff argued that this structure underpinned the ideological origins of the American Revolution, and offered alternative forms of social organisation from that of revolutionary France or Latin America. From the perspective of this earlier ideological clash between North America and the British colonial power structure, Charlene's new historicist position becomes a by-product of (and is tackled as) a pre-American Renaissance force of criticism. *Cryptonomicon* reflects such criticism as having made a cunning rebirth in the contemporary academic institution, enforcing a claustrophobic corridor of survivable experience, bordered on one side by unendurable enclosures, and on the other by unsurvivable exposures.³⁵⁷ Reflecting the institution of the humanities as perverse, the postwar university professors are now linked ideologically to the old world consensus critique of nationalist emergence.³⁵⁸ Charlene, reflective of colonial interference on the intelligibility of early American literature, is separated in the novel form, and under Bercovitch's paradoxes of dissent she no longer serves directly as a staple of national self-definition, but as a remnant of the colonial elite that looked to control young America's national history.

³⁵⁶ Bercovitch, "Afterword," 420.

³⁵⁷ See McClure, *Imperial Romance*.

³⁵⁸ See Ayers for how college professors had to confront their ethnic concerns with administrative processes. Ayers, *Literary Theory: A Reintroduction*, 206.

Randy does not surrender to Charlene's pluralist re-trending of American mythic forms because she literally cannot combine his Renaissance liberal demands with conditions of modernization in the United States. She is thus separated and isolated in the text with other remnants of the old world power structure as material, and metaphysical properties in the novel are closed off. Following in the process of national emergence, *Cryptonomicon* now illustrates in ideological mimesis two American outsides to itself. The first is McGurl's recent aesthetic formation, as *Cryptonomicon* becomes reflective of a process of post-1960s fiction that offered to the institution the outside to itself, as society became more socially diverse. Therefore, structural coupling takes place between system and environment, and a classical mode of sociological analysis becomes more apt, than a proto-Foucauldian reading of internal differentiation in American society and culture. McGurl measures the scale of representative norms not emanating from the individual, but to the larger unit of analysis, which broadens the scope of internal/social differentiation. As the system becomes more complex in a systems theory analytic, McGurl argues, that the "excellence of the university is not an index of its functional efficiency but of its more or less impressive capacity to waste."³⁵⁹ McGurl's analysis offers the opportunity to reappraise a deeper social contrast with twentieth century modernist forms of literary ambiguity and negation. The other outside uses Bercovitch's aesthetic flowering of an ideology "adopted from the start precisely for its capacity to transmute radicalism of all forms into forms of cultural consensus."³⁶⁰ The national-utopian promise is used to summon Charlene back into the integrative narrative, which, in turn, regulates the narrative form against itself when it writes against the American Way. Both outsides (which is only one outside) mask acceptances of the authority of consent without however turning the bases of dissent into actual social change. In their acts of theory, and in compliance to powers melded independent of their will, *Cryptonomicon* offers parochial conflict and ideological analysis of canon change as a twin process of the rites of cultural assent.

Analysing Randy we are afforded both the opportunity to reappraise Jehlen's structural conditions of the emergence of American middle class liberalism, and Bercovitch's positive ideological value inherent within American intellectual culture. Bercovitch identifies the American future as utopia, and its utopia does not allow the dominant culture "to enforce rules of conduct, but to circumscribe the bounds of perception, thought and desire [...] and utopia, therefore as the essence and telos of the American way."³⁶¹ In the novel the academics' national-utopian promise is full of the European philosophical dualism that *Cryptonomicon* closes out. It reaches towards the notion that a large portion of the blame for Randy's feeling under threat comes from post-1960s countercultural

³⁵⁹ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 407.

³⁶⁰ Bercovitch, "Afterword," 436.

³⁶¹ Bercovitch, "Ideology," 644, and Bercovitch, "Afterword," 435.

activism and 1960s humanities theory, inherited from concepts taken from the social sciences. The novel, therefore, cannot rest its narrative on a further philosophical dualism, and its narrative, drenched in the saturation of meaning, is no longer affirmative of the postnational promise of a postmodern utopian outcome. The type of opposition to the dominant culture in *Cryptonomicon* stands not in opposition to Bercovitch's dominant nineteenth century Renaissance culture, but Charlene's post-political critique of Randy. Her engagement between history, reader and the text no longer precludes a dialogue of freedom in the novel for Randy but rather America in its distinctiveness, through a self-enclosed circle of multiple perspectives, precludes all oppositional forms of dialogue with unusual effectiveness. On this larger historical scale, analysis of literary modernisms' aspects of negation and ambiguity, and the postwar period academics' conflation of rhetorical and political terms is politically unintelligible to Randy, and the liberal pluralist consensus is defined as too narrow, resulting in a national-utopian promise with no political effect.

In reflection of Bercovitch's calling for heightened ideological awareness, *Cryptonomicon* mounts a structural condition of Jehlen's middle class American liberalism. These contrasts offer the opportunity to re-examine a long-established cycle in American scholarship of pluralism and consensus. As Charlene's Nietzschean concept of power loses its value as a term of critical analysis in the US, dissensus (now literally a strand of American social realism that stands oppositional to antirealist epistemology and the Left-Right antithesis) foregrounds my reading of Randy. However, this chapter is also about focusing upon Berlant's experimental framework, which challenges the educationally pragmatic consensus model, the repressive force of the mid-nineteenth century dominant culture, and the just as repressive force she argues is taking place in the university right now. These concerns and debates around the processes of formation, transformation and expression of citizenship and collective subjectivities in the Americas, from the remote past to the present, is where the rest of this chapter turns to.

The Female Complaint

There Is No Distinction between the American University and Professionalization.
Stefano Harney & Frank Moten, *The University and the Undercommons*³⁶²

Lauren Berlant's affective remapping of post-nationally concentrated cultural identity politics offers a competing framework within the current model of literary dissensus. Berlant does not simply wish to add a counterhegemonic claim or avant-garde deformation of form to a culture of consensus model that has taken root in the North American academy. She seeks out an alternative affective

³⁶² Harney and Moten, "The University and the Undercommons: Seven Theses," 101-115.

framework that works within the overdetermined racial monoculture of conservative America. Berlant works within Bercovitch's inescapable circle of ideological containment, by taking the 1990s culture wars back to culturally affirming bases of dissent. Using an uncertainty of meaning turned into a unified design in *The Baroque Cycle's* three volumes, the character Eliza retains the more permeable subjectivity of Eve Sedgwick. Eliza thereby overlays radical ambivalence on the ambiguities of group pluralism, through which consensus is established and sustained. And, rather than retain Bercovitch's paradoxical permeability of dissent that welcomes the opportunity to contain political opposition, Eliza offers the opportunity to examine and explore Berlant's female complaint, which exposes, rather than consents to, shuttling between the contradictions of Bercovitch's liberal pluralist culture.

Building up an affective complaint

Graff and Bercovitch's pedagogically framed "culture of consensus" model, no matter how chaotically formed, looks to restore rather than reform values of American liberalism as a cultural function of the academy. As I showed, their dynamics of American culture as multicultural with various conflicting dimensions covers all aspects of literary radicalism, including Randy's luxuriant uncertainty of meaning. Berlant builds her model of Marxist critical commentary in response to this threatening group pluralism, and holds out ordinary feelings through which to describe a non-sovereign subjectivity in a variety of scenes. Writers like Berlant and Sian Ngai, in their attempts to contest an American exceptionalism that, rather than provide the rule, has become the rule (and "globalization its unlovely name"), confirm what Lennon argues is a "postcolonially melancholic US literary studies, today."³⁶³ Berlant argues that her analysis is both politically necessary and socially important, insofar as it allows many critical theorists "to switch between analyses of love and the social."³⁶⁴ Her comment here is reflective of a case made in the *Anatomy* where Berlant stood against easy assimilations within the genre of romance.³⁶⁵ Berlant looked to track an alternative structure of liberal sentimental relevancy for the development of official and intimate publics in the early US period. Her eclectic, as opposed to integrative, analysis is to make room for ethical indirection in the current sober accounting of postmodern differences and emerging value-based discourses of the university in the contemporary period. In many ways, Berlant's synthesis of affect theory, psychoanalysis and Marxist critical theory opens a structure of relevancy through which she can disengage directly from the implicitly political aspects of ideology critique, in order to reengage with the realm of women's culture from her concept of the juxtapolitical. The juxtapolitical is tied in one aspect to reconstructed conventions of romantic love inhering in a

³⁶³ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 362, and Lennon, *Gaming the System*, 2.

³⁶⁴ Berlant, *Complaint*, 266.

³⁶⁵ Accounts such as Jehlen's according to Fluck "made the genre of romance [...] the exemplary expression of this non-conformist, adversarial America." See Fluck, "Romance with America," 3.

relation to time, and therefore to the ongoing repetitiveness of the past into the ongoing present. Berlant argues that the example of the intimate public organised by affect and emotion (the quality of an object as it inheres in its relation to time and not in the thing presented) forces questions of the centrality of economies of suffering to mass capitalist aesthetics. For Berlant, in sex/culture/identity wars, sentimental radicalism pushed sentimental liberalism to a conservative compassion that, under the screen of feminism, masculinised compassion. Berlant looks to trace the effects of the culture and politics of compassion in the contemporary public sphere.

Because Bercovitch's model has circumscribed all contexts through emphases on one particular culture's mode of resolving crisis, the problem of modern mass nationality is yet to be a problem solved for Berlant. She accordingly retrains her focuses on bringing back from the past not the rhetoric of dissent, but powers of recognition within intimate publics. In many ways Berlant concedes a point of defeat in the *Anatomy* when she writes:

but it would not suffice to say that the personal would be the political for crucially these materials would be defined outside of their now defensive postures with respect to the national-utopian promise that has long conscripted their allegiance and their fantasy: they would be intelligible to us.³⁶⁶

Challenging Bercovitch's affective framework and rhetoric of regional and continental incorporation, Berlant, like Sedgwick before her, reconsiders Foucauldian repressive hypotheses. She argues that views on sexuality had absorbed the conservative worldview as a neoliberal order had capitulated to a new styled corporate managerialism. Accordingly, Berlant moved her structure of relevancy to advance her analysis not in sexual politics in disciplinary societies, but in politics of emotions held in control societies.

Berlant is tough on emotions, seeing in these terms only a means of conveying one relationship among many. She writes "there is nothing clear about compassion except that it implies a social relation between spectators and sufferers, with the emphasis on the spectator's experience of feeling compassion and its subsequent relation to material practice."³⁶⁷ In working her way through the constructivist viewpoint on compassion she argues how its failure to be a good in itself now encapsulates a stinging loss of optimism in lieu of the failed politics of the cultural Left. This leaves an offset of what she calls "political depression."³⁶⁸ In her view nondominant groups blindly

³⁶⁶ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 208.

³⁶⁷ Berlant, "Compassion and Withholding," 4.

³⁶⁸ See Berlant, "Cruel Optimism," *Differences*.

bargain for a more centralised place in patriarchal society, and therein confirm their gendered and unhappy connections to (subaltern) stereotypes.

If the *Anatomy* looked to bring into view a structure of relevancy, *The Female Complaint* works in the realm of feeling to give a separate but wedded account of critical readings of the early US period via Hawthorne. In the *Anatomy* Berlant writes that “rather than display his transformations as exceptional personal crises, Hawthorne suggests that they are also fundamentally a condition of identity: the experience of identity might be personal and private but its forms are always collective and political.”³⁶⁹ Berlant attempts to develop a separate sphere through uses of genre for an original intimate public to emerge, which is helpful to examine the violation of interests of women.

Although she concurs with Bercovitch’s wider observations “to the extent that [her] book holds that America’s symbolic lexicon aims to create an aura of transhistorical invulnerability for the nation” she extends an official state imaginary and national identity, not as fixed, but as held within the intersection of several cultures linked through discursive practices.³⁷⁰

Michael Sandel’s recent lectures on the politics of Justice intimate some of the normative political demands held on subjectivity in the US public sphere that Berlant holds in abeyance. She tracks aloneness, isolation, and optimism (as well as anxiety, passive aggression, and torture) to name but a few of the commodified genres of intimacy of a subordinated population defined by its relation to normativity, and how this normativity is specifically related to “this bomb, that rape, this war, that police encounter.”³⁷¹ The unidirectional itinerary of Sandel’s public lectures, on the other hand, are incited to arouse passionate debate and nostalgia of another kind, held within a collective political identity remediated by the state and related institutions, rather than invoke an excess of passion that produces a kind of irreducible autonomy. Berlant writes in another context:

but this taxonomy underdescribes the dynamics of indirection and mediation that characterise even strong publics, while bracketing the difficult question of what views can be said to constitute the circulated opinion that produces civil society as a force in institutional political life.³⁷²

Berlant argues how structural subordination enacted by stipulated and administrative laws and norms implicitly arouses passion as a political structure forcing its way into an intimate public, through a tiny point of identification. Her work is not to interrupt sexuality per se (as Foucault had done) but to make the claim that “a political structure is fundamentally an affective structure” and

³⁶⁹ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 2-3.

³⁷⁰ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 221.

³⁷¹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 9.

³⁷² Berlant, *Complaint*, 8.

“negative political feelings provide important openings for measuring injustice.”³⁷³ In line with Bercovitch’s culture work, she resists the philosophical dualisms of Eurocentric models of the state, and puts her culture of the “affectively and emotionally incoherent” to work in the American context.³⁷⁴ Berlant sets out to provide an angle of vision in the American ideology that track the invention of performative norms in relation to the hegemonic ones.³⁷⁵ Moving away from less permeable angles of vision and what Roland Murray argues is “the coercive underside of the performative language theory that developed during the 1960s,” the women’s culture concept she argues thrives in a world of contradictions.³⁷⁶ Berlant argues that a contradiction in intimate publics, from which the women’s culture concept grows, “never bothers anyone.”³⁷⁷ What is a partially veiled challenge to politically (and now pedagogically) achieved American manhood relates to a continuing gender war taking place in the US. The linking of gender to desire is seen to have followed an erroneous representation of transgression. Berlant is smart enough to see this quicker than most. In the *Anatomy*, Berlant argued how “the default gender of the American citizen is still, alas, a masculine one.”³⁷⁸ In the *Complaint* Berlant re-identifies this problem as when “what was a minor register of survival aesthetics has also become a predominant way even for elites to orchestrate a claim that their social discomfort amounts to evidence of injustice towards them.”³⁷⁹ As Readings argued, for Berlant gender now becomes simply an axis for marking the course of the university’s way to the current discourse of professionalization.

Women’s culture in *The Baroque Cycle*’s three volumes, rather than throw focuses on Neal Stephenson’s brilliant intentionality, posits Berlant’s model of femininity as a distinct feeling struggling to be formed. The female complaint is, Berlant writes, “a discourse of disappointment.”³⁸⁰ Largely the three volumes in the trilogy are shaped by men’s experiences, and how women bargain in and through these scenes with power. What makes the trilogy interesting is that it focuses on these scenes through ordinary survival techniques rather than transgression, disappointment, or refusal. The lack of a unidirectional itinerary for the women in the novel is cause for an analysis of Berlant’s discourse of disappointment, and how, in many ways, it throws such affective scenes together that can offer something completely different (in terms of structural relations to Bercovitch’s production of a complex Hawthorne where he reinstates principles of exclusion or choice on an original footing).

³⁷³ See Sina Najafi and David Serlin, “The Broken Circuit: An interview with Lauren Berlant.”

³⁷⁴ Sina Najafi and David Serlin, “The Broken Circuit: An interview with Lauren Berlant.”

³⁷⁵ Berlant, *Complaint*, 284.

³⁷⁶ See McCann and Szalay, “Paul Potter,” 216.

³⁷⁷ Berlant, *Complaint*, xi.

³⁷⁸ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 10.

³⁷⁹ Berlant, *Complaint*, xii.

³⁸⁰ Berlant, *Complaint*, 13.

In the trilogy, focuses are drawn on the ordinary, and to use Berlant's words, "what gets uttered in the female complaint is a collective story that is not organized by a singular autobiography." She writes:

In *What Is a Minor Literature?* Deleuze and Guattari argue that one's identification with any material marked by a minor voice performs one's attachment to being generic to being a member of a population that has been marked out as having collective qualities that are apprehensible in individuals.³⁸¹

Women in *The Baroque Cycle* conform to a generic structure of affective spaces (whose shapes, logics, and procedures were not identical to the intellectual and political history of public life that Hawthorne was telling) and in many ways through the author's narrating the ordinary through forgotten or lost moments of the women's culture concept, we review the remediating of stuff (the glance, the gesture, tonal intensity) by paying attention.³⁸² By paying attention to Randy, on the other hand we finally see that he does not conform to anything or anyone; he is redolent of Bercovitch's concept of negation by dissent as a form of consent. No matter how closely linked Randy's group is, they are rarely determined by identifiable dependencies. This sees Randy shuttling between twin polemics in Bercovitch's argument on national identity where, alongside others, he becomes a point of socialization. As a product of Hawthorne's fusion and telos, he transmutes opposition into complementarity. His ineffectualness, as the American abroad, is to deliver a more emphatic narrative focalization to drive forward the American social story and its understanding and sympathy for people of Asia and the Third World. The women in the trilogy, on the other hand, are narrated expertly-abstractly or more confidently, and suggest an author maturing in the experimental mode, finding his way to Berlant's non-default view on gender, and in turn allowing a view into "the singular materials of a specific life [that] are readable only as particulars that are exemplary not of the individual's life but of that kind of life."³⁸³ Eliza's first-person narrative, as we will see, is not so easily accommodated into Bercovitch's paradoxical dynamics of dissent that provides a multivocal narrative of American liberal ideology during a crucial period of its formation. As such, the experience we get from experiencing her story is radically different from the regulatory juridical overlap in the spaces of Randy's ordinary American everyday.

Randy's thunderous no-saying to American imperialism offers a certain imaginative vitality, yet his attempts to establish an independently critical stance works from a painful retreat. Once he consigns

³⁸¹ Berlant, *Complaint*, x.

³⁸² Berlant, *Complaint*, 25.

³⁸³ Berlant, *Complaint*, x.

the academics to the devil, as Jehlen suggests for Melville, a certain imaginative vitality seems also distinguished in the novel. This builds into a conflicting paranoid nativist viewpoint, aimed not at society, but at the possibility of active dissent (lack of symbolic reconciliation) in rhetorical structures.³⁸⁴ After his no to the daemonic originals of the academics, Randy becomes a more relaxed protagonist, an alternate vision of himself that is not so much as fixed in enclosures of philosophical pluralism or an alien cultural criticism, but one that is at rest in the aesthetic narrative. In what follows, and as he is brought into series of contrasts, he confronts a less objectionable America, which is easier to reconcile. Randy is even twinned with his business rival Hubert Kepler. In this aspect the novel brings forward to Randy not the vagueness of his relation to the object, as with Charlene, but the self-enclosed circle, which locks out the pervasive forces of capital that centre in the Old World. Jehlen writes: “A century before, [Melville] Hawthorne also retreated after *The Scarlet Letter*. The descendants of the dangerously dualistic Hester come in allegorical pairs, a dark lady and a fair, (Glory/Charlene) a sexy one and a chaste, (Nina/Mary) a rebel and a sweet conformist (Glory/Amy/Charlene). The dark rebellious self need then not be overcome (Newton/Daniel i.e. the Puritan origins of the American self) or absorbed: she can be exiled, excised.”³⁸⁵ As Jehlen further argues for Faulkner, I similarly argue that where American liberalism allows for all possible surface adjustments creating its aura of transhistorical invulnerability for the nation, *Cryptonomicon*'s writing “suffers” if taking a transnational perspective to it when it fails to establish an independently critical stance. Also, and paraphrasing Jehlen, “this is not the place for a discussion of philosophical dualism in American thought,” but simply to refer to the structural conditions of this thought.³⁸⁶ Emerson's monistic resolutions are dangerously edified in *Cryptonomicon*, and more condemningly for women, re-replaces them in rhetorical (and therefore social) exile.³⁸⁷ Also, and similar to Jonathon Arac's study of the A-politics, in *Cryptonomicon* “explication leads out from the problem of meaning into an anatomy of liberal co-optation.”³⁸⁸ Randy's inaction is to perceive ambiguity, and this ambiguity is rescued from “its own council of despair [...] by the affirmation of some benevolent overarching design.”³⁸⁹ What finally comes

³⁸⁴ McGurl argues the paranoid nativist view in Stephenson's writing reflects how the university not only serves as agents of upward social mobility for US citizens but also inspires the flow of social elites from nations on the periphery into metropolitan centres. The school, in turn, becomes a means for repressive socialisation but also a means to free oneself from these structures. It is this ambivalent but central theme in the countercultural teachings in the 1960s that McGurl argues enabled minority students to find their voice as they were recruited in large numbers into the suburban middle classes but also where white writers like Stephenson have ostensibly destroyed this movement as they have been the most likely to assert the privilege of other narration while the minority writers have been asked to slot themselves into a single ethnos. The difference between a paranoid nativist viewpoint in *Cryptonomicon* and the one McGurl picks out in Stephenson's *Cobweb* (1996) is that rather than the social elites come from the periphery to cause a threat they come from the centres of old world power to cause a threat. See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 383.

³⁸⁵ Jehlen, “Middle Class in America,” 139.

³⁸⁶ Jehlen, “Middle Class in America,” 139.

³⁸⁷ Jehlen, “Middle Class in America,” 130.

³⁸⁸ See Bercovitch, “Afterword,” 435-436.

³⁸⁹ Bercovitch, “Afterword,” 435-436.

down to Randy is the American fantasy, in the form of America Shaftoe, and not the fantasy imbued in Charlene that is always utopian and a critical measure of lack at the same time.

Taking aspects of the trilogy as a kind of after-feminism rewriting of official history offers the modern American moment not through what Berlant argues is “the official timeline of national history, nor through a claim that family history is any sense private, but through a genealogy of entertainments, whose place in the collective memory makes up a nation that takes on a shimmery, intimate yet detached quality of the commodity form.”³⁹⁰ In such a mode of understanding Berlant writes:

Addressing femininity from the perspective of mediated fantasies that magnetize many different kinds of women to the scene of suffering, sacrifice, survival, criticism, and sometimes sublimity that has historically provided that narrative of women’s culture thus shows us something about the operation of mass-mediated identity – that is, how it manages to sublimate singularity on behalf of maintaining proximity to a vague prospect of social belonging via the generic or conventional love plot that isolates an identity as the desired relay from weakness to strength, aloneness to sociability, abandonment to recognition, and solitary agency to reciprocity [...] For the writers of these narratives both the nation and capital have two special kinds of function. One function is institutional, in their disciplinary organisation of materialized or lived life. The other function is to serve not as sources of reciprocity or justice, but as magnetizing forms for *fantasies* of reciprocity and justice whose very impersonality and constitution in an ongoing near future is a source of relief and optimism.³⁹¹

If Eliza offers what Berlant argues is the structure of a “multiply mediated agitation against the narrow, privatised version of the American way of life,” then she also comes close to being written from the spiritual scene that generates relief from the political.³⁹² By paying attention to how Eliza attempts to overcome alienation through affective spaces (where she generates those veerings of the sexual drive to find bearable terms of reciprocity), she reaffirms Carolyn Porter’s insistent engagement with (an intolerable) society rather than a flight from it.³⁹³ Eliza counters desire for performative and transparent community by proposing an inheritance without a mimetic compulsion or fear of emotional opacity. In doing so, she rejects the normative presumptions and idealisations of transparency. Her plight in the volumes is to oppose all forms of slavery, from the abduction of the fair Abigail Frome, sold into service of sexual slavery, to black African man servant Dappa’s reduction to a precise and individual discovery. She does this with compassion that is hardly masculinised, and within an emotionally charged set of experiences.

³⁹⁰ Berlant, *Queen*, 9.

³⁹¹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 11.

³⁹² See Berlant, *Queen*, 220, and *Complaint*, 10.

³⁹³ See Berlant, *Complaint*, 23, and Porter, “Reification and American Literature.” 188.

Eliza's eighteenth century liberal sympathy is tellingly amiss as she visits the whores at Bridewell Palace. The whores face slow death, through the attrition of subjects by the exchange values of capital. Eliza's sentimental plight is to oppose slavery in all its forms. Yet in this scene she rejects the normative presumptions and idealisations of transparency even of that of a bourgeois subject who is beginning to write her own *jouissance*. In her response to Daniel's request for investment in his "logic mill," where the whores would pump the bellows to make the punched cards needed to transfer information to material sources, Eliza asks Daniel to join him in her carriage for her return journey. She tells Daniel that Johan (her son) will travel with Mr Ham as he "has a head for numbers" while she has "a head for relationships." Eliza as "it turned out had a vicious head for numbers" (vol. 3, 156) yet proffers terms of discourse to Daniel of "the relationship, or to be blunt, what precisely is to be the security of her proposed loan" (vol. 1, 418-426). Eliza's business transactions are always held in a double articulation, which decodes the modern logics of corporations. I deal with this aspect later. In this scene I focus on Eliza's countersentimental narrative. Eliza or Princess Caroline can hardly be described as sympathetic human beings. In *The System of the World*, Caroline thinks nothing of detaching from her one true love Johan when she becomes wedded to the service of state power (vol. 3, 875). Conversely, in the Bridewell scene Eliza's pains to assert that all men (and women) are naturally free and equal does not take in the labour-mixing formula of master-servant with the relation of class. We see in these women not necessarily conflicting and contradicting emotions culminating in what Berlant calls a "Zizekian representation of affective self-maintenance" but emotions that signal that, for these women at least, there is no transcendence anywhere (neither for Hannah the Bridewell pumping whore who is picked out one form entrenched social hierarchy into another) and not specially through a thrilling (libidinal) or comforting image.³⁹⁴ By paying attention to how these women negotiate and bargain with power, we see that there is no family relationship or specific male attachment through which they form specific bonds of attachment, yet in Berlant's understanding there is an "explicit aversion to the activity of disavowal."³⁹⁵ She writes that

The bargain struck in these works demands not the sacrifice of intelligence and ethical potential about the catastrophic and petty lies, violence, and disappointment with which the world proceeds without guarantees, but confirms all that while demanding the maintenance of proximity to the *promise* of affective continuity, recognition, and, metatextually, membership in the community of people constituted by *whatever* longing, the longing of people who showed up. Nothing is hidden or

³⁹⁴ Berlant, *Complaint*, 268.

³⁹⁵ Berlant, *Complaint*, 268.

unknown in this double movement: the doubleness is a commitment to maintaining contradiction and a project of making explicit the difficulties of bargaining.³⁹⁶

Eliza will not curtail the vagueness of the scene at Bridewell through sentimentality that Amit Rai argues “can also function as an agent of the police.”³⁹⁷ Such non-curtailed about the relation of any object of optimism allows an affective structure to arise, offering potentiality immanent in anyone. Eliza’s resistance is apt in this figuration, as she holds up American culture’s preoccupation with familial feeling as the foundation for sympathy, and sympathy as the basis of a democratic republic.

In *The Baroque Cycle* the character Daniel Waterhouse holds open a contrast to Eliza and a rejection of the old world that, Jehlen argues, came by the very process of national emergence. However, because the trilogy is such a massive and noteworthy compendium of historical fact and fiction it would be inconclusive to simply read all of its characters though parallels unearthed in versions underpinned by Bercovitch’s readings of classical dissensus and ideological mimesis. After all, dissensus is a model about not being right all the time, but a source of study through which students can make their own decisions about American literate culture and an originary political rhetoric. While Bercovitch’s profundity of the goal of the scarlet letter (it had not done its office therefore it had a goal) would be a relevant reading to take to the trilogy, it would cover ground already made in the breaking of ties between Leftist politics and antirealist or postmodern epistemology in the North American academy throughout the 1990s. To go over this ground again would offer very little in the way of formal new insight or the reinvention of new relational modes, though it would offer new grounds upon which the American form could offer structural effects that challenge early dominances of British-European hegemony. The trilogy could be appropriate to read through McGurl’s brilliant realignment of the classroom as “dialect of structure and agency,” as well as relevant context through which to discover the institutional *a priori* of what he calls the “long now.”³⁹⁸ However, Berlant’s analysis offers us both the creative possibilities and limitations group pluralisms afforded on the basis of dissensus. And, following Deleuze’s understanding of “worker-school-kids or bureaucratic students” we are offered an insight into Berlant’s reform of the school system as being, in reality, its dismantling.³⁹⁹ As an alternative approach to the model of dissensus, I offer an analysis of women’s culture in *The Baroque Cycle*, to pose questions on how individually experienced pain gets turned into modern forms of entertainment. I then consider what

³⁹⁶ Berlant, *Complaint*, 268.

³⁹⁷ Rai, *Rule of sympathy: sentiment, race, and power 1750-1850*, 165.

³⁹⁸ See McGurl, “*Ordinary Doom*.”

³⁹⁹ See Antonio Negri, “Control and Becoming, Gilles Deleuze in conversation with Antonio Negri,” *generation-online.org*, <http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdeleuze3.htm>

that aesthetic experience says about a forgotten context that would help explain a contemporary cultural moment in the long now.

Intimate Publics

In *The Female Complaint*, Berlant tracks affective and emotional attachments in relation to official public policy and the mediated public sphere, to span the ongoing power and range of sentimental culture in the US. Berlant's attempt to articulate radical re-imagination tactics is part of her larger endeavour to bear witness to American political culture's fraudulent claims to popular consent on the back of politico-sentimental texts. In the culture wars, the Right had invariably won for Berlant, and she looked to read through the whirling mass of these debates that swung spectacularly from this way to that with no real political outcome. She writes:

I first conceived [the complaint] in the late 1980s as a way of helping to elaborate what I had learned from the *Anatomy* that publics were not just structural effects but also affective spaces whose shapes, logics and procedures were not identical to the intellectual and political history of public life that Hawthorne was also telling. My aim then became to tell the long story of US women's culture as a sphere of intimacy with a complex relation to nationality and political metaculture. My plan was to track novels that had become adapted into melodramas [...] by the Hollywood culture industry [...] Above all I wanted to use the story of feminine publicity after 1837 to tell what happened as cities and mass culture became conjoined sites for the production of social belonging in the United States that did not always remediate the collective sense that was building through the public sphere.⁴⁰⁰

Berlant's separate sphere of public intimacy (which branched off from, without entirely becoming antagonistic toward, the political scene of inequality) can be used to define how cultural struggles are used to identify how different cultural groups tell different literary stories through the wide expanse of fictionality in the university establishment.⁴⁰¹ Taking her stance literally from resistances to moral and social conservatisms built from the Reagan Era, she generalises affective frameworks of consumerism, before the subsequent encroaching de-differentiation of their material vehicles. She takes what she calls a juxtapositional attitude towards those that float with displacement of politics to the realm of feeling, seeing this heterosexual sphere as somewhat blinded to its negative representations of pathologies on non-dominant groups in media space and US policy. Similarly, as arguments are made for the new sociology of literature in the university, it is important not to lose sight of these stories relevant across all economic sectors in a world where fictionality and the stories we tell ourselves are locked together. As James English concurs:

⁴⁰⁰ Berlant, *Complaint*, 23.

⁴⁰¹ Berlant, *Complaint*, xii.

The process of counting and tabulating requires one to specify the units of analysis (in Moretti's case, "devices, themes, tropes," "clues," and so on) but these are, Frow argues, "neither given in advance nor arbitrarily constructed by an analytic choice, but are, rather, necessarily implicated in and derived from a process of reading and interpretation." The "sociological" method, that is, itself depends on literary practices.⁴⁰²

It is then not simply the case of telling another story about presentism, relativism, truth, indeterminacy or the commercialised, but to argue for ways of reading and interpreting as a way to rethink the contemporary issue of global struggle (anti-capitalism) that is becoming increasingly harder to define.

Insofar as it survives as a recognizable thing, the women's culture concept can be put to work in *The Baroque Cycle's* three volumes. Rather than simply focus on the trilogy's ability to narrate or bring forward Berlant's affective concept of crisis ordinariness, it also carries a structural demand on the way 1980s American culture was in process of remodelling itself. Berlant turns away from this semi-cum-political-affective framework. For her, 1980s personhood was beginning to be reframed in symbolic acts similar to first instances of the Constitution Framers symbolic acts, the nation form and sexual difference. For Berlant, those that see themselves in terms fully assimilable to the identarian ethos of ethnic fiction, as well as the discourse of difference and writing tagged as ethnic that fully assimilates the self-reflexive interests of literary modernism, erroneously turn the power of that writing back upon the self in bouts of unselfconscious presentism. She remarks:

A growing number of scholars and activists who speak from identity movements celebrate the ways US subalterns develop tactics for survival from within capitalist culture: forms of activity like gay marriage, critically-motivated acts of commodity consumption, and identity-based economic based economic investment zones are said to make marginalised social groups more central, more legitimate and powerful in capitalist society. Yet for all the importance of survival tactics, a politics that advocates the subaltern appropriation of normative forms of the good life makes a kind of (often tacit) peace with exploitation and normativity.⁴⁰³

Berlant looked to counter what she saw were misdirections from the state overwriting critical groundwork made during the phase of US literary experimentalism and interpretive activism. She argues that "the displacement of politics to the realm of feeling both opens a scene for the analysis of the operations of injustice in lived democracy and shows the obstacles to social change that emerge when politics becomes privatised."⁴⁰⁴ Berlant moves her terms on from the culture and the canon wars to the sex wars, in order underwrite a genealogy of sex in America that "would register

⁴⁰² English, "Everywhere and Nowhere: The Sociology of Literature After "the sociology of literature," xv.

⁴⁰³ Berlant, *Queen*, 9.

⁴⁰⁴ Berlant, *Complaint*, viii.

how intensively sexual white American relations have been to African American people and people of colour.”⁴⁰⁵ She argues how in the spaces of nation and capital the “hegemonic achievement of Reaganite conservatism” bestowed upon the American public, “also evident in its effects on its adversaries on the left,” a less than visible ideological barrier to self-realisation.⁴⁰⁶ Out a sense of political urgency Berlant halted her project on the business of sentimentality to challenge not only the Reaganite Revolution, but also the capital optimism of cultural studies in general, which she saw had become a tool of power.

In the *Queen* Berlant writes that:

the account of the total correspondence between acts and identities that marked the controversy over gays in the military manifested the juridical understanding of sexuality: my perverse act expresses my perverse identity; the state has a compelling interest in protecting the family by repressing my perversion; hence, no gays in the military; and hence, no privacy protection for any non-reproductive sexual practice or identity.⁴⁰⁷

Similarly, and writing on Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, she argues there is a countersentimental narrative “which refuses to confuse survival with freedom, justice, or the good life.”⁴⁰⁸ The idea that a character or characters can bring forward Bercovitch’s unified design in the friction emerging between private interests and the public good is far more remote an option in the trilogy than in *Cryptonomicon*. Randy may bring home a point against homophobia in the military and, it may use Lawrence Waterhouse to defend Alan Turing’s non-reproductive sexual capabilities, yet this is always from an overarching design through which the ironies of personal agency and the ambiguities of Epiphyte Corp’s group pluralism and their links to wartime group pluralisms of Lawrence, Bobby, and Goto are finally established and generalised in a desire for community and continuity. Although the cross-generational aspect of these groups speak of literary ambiguity, with its indeterminate obliquity of signs, they interpret away metaphysical outrage of Japan and Germany’s crude recommencements of slavery (old world terrors) with the academics’ internal appropriation of subaltern populations placing them on an original footing as the products of one more European socially binding norm. Thus, for all of *Cryptonomicon*’s inconclusive luxuriance of meaning, it prevents the sort of divisiveness that leads to radical social change, and finally offers the differences in their relations with America as an object of optimism in a constant democracy.

⁴⁰⁵ Berlant, *Queen*, 221.

⁴⁰⁶ Berlant, *Queen*, 9.

⁴⁰⁷ Berlant, *Queen*, 17.

⁴⁰⁸ Berlant, *Complaint*, 64.

Having tried to argue that interpretation in *Cryptonomicon* is largely to perceive ambiguity, I have also expressed that the novel's characters find it very hard to not speak from a multiplicitous whole through Arac's council of despair. In their inability to remain open and porous, the characters lead us away from the academics' wilful self-binding of truth to the redemptive vision of many truths. In doing so, they throw up a structure of relevancy that returns them to a Nativist understanding, where Arac's problem of meaning turns *Cryptonomicon* into an anatomy of liberal co-optation. There is, on the other hand, radical ambivalence in which women emerge in the trilogy, which makes the sympathy toward the national unintelligible and "inconstant."⁴⁰⁹ As they invoke a people to a promise of affective continuity Berlant illustrates a condition of their reality. She writes:

Sentimentalists strive to save the political from politics. To do this they constitute the citizen not as someone with potential jeopardizing qualities or with a status in a hierarchy – but as someone with attachments and intentions and pain capacities – for example, as a *subject of feeling* – who longs for what everyone is said to long for, a world that allows access to vague belonging, a sense of unanxious general social membership that ought to be protected by the institutions that bind power to ordinary life.⁴¹⁰

It is also possible however to read--from within the trilogy's own moment of high historical nationalism--a culture of consensus that absorbs the fractures of social hierarchy (in a pluralist semiotic), where women symbolise how the US is too abstract at this moment, because however utopian it may be, it has, at present, codified an intense high-stakes polarity between national interests and local identities. However, unlike in *Cryptonomicon*, the women or the group in the trilogy do not come in allegorical pairings, and do not offer either an exercise in narrative exile or the reproduction of life on scenes of narrative transgression or refusal. Instead, they draw focus towards scenes of ordinary survival and disappointment. In Eliza's bargaining with power to keep Princess Caroline from the demands of the lecherous Elector Fredrik, or in the forced abandonment of her baby due to political opinion, she reflects literally the sphere of intimacy that you get "if the nation were no longer held to be the ideal type of political structure that secures justice for its citizens."⁴¹¹ Eliza encapsulates the generic structure of Berlant's survivor, and her complaint in the trilogy is to expose the circuits of erotic and political dominance that have permeated the collective life in the US. We can think here of Eliza being forced into an unjust sexual act by Prince William yet also how William, or *Le Roi* for that matter, cannot exile Eliza to a political scene of inequality and the subaltern appropriation of women as a sexual underclass. In these scenes *The Baroque Cycle* offers structural as well as affective resistances to overt chest-baring of American manhood,

⁴⁰⁹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 146.

⁴¹⁰ Berlant, *Complaint*, 145.

⁴¹¹ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 208.

which finds fictional truth with Berlant's attacks on the patriotic nationalism of Reagan Republicanism, which sought to shrink the state while intensifying identification with the utopian symbolic nation.⁴¹²

Women in particular that have to bargain with power in the trilogy cannot be as easily exiled as women in *Cryptonomicon*. They, in other words, reflect a whole duality, which is not suffused through readymade allegorical pairings. Eliza, Liselotte, Sophie, Hannah, Catherine, and Caroline are complementary of each other, and mark out Deleuze and Guattari's attachment to being generic as part of something social, even if, as Berlant argues, "one's singular relation to that belonging is extremely limited, episodic, ambivalent, rejecting or mediated by random encounters with relevantly marked texts."⁴¹³ These women are all dangerously dualistic, and speak of an alien encounter in Jehlen's dominant culture and the Constitution's framers' hegemonic relations. It is important to show what Berlant argues is affective-structural dominance, and therefore I give her commentary in full. She writes:

The Constitution's framers constructed the person as the unit of political membership in the American nation; in doing so, they did not simply set up the public standard of abstract legitimation on behalf of white male embodiment – technically, in the beginning, property ownership was as much a factor in citizenship as any corporeal schema. Nonetheless, we can see a real attraction of abstract citizenship in the way the citizen acquires a new body by participation in the political public sphere. The American subject is privileged to suppress the fact of his historical situation in the abstract person: but then, in return, the nation provides a kind of prophylaxis for the person, as it promises to protect his privileges and his local body in return for loyalty to the state. As [...] others have argued the implicit whiteness and maleness of the original American citizen is thus protected by national identity. This is a paradox because if in practice the liberal political public sphere protects and privileges the person's racial and gendered embodiment, one effect of these privileges is to be without notable qualities while retaining cultural authority. It is under these conditions that what might be an erotics of political fellowship passes for a meritocracy or an order defined by objective mutual interests. The white male body is the relay to legitimation but even more than that the power to suppress that body to cover the event of its tracks and traces is the sign of real authority according to constitutional fashion.⁴¹⁴

It was Nietzsche who wrote that knowledge is an invention behind which lies something completely different from itself, the play of instincts, impulses, desires, fears and the will to appropriate. Berlant shows how the women's culture concept is evidently a Nietzschean structural condition of abuse. Through a reading of Hawthorne, she offers a continued site of social differentiation, where

⁴¹² Berlant, *Queen*, 3.

⁴¹³ Berlant, *Complaint*, x.

⁴¹⁴ Berlant, *Complaint*, 110.

male gendering and domineering has not taken up (or been allowed to take up) the peculiarities of such reference points. These spaces are from which publics in America are organised differently from each other, allowing complex identifications that locates real life in the affective capacity to bracket many kinds of structural and historical antagonism.⁴¹⁵

In practical returns to readings of race and power before her more nuanced ethical reconsiderations of women's culture in the *Complaint*, Berlant writes in the *Anatomy* that "if racial privilege becomes glaringly the one local identity in which Hawthorne feels nationally uncontested, the politics of gender and nationalism take on vastly different and more intimate issues."⁴¹⁶ "The racial and gendered sites of [Hawthorne's] entitlement" (his local identity which superintend the emancipated ethnic identity Hawthorne lives) brings into clearer view the structural conditions of racism and whiteness in the contemporary US.⁴¹⁷ In the *Complaint*, Berlant sees an overt male-constructed manhood forming a dominant metaculture that is tacitly white.⁴¹⁸ In marking out her tactical point of entry into a male US metaculture, Berlant writes "what makes work that is written from and for an intimate public realistic is also what makes it sentimental and juxtapolitical: its excesses and displacements are demands for recognition of the importance of the situation in terms of affectively alternate realities."⁴¹⁹ The national-local serves in Hawthorne's work as a mnemonic of another sort, where Berlant's new local provokes a redefinition of post-melodramatic subjectivity in contemporary political life.

We find redefinitions of feminist realist sentimentality seen historically and across a wide variety of locations in the trilogy, as Eliza questions Dappa on his collection of small slave narrative tracts: on "the execrable crime that slavery is" (vol. 3, 59). Eliza's mechanical coldness in these situations operates in concert with—but always beyond the reach or in excess of—the political economy and patriotic memory. Berlant writes that "seen en mass these diverse sites of identity knowledge and practice provides a kind of antidote to American monomania."⁴²⁰ Eliza's "placid cruelty" (vol. 1, 746; vol. 2, 794) put towards bringing an end to such inhumane gestures as slavery and misogyny, within Berlant's view, not only brings into play a reverse affective pathology of American manhood in mass nationality, but a rhetorical quality that can speak of rage, pain, helplessness and politics all

⁴¹⁵ Berlant, *Complaint*, 4.

⁴¹⁶ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 210.

⁴¹⁷ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 209.

⁴¹⁸ It is intriguing to see that US TV programmes like *American Chopper* and *Two and a Half Men* reinstate white male masculinity under the guise of a more softened intimate public. Berlant argues that, behind an overt sense of male conservative shamelessness, there is a new bullying mechanism and racial monoculture being formed. The lack of shame in these TV series represents an amount of justice for the white monoculture. The overt sense of autobiographical confession and chest-baring in these newly forming intimate publics represent for Berlant a new form of modal domination in the right-wing media.

⁴¹⁹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 271.

⁴²⁰ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 208.

in one breath.⁴²¹ Eliza's hyper-vigilance in these scenes is not the opposite of disavowal and self-deception; it is also often their guardian, and sits on what Giles considers as a "dangerous and uncomfortable boundary where residual assumptions about autochthonous identity are traversed by something different."⁴²² Pointing to the structural inequality in the construction of US male homosocial political culture both past and present, women's culture as presented in *The Baroque Cycle* shows convergences of a different type than Hawthorne's work. Rather than signal a homogenous or organic whole (no matter how chaotically organised), these women speak the languages of a repressive white dominant male liberal culture, radical subalternity within that culture, and the subordination techniques of white American male metaculture. Berlant, by opting to return to an approach that was deemed largely trite and unsexy, narrates the situation in terms of where a path of resistance is to be found. It was only by reclaiming a link to the National Symbolic (while many other writers like Charlene were involved in denying this type of intolerable particularity of her selfhood) that the women in the trilogy can reinstate resistance in an affective National Symbolic.

With the perceived poststructural threat all but extinguished in the American ideology, and what I have so far described as libertarian attitudes that took effects on adversaries on the left, *The Baroque Cycle's* formal structure now works through the network of ideas through which American nationalist and corporate culture justifies itself. On the one hand, Charlene and Randy's relationship in *Cryptonomicon* tracks Berlant's apprehension of the problem of modern mass national identity from the hegemonic achievement of Reaganite conservatism, and where a structure of relevancy around Randy reveals the threat about the imminent end of male hegemony. Randy fails to find an independently critical stance; he interprets away the radicalism that postmoderns were led to believe would lead to decisive social change or at least secure policies for the betterment of the good of education. Eliza's relationships, conversely, redraw intense focuses on the classical American ideology, an optimistic literature made virile by criticism of the actual in comparison with the ideal. In relations between females, a generic structure is being formed out of an eclectic borrowing of residual elements. As Eliza holds sway in her abeyance to future optimism, her fantasy projections which carry the fortitude of common sense and their centrality to the political economy, generate a formal structure that describes the complaint genre. Her relations with Rossignol intimate that there is a structure, as her dreams of boarding a ship with him to sail off to "Amsterdam or London to raise their baby in exile" (vol. 2, 77) are a glimpse at the identification of a counterfactual in the narrative that is raised to a degree of general significance. The women in the definitively male-

⁴²¹ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 210.

⁴²² See Berlant, *Complaint*, 213, and Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections*, 14.

oriented trilogy recalibrate experiences pointing to Berlant's mass intimacy that has promise to include them.

Eliza was accustomed to being looked at, and did not mind it. But she was preoccupied now for a little while. Rossignol had no feelings whatsoever for the baby. He had not the slightest attention of being its father. He wanted her for what lay at either end of her spinal column [...] certainly not for her offspring [...] It would have made matters a good deal simpler if he had fallen in love with the baby and proposed to elope with her, and him to some other country. But this, as she now saw clearly, was unthinkable in so many different ways that to dream of it any more was a waste of time. Oh well (she thought) if the world were populated solely by persons who loved and desired each other symmetrically, it might be happier, but not so interesting. And there would be no place in such a world for a person such as Eliza [...] If there was to be no doting father so be it. (vol. 2, 48)

Developing her "wiles for surviving, thriving, and transcending the world as it presents itself," Eliza shapes such a historical form of optimism that can be affective as a marketised message in and across the capitalist media sphere. Her "aesthetic structure of affective expectation" offers the chance to reappraise new historical convergences of social and economic objectives in the institution.⁴²³

Women's Culture

In the *Complaint*, Berlant argues how women's culture becomes more recognizable as a thing in the US because "its central fantasy [...] is the constantly emplotted desire of a complex person to rework the details of her history to become a vague or simpler version of herself, usually in the vicinity of a love plot."⁴²⁴ In many instances women's culture in the trilogy is perceived in this way, whether it is the unremarkable shedding of everyday tears in "domestic life, controlled unremarkable" (vol. 2, 158) that frames a particular aspect of Eliza's story, or Princess Caroline's folding the sum of her losses into her life story (vol. 3, 328), these women offer forms in generic terms of fantasy improvisation (usually in the vicinity of a love plot) that seek the social to one side of the political "as something other than a failure to be politics."⁴²⁵ In the following section, I look to how the trilogy, through Berlant's concept of women's culture, throws up affective scenes that neutralize the threat of the hegemonic achievement of Reaganite conservatism (social and moral) which was to advocate the subaltern appropriation of normative forms, and offer rhetorical affectations of sexual underclasses in contemporary culture along with their involvements in the historical political life of the polis.

⁴²³ Berlant, *Complaint*, 2-3; 4.

⁴²⁴ Berlant, *Complaint*, 7.

⁴²⁵ Berlant, *Complaint*, 25.

Moving on from the perceived poststructural threat in *Cryptonomicon*, which the novel sees as coming in on planes and academic conference circuits, and in which in many ways the American form closes out, *The Baroque Cycle* begins to offer passages in poststructural variants of cultural materialist terms. *The System of the World* offers a simple understanding of Berlant's "false distinction between the merely personal and the profoundly structural" and with it "the narrow, privatised version of the American way of life."⁴²⁶

But relations between one who was a princess and one who was not were governed, not by what a Princess was really feeling and thinking, but rather by certain forms that were supposed to ensure the steady functioning of the Court, and by extension, the secular world. (vol. 3, 318)

Eliza's intimate scenes with Caroline, as with other women in the trilogy and across a wide variety of locations, constitute a variety of scenes played out in the gendered register of the female, can be read in Berlant's transformative political terms that "seek to harness the power of emotion to change what is structural in the world."⁴²⁷ Eliza's intensively sexual white relations, in voluntary acquiescence with dominant male white metaculture, become an instinctive source of creative release. This is drawn in her affectionate relationship with Rossignol, where he, as the King's cryptanalyst, is drawn into her vague prospect of social belonging.

Rossignol [...] extended his arms [to his baby]. He had never seen the woman before, and had no idea who she was, but it did not require a Royal cryptanalyst to read the situation: Eliza, despite being trapped and detained in Dunkerque with no money, had not only figured out a way to move into this vacant chateau, but had also managed to retain at least one competent, loyal, and trusted servant. (vol. 2, 48)

Berlant's critical confidence and good intention in affect and emotion is reflected in Eliza's building of a community with "ex-whore [...] Nicole, recruited from one of Dunkerque's waterfront brothels [...] [and who] had already given the baby more love than he would get in a lifetime with Bonaventure Rossignol" (49). This scene creates an understanding of Berlant's feminine realist-sentimentality, which thrives in proximity to the political, and offers not so much an object of transgression but the instance of a structure of survival.

⁴²⁶ Berlant, *Queen*, 220.

⁴²⁷ Berlant, *Complaint*, 12.

We see how Eliza grows from Berlant's "loosely organised, market-structured juxtapolitical sphere of people attached to each other by a sense that there is a common emotional world available to those individuals who have been harshly treated in a generic way."⁴²⁸

Thus d'Avaux let her know the stakes of the game. She might end up in a work-house, or a countess at Versailles. And her baby might be raised a thousand miles from her, or a thousand yards. Or so d'Avaux wished her to believe. But though she did not gamble, Eliza understood games. She knew what it was to bluff, and that sometimes it was nothing more than the sign of a weak hand. (vol. 2, 62)

Eliza sends a message that shapes a historical form of American optimism "regardless of how what is personal has been threaded through mediating institutions and social hierarchy. It marks out the non-political situations of most ordinary life as it is lived as a space of continuity and optimism and social self-cultivation."⁴²⁹ Her strange kind of optimism is to "know and understand things" (vol. 1, 637). With some needlework we are told she "makes garments over into ones that, while not quite fashionable, will at least not expose her to ridicule" (vol. 1, 640). On the other hand, her fantasies at Versailles calibrate nothing for her in terms of how to live. Regardless of the "cruel words" which Liselotte places on her, Eliza knows that the "only cruel words" at Versailles are to express that "she is a nobody. And Madame had not said that. Consequently the King had to look at her for a few moments longer" (vol. 1, 644). Berlant writes "what makes a public sphere intimate is an expectation that the consumers of its particular stuff already share a worldview that they have derived from a broadly common historical experience. A certain circularity structures an intimate, therefore; its narrative and things are deemed expressive of that history while also shaping its conventions of belonging."⁴³⁰ As we will see, many of Eliza's relationships are posed in this way, and distinguish a view that is marked by fantasy.

On meeting the bigger, older, richer, and stronger woman d'Oyonnax, a structure or relevancy is revealed in a "domain of detail [that] is always being negotiated, debated and taken personally."⁴³¹ D'Oyonnax tells Eliza:

There used to be at court many practioners of the Black Mass. Do you think that all of these people woke up one morning and said, today I shall worship and offer sacrifices to the Prince of Evil? Of course not. Rather it was that some girl, desperate to find a husband, so that she could not be sent off to live out the rest of her life in some convent, would hear a rumour that such and such a person could prepare a love potion. She would save her money and go into Paris and buy some magic powder

⁴²⁸ Berlant, *Complaint*, 10.

⁴²⁹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 10.

⁴³⁰ Berlant, *Complaint*, viii.

⁴³¹ Berlant, *Complaint*, ix.

from some mountebank. Of course it had no effect at all; but she would cozen herself into believing it had worked a little bit, and so conceive a desperate hope and a desire for something a little bit stronger: a magic spell perhaps. One thing would lead to another, and in any time she might feel herself stealing the consecrated host from some church taking it to a cellar where a black mass would be sung over her naked body. Errant foolishness all of it. Foolishness leading to evil. But did she set out to do evil? Did she ever conceive of herself as evil? So much for lonely hearts desperate for love, said Eliza. What of those that were married, and whose husbands dropped dead? Did they act out of love? Do you propose to act out of love, mademoiselle? I have not heard the word love escape from your pretty mouth. I have heard something about honour instead; which tells me that you and I have more in common than you would like to admit. (vol. 2, 161)

D'Oyonnax's narration of anxiety and depression—what Sedgwick calls “those veerings of the sexual drive to find bearable terms of reciprocity in invented forms, nonce practices, or just adequate objects rather than holding out for entire ways of life,”—attempts not to be sucked into the encroaching de-differentiation of their material vehicles, such as the humanist frame of classical melancholia that keeps the ego attached to the lost object (so that emotionally it is not lost or you are lost with it).⁴³² D'Oyonnax has no need for her fantasy to be material, and the exchange is expressed hyperbolically. Such a scene offers an affective framework, where d'Oyonnax offers a fantasy improvisation “so she can feel in a general sense that she has known the feeling of love and carries the memory of having been affectively recognised and emotionally important.”⁴³³ A type of broad shared circularity between these women signals survival techniques “which are forms of social realism when social suffering is the apriori of experience,”—and where, as Foucault argues, an *a priori* is not a condition of validity for judgements but a condition of the reality of statements.⁴³⁴ Together d'Oyonnax and Eliza address femininity from the perspective of mediated fantasies that draw out aesthetic gestures that define living as responsiveness to the urgencies of the ongoing moment. In the American ideology this small complex scene becomes big and simple in the revolutionary moment of its simplifying recognition.⁴³⁵

McGurl's suggestion about the experience economy becomes apt in drawing parallels with d'Oyonnax and Eliza. Rather than these figures symbolise allegorical pairings doubled in a form of exilic conversion in the integrative narrative form (and thus simply reconstitute old components of labour power and disciplined capitalism), they draw alignments instead to how different material and expressive components have intermingled to form business hierarchies. Karl Palmas writes on the evolution of the corporation “as such, the history of the modern corporation can be understood as a series of innovations that have affected these components, and – more specifically – the ability

⁴³² Eve Kofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: affect, pedagogy*, 23.

⁴³³ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: affect, pedagogy*, 7.

⁴³⁴ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: affect, pedagogy*, ix.

⁴³⁵ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: affect, pedagogy*, 278.

of corporate assemblages to “suck in” matter/energy and territorialize economic activity.”⁴³⁶ In relations between Eliza and d’Oyonnax, their business transactions are staged as a set of memorable experiences, and always held in tension with the thing being sold. D’Oyonnax tells fanatic Jesuit priest Edouard de Gex “perhaps I’m not so different as you phant’sy from Eliza. She is a business woman – she does nothing for free” (vol. 2, 640). D’Oyonnax further relates to de Gex the staging of business transactions as a set of memorable experiences that McGurl argues “would be as various as the individuals who enjoy them” (or not, as the case may be).⁴³⁷ D’Oyonnax tells de Gex a small story of a “thrall” (vol. 2, 641) she did not have, the point being that both Eliza and d’Oyonnax “affect a structure that emerges from the “double articulation” of corporate structures/components playing both material and expressive roles.”⁴³⁸ Palmas illustrates here what I argue are formal acts of resistance to new forms of modular domination when he writes:

So, in an attempt to remove the spectre of Marx from the text, our focus should not be “how is Capital re-aligning itself against labour in the societies of control?” or “how does the value theory of labour manifest itself in this new society?” Rather, we could ask questions such as “how are the previously panoptic assemblages (notably corporations) maintaining their constancy, even though the disciplinary diagram is 'finished'?” and “what are the new material and expressive components that yield assemblages and hierarchies?”⁴³⁹

Eliza and d’Oyonnax point to McGurl’s catastrophic deflation of brand name value (and per unit profitability), the organisation of new hierarchies of power in corporate assemblages, and Manuel de Landa’s circuit breaker that makes it possible to chart the emergence of new forms of control.⁴⁴⁰

Using Berlant’s understandings, we see how women’s movement in *The Baroque Cycle* offers an experience that confirms some homogeneity and elaborates social distinctions. Berlant writes “the female complaint focuses on what has evolved and shifted around but not changed profoundly in the history of public-sphere femininity in the United States – a love affair with conventionality.”⁴⁴¹ Often the women’s culture concept in the trilogy “operates in concert though, sometimes in competition, [with] the couple/family form, the nation, and capitalism,” and in many ways identification with others such as d’Oyonnax and her identification with Eliza (vol. 2, 640) allows us to get hold of Berlant’s radical understanding of the privatisation of US citizenship.⁴⁴² She writes:

⁴³⁶ Palmas, “The 'control society' thesis and the evolution of the corporation” 1-29.

⁴³⁷ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 14.

⁴³⁸ Palmas, “The 'control society' thesis,” 12.

⁴³⁹ Palmas, “The 'control society' thesis,” 11.

⁴⁴⁰ De Landa cited in Palmas, “The “control society” thesis.”

⁴⁴¹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 2.

⁴⁴² Berlant, *Complaint*, 11.

More than ever, as the vote itself is seen as the corrupted vehicle for the misrepresentation of political will in the United States, citizenship is measured in the broader sense of social membership and is more likely to be enacted optimistically in response to events in mass culture especially those signifying evidence of democratic accident or ongoing violence – for example, the police beating of Rodney King, the Thomas Hill controversy, O.J. Simpson’s murder trial, and the attacks of September 11, 2001.⁴⁴³

Bercovitch’s account of “necessary friction between private interests and the public good” no longer holds when thinking in terms of society as a whole, when in *The Baroque Cycle*’s three volumes resistances are posed that link art to a people suffering injustices in societies of control.

Misdirection from the State

In the *Queen*, Berlant relates her political urgency to how conservative cultural politics aimed to dilute oppositional discourse of people of colour, women, gays, and lesbians. She expresses that, to stave off the assault of multiculturalism, and more specifically the tarnishing of the family and family-making, a supericonicity was produced. Berlant’s rebelling against an image that was “tacitly white [...] and the blueprint for the reproductive form that assures the family and the nation its future history” was largely due to how she saw how the Reaganite Era had exhausted cultural struggle over the material and symbolic conditions of US citizenship, and how in the culture wars the Right set out to incite nostalgia for a lost world of American iconicity, and that lost world as a utopian horizon of political aspiration.⁴⁴⁴ It was the moral and social conservatism of voters around issues such as abortion, crime and patriotism, Graham Thompson writes, that enabled Reaganomics to shape the decade.⁴⁴⁵ Reaganomics, Thompson argues, was not just an economic vision, but also a moral vision. It is important to understand Berlant’s argument within the view of patriotic nationalism of Reagan. She writes that this form of nation and national belonging elicits

a rhetorical shift from a state based and thus political identification with nationality to a culture based concept of the nation as a site of integrated social membership; the expansion of a mass mediated space of public opinion formation that positions the citizens as isolated spectators to the publicity that claims to represent them; the marketing of nostalgic images of a normal familial America that would define the utopian context for citizen aspiration.⁴⁴⁶

In many ways we see how Eliza is involved within the networks of sympathy and recognition that create alternative spaces of survival and solidarity. Berlant writes in the *Anatomy* “the law [of

⁴⁴³ Berlant, *Complaint*, 150.

⁴⁴⁴ Berlant, *Queen*, 8.

⁴⁴⁵ Thompson, *American Culture in the 1980s*, 8.

⁴⁴⁶ Berlant, *Queen*, 3.

statements] and the spaces of everyday life provide overlapping contexts for tracking the developments of official and intimate publics in the early US period.”⁴⁴⁷ Through Eliza, we access a specific way of understanding how US citizenship is privatised, and how Eliza can represent an aesthetic gesture that defines living as responsiveness to urgencies of the ongoing present. She offers Berlant’s concept of crisis ordinariness that “constitutes the struggle to master a social situation rife with contradictions about desire and suffering.”⁴⁴⁸ This, in turn, poses questions about how family history is now being produced through a genealogy of entertainments.

In the trilogy, sons are abandoned, sons are found, families are ruined, babies wanted, babies not wanted, fathers doting, fathers not doting: these binaries do not make up the general patriarchal dichotomy or failed modernistic aesthetic. It does not even, when run through Eliza, amount to 1990s market place criticism of the failed modernist aesthetic. In Eliza’s spaces of resistance, there is a breaking of the grotesque triangle of the Oedipus complex. It is more Deleuze than Freud as she breaks down all gendered dichotomies behind the façade of male corporatized consumer oriented relationships. Not only this, but Eliza diverts from Marxist materialist readings of the world of (male) gendered hierarchies, ground out in the mechanics of institutions and patriarchy. These institutions are, somewhat unusually, disconnected through Eliza from the exploitative modes behind the social imagining of the extraction of profit system that form surplus labour (and slow death through the attrition of subjects by the exchange values of capital). Not only do we see a divergence from traditionally held views on Marxism and patriarchal binary distinctions, in Eliza’s movement through the more complex nuances of capitalist oppression (an old story but not without some considerable weight), but understandings of power and governmentality flank representations of church professionals, and the centrality of the asylum Bedlam to civic social life.

Eliza transvalues negativity as a marketized message, which now takes the detached quality of the commodity form, and brings into view Berlant’s concept of fantasy not as disavowal, but as an affective claim. As Eliza enters the opera house in volume three, she is directed not towards the swordplay between de Gex (the crackpot Jesuit priest who has a powerful and constantly distracting and obsessive infatuation with Eliza) and Jack (her lover and also her symbolic attachment to cruel optimism) but to the music of the violins and the violoncellos. “The theatre etiquette had somehow taken over from her street instincts, and she was disinclined to make a fuss [...] She was interrupted for a moment by a voice from the stage [...] Eliza cowered [...] those theatre-going habits again” (vol. 3, 578; 579). The shaming habits that involved going to an opening for Eliza (going to the opera previously, she was deemed a nobody, a counterfeit princess, a whore and thus entered the

⁴⁴⁷ Berlant, *Anatomy*, xi.

⁴⁴⁸ Berlant, *Complaint*, 12.

circuit of shaming) is to embody an attitude that Berlant reads into the trope in her chapter on Dorothy Parker “going to an opening.” Reading through the commodity form Berlant writes that Parker, in order to “delaminate that scene of stuck potentiality from her image of having a life,”

adapts the conventions of sentimental optimism not to express the American static nostalgia for a home in love that never existed nor to embody that Greek fierce nostalgia that asserts a sensually embodied communal knowledge against the political attritions of the present. Parker’s sentimentality is more Kafkaesque: a return to a door that is always open to (love); a self-reproaching reapproach to a scene that calls for courage despite the odds against being able to enter it and rest somewhere; and a kind of radical impassivity in her stubborn refusal to go somewhere else.⁴⁴⁹

In this scene, Eliza also speaks of a home in love that never existed. It is there as she enters the opera house, in her stubborn refusal to go somewhere else.

She thinks about the prophecy Jack had alluded to. Jack styled it a prophecy, anyway; in her mind it had been more in the nature of a blunt promise. She had spoken it to Jack twelve years ago in the Petit Salon of the Hotel Archon in Paris, with Louis XIV as witness. Most inconveniently she had forgot the exact wording of it. It had been something along the lines of that Jack would never see her face nor hear her voice until the day she died. Eliza being somewhat of a stickler for promises and commitments, she now reviewed the last few minute’s events in her mind, and satisfied herself that this promise had not yet been broken. At no time had Jack gotten a look at her [...] and she had not spoken any words he was likely to have heard. (vol. 3, 581-582)

Berlant writes that such a pulse (Eliza’s commitment to undefendedness) is what the real ought to feel like.⁴⁵⁰ Eliza (and Caroline’s) negotiating with dangerous and disappointing worlds can be open towards politics but is abundantly on the outside of it refusing its status as determining the real of power agency or experience. In Berlant’s understanding, Eliza stands as a “paradigm female complainer” as she revolts against the kind of “Zizekian realism that sees fantasy as a mechanism of disavowal that enables failed ways of life to endure.”⁴⁵¹ Attempting to read through Berlant’s affective complaint register, these women make demands for reciprocity on both persons and worlds. Berlant writes “the female complainer’s exemplarity derives not just from her skill at playing out a formally ambivalent and contradictory sexual politics in a long term historical context but also from the way the work expresses the formal problem of even imagining actually detaching from the disappointing object or world.”⁴⁵² Eliza, Caroline, and d’Oyonnax offer senses of loss to compromised conditions of possibility, through which Berlant’s better worldness would exist if

⁴⁴⁹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 267.

⁴⁵⁰ Berlant, *Complaint*, 267.

⁴⁵¹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 267.

⁴⁵² Berlant, *Complaint*, 268.

only real life would step up to the plate.⁴⁵³ Their doubleness is a commitment to maintaining contradiction and a project of making explicit the difficulties of bargaining.

Shame

Through the broken circuit of shame and through the marginalised positions of women in the text and the way in which the world takes from Eliza, her son and her son is held captive by a demented banker whom the boy loves, the narrative expresses the formal problem of ever actually imagining detaching from the disappointing object or world. Berlant writes

For [Sylvan] Tompkins, shame occurs when a child experiences the refusal of their attachment. When the child looks away because it feels that it's been refused or rejected by its mother, that is the exemplary moment of shame. In my own work, I argue that the feeling of the world withdrawing from you and therefore throwing you back on yourself *could* be described as shame, but that says nothing about the *experience* of it. The broken circuit could also involve anger, numbness, hunger, a desire to self-stimulate, a compulsion to repeat, the pleasure of a recognition, grief, and/or curiosity, and these wouldn't merely be defences against the impact of the pure feeling of shame, but actually different responses to being affectively cut off.⁴⁵⁴

Eliza offers a way for us to read the experience of shame. The loss of her child to Lothar is not the end of the story. She is told that the boy will be her downfall (a bastard) if she does not agree to his demands to give him up. Already it is "too late" (vol. 2, 348-350) to do anything she tells Bob Shaftoe, and we never get a simple clear visceral truth about anything, neither in Eliza's shame nor in her loss. Eliza manages her loss through what Berlant calls cruel optimism, a phrase which points to a condition different than that of melancholia, and a process of fomenting and circulating fantasy, within the condition of maintaining an attachment to a problematic object in advance of its loss.⁴⁵⁵

Through Eliza's attachment/detachment to Jean-Jacques as he becomes a lesson in a fomenting subject (in which the continuity of the form provides something of the continuity of what it means to keep on living, in a world that keeps on taking) we get to see an understanding of Berlant's cruel optimism. Berlant's larger project comes from a source of political depression. She writes

The politically depressed position is manifested in the difficulty of detaching from life-building modalities that can no longer be said to be doing their work and that indeed become obstacles to the flourishing of the subjects whose optimism animates them. My assumption is that the conditions of ordinary life in the US are conditions of attrition or the wearing out of the subject and that the irony – that the labour of reproducing life in the contemporary world is also the activity being worn down by it

⁴⁵³ Berlant, *Complaint*, 268.

⁴⁵⁴ Najafi and Serlin, interview with Lauren Berlant July 2008.

⁴⁵⁵ See Berlant, "Cruel Optimism," 21.

– has specific implications for thinking about the ordinariness of suffering the violence of normativity and the technologies of patience that keep these processes in place.⁴⁵⁶

Eliza’s often ambitious fantasy—of being able to continue to make sense in the places that test the senses and overdetermine the object relations that make a world material for its inhabitants—is one way in which to remark that the trilogy invokes intimate publics, which attempt to break the universalising transcendence in pop homogeneity, compassionate self-performance and celebratory nationalist historicising. It is also how we see an aesthetic of attachment which is not oriented to the past disengaging from the ordinary present, in favour of excursions into cultural history whose relation to the “now” of its execution is largely left implicit.

Affect: An Institutional or Interdisciplinary Concern

Some have argued that it was naive to begin with to believe that mere changes in academic literary criticism could effect significant political change, as if theoretical and social revolution were coextensive.

Eva Carton and Gerald Graff, *The Cambridge History of American Literature*⁴⁵⁷

Starting with Graff and Carton’s above observation, in this final section I look to how Berlant’s affect formalism and principles of affective pedagogy are considered not as transcendences of cultural particularity, but rather from a point of view that sees it as a compelling aesthetic vehicle for the appreciation of that culture’s reassuring repositories of cultural diversity and authenticity.

According to Berlant, affective politics (the displacement of politics to the realm of feeling) brought to the forefront of American policy concerning personhood brings no vision of sustained individual or collective criticism.⁴⁵⁸ Berlant sets this view as that which sets itself out in a conflict between a patriotic view of national identity, and a view that is frequently perceived as unpatriotic and victim-obsessed. Rather than tack to existing debates about diversity, Berlant set out to work within the space of the American National Symbolic engaging with a fantasy-based concept of what mutuality in love might actually look like. This was unlike Habermas’s concept of mutuality, in which individuals come together to form a public body, but a public space where circumstances “are never just right; they are always just being righted.”⁴⁵⁹ In this manner, Berlant attacks the reassertion of publics in culture wars as an idealised, nostalgic and singular version of the public sphere, where subaltern bodies and identities usually bear the burden of representing the desire for the nation

⁴⁵⁶ Berlant, “Cruel Optimism,” 23.

⁴⁵⁷ Carton and Graff, vol. 8, *Criticism since 1940*, 448.

⁴⁵⁸ We see this foregrounding of affect in policies of personhood in “compassionate liberalism:” American culture’s preoccupation with familial feeling as the foundation for sympathy, and sympathy as the basis of a democratic republic.

⁴⁵⁹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 26.

generally. Berlant argues that redefining citizenship, and framing what can legitimately be read as national, becomes more and not less central to any analysis of political identity in postmodern American culture. She writes:

The definitional field of citizenship denoting simple identification by a national identity category a reflexive operation of agency and criticism or a mode of social membership is precisely what is under contestation as the development what we might call mass nationality changes the face of power both in the U.S. and globally.⁴⁶⁰

Berlant moves on from the culture wars to the sex culture wars in which the national culture industry emphasises sexuality, the scandalous anus, and the cancerous breast as the fundamental index of a person's political legitimacy. There is, of course, a diverse array of hetero- and homosexual relationships competing in *Cryptonomicon*, however, finally what comes through this zone of intimacy is not so much as an identity fixed for Randy but one that is at rest. Working from a homogenising friendship to a transgressive understanding that charts alternative cross-gender applications, as well as a queering of these applications (and because women's culture is not so well thought out in this novel) does not alter *Cryptonomicon's* narrative of dissent as one of revisionary continuity instead of rupture.

The context for reading *Cryptonomicon* begins to change, as it is now situated within debates that centre on narrative re-visions of Hawthorne, and an aspect of nonconformist culture that sits problematically within the American metaculture. Readings challenged making consensus out of a misplaced emphasis on the object of study, arguing that it was impossible to find injustices in terms of regimes of truth, as they no longer carry within them an automatic political or cultural orientation. For Readings, the University of Excellence (a sad conflation of what Readings argued the university without external referentiality should be) is now understood as a bureaucratic system, whose regulation is entirely self-interested without regard to wider ideological imperatives. Notwithstanding Reading's reading that the stakes of the University of Culture's functioning are no longer essentially ideological (because they are no longer tied to the self-reproduction of the nation-state) and feminism is exemplary only for its introduction of a radical awareness of gender difference. Berlant looks to uncover new modular forms of domination being brought forward in affective protocols/selfhoods reorganised around questions of the political collective identity of national state. She argues that the politics of intimacy should no longer overorganise the terms of public discussion about power, ethics and the nation. Having seen no real way out of culture wars, Berlant took to re-examining the Reaganite Revolution and the ways it had been opposed.

⁴⁶⁰ Berlant, *Queen*, 3.

Cryptonomicon, via Berlant's critical lexicon, is given an alternative productive base. However, its resistances to opportunistic exercises of transnationalising US American literary studies is to view the long half-life of the politics of the counterculture, and the rise and resistances to New Left theory in the humanities. This is in addition to seeing how shoring up moral authority within existing academic hierarchies is to see them form comfortable accommodation with the state bureaucracies that currently finance and control higher education.⁴⁶¹

John Guillory's seminal text had an optimal effect on the canon, sex, or culture wars, and shifted terms of assimilation and separation, cultural politics and real politics. Guillory helped move a certain brand of cultural studies from politically untenable claims on cultural interventions in the politics of American national culture to their institutionalisation in the North American academy. We see also here the oppositional backlash mounting to too much unnecessary jargon inflected by too much Leftist quasi-sociological shaping analysis on institutions, including the institution of literature. Although Foucault's concepts of governmentality are used in sociological analysis, McGurl argues "*Discipline and Punish* is not a similar kind of book to Goffman's *Asylum* (1961)."⁴⁶² The point, here, is that a certain kind of Leftist imaginary, linked to post-war practices of higher educational reform (i.e. multiculturalism) is in the process of being completely removed and isolated from strands of critical thinking. Guillory's central claim is quite startling: it somehow revives, maximises or ends the period formerly known as contemporary, giving a salient reminder that anti-institutional posthistorical discourse is simply the continuing production of a certain kind of professionalization of literary studies in US university contexts. Guillory moved emphases of canon debate over to terms of their institutionality. Before McGurl's subsequent revamped institutional analysis, Guillory's codifications were part of larger debates about formalism versus historicism in the university, as we see in debate taking place between Graff and Readings. Graff responded to Readings's debunking of his method of teaching the conflicts (and the implications it held for the organisation of departments in universities) by explaining that

there exists enough common discourse between Cheney and hooks to permit the reasons why these two are at odds to become intelligible to students and other third parties. Neither I nor Bill could have described the incommensurability of such discourses if no such metadiscourse were possible.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶¹ See Paul Giles "Transnationalism in Practice."

⁴⁶² See McGurl, "Ordinary Doom." See also "The Valve," a scholarly website for academics with lots of interesting discussion on the embarrassment now associated with Leftist politics and postmodern epistemology, and also John McClure's interesting response to McCann and Szalay's "Magic." McClure, "Do They Believe in Magic? Politics and Postmodern Literature," 125-144.

⁴⁶³ Graff, "Response to Readings."

Graff moved his understanding of “a traditional political Left as an avatar of the Right” to teach the conflicts within Bercovitch’s model of dissensus, seeing how there could be no real outcome from aesthetic radicalism’s critiques of Enlightenment modernity.⁴⁶⁴ Graff, for Readings comes to act more like an administrator, and, in Moten and Harney’s terms “he goes upstairs in polite company among the rational men.”⁴⁶⁵ Graff’s clarification on cultural incoherence is how Readings saw the university as becoming to resemble a place of work rather than a grouping of a place of scholars. Notwithstanding the seriousness of the issues, Bercovitch and Graff’s joint efforts of restoration, rather than emphasise radical reform has been a smart example, encouraging scholars not just to do their own thing, but also to remerge in spaces of public debate.

In marking out Graff and Bercovitch’s interventions into US literary canon formation—as Derridean *différance* became irreversibly linked to nationalist politics and the pluralist theme of cultural difference, and Foucauldian lenses brought forward the notion of literature as part of some strategic operation: a locus of discursive –power—they each circumscribe Berlant’s post-nationally-concentrated cultural interventions in the politics of mainstream American national culture. Exploring certain characters in *Cryptonomicon* within Berlant’s affect and psychoanalytical formalism helps to illuminate debates of Graff and Readings, and sociological links taken out between Guillory and McGurl to move beyond culture wars, along with what it was post-war professors taught in the classroom. Berlant’s experimental explanatory power, although running counter to the main current of history in the university, is still relevant. Strains of American poststructuralism in *Cryptonomicon* offer it as relevant to view areas of literary critical debate in contemporary US scholarship, yet we see also how postmodern principles of fusion through fragmentation never made it far past the university walls. In McGurl’s analysis and writing on “the consolidating of theory’s empire” he argues how theory “had noticeable effects on Sandra Cisneros’s writing, which it is tempting to sum up simply as its postmodernisation.”⁴⁶⁶ It would be tempting to sum up Berlant’s (writing) in a similar way, yet her art is not only the thing produced if there is a retreat into the professionalisation of literary discourse rather than in active spaces of public debate.

Graff writes “although it has become a common place that literary criticism itself is a political act and is inseparable from power, this view has arisen at a moment when criticism has become peculiarly closed off within the university, a fact that complicates further the problem of how the

⁴⁶⁴ Graff, “American Criticism Left and Right,” 112.

⁴⁶⁵ Harney and Moten, “The University and the Undercommons.”

⁴⁶⁶ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 343.

political effects of criticism should be measured.”⁴⁶⁷ From the perspectives of Guillory, Graff and Bercovitch, and more belatedly McCann, Szalay, and McGurl, a dominant literary critical pattern emerges against Berlant and her postmodern synthesis of poststructural themes. Graff and Carton further set the tone for literary and cultural theory’s demise in its radical anti-consensus formulation arguing:

In part the theoretical drive is an extension of the professionalizing and systematising impulse that dates back to the beginnings of academic literary study in the 1940s. Unlike the theorizing of the 1940s and 1950s, however, the most prominent theories since the 1960s have sought not to consolidate and rationalise existing professional procedures and assumptions but to challenge and deconstruct them. Theory is what results in a period of dissensus, as Bercovitch calls it, a moment when premises which at one time were so shared within a community they did not have to be recognised as premises, something that has happened today to formerly received ideas about what literature is and what counts as great literature or as proper reading.⁴⁶⁸

McGurl’s reading of the postwar literary experience in the US, through the concept of the emergence of the creative writing program, offers an alternative to sum up Graff and Bercovitch’s shifting of rhetorical aesthetic experience, and forces further reconsiderations of those who “took inspiration from the vivaciously creative poststructuralist cognitive style.”⁴⁶⁹

Avoiding the temptation to sum up Berlant’s affective complaint as part of some academic jargon, or simply to see her writing as its postmodernisation, John Johnston argues that she “does more than simply foreground affect as a new critical focus, by demonstrating that from such registrations of affect as are evident in these novels we can learn to recognise and chart the singularities of experience that define our present, both in its historical determinations and still-forming vectors of becoming different and unknown.”⁴⁷⁰ Johnson is an avid enough reviewer of Berlant to give affect theory a fair critical hearing without simply reconsidering it as endemic of a powerful background contextual coherence rooted in mid-nineteenth-century American literary classics. However, the picture painted of Randy largely shows that academic jargon as Graff and Carton contend is a stumbling block for readers who might otherwise be willing to give that criticism a fair hearing. Summing up Randy’s mood in the US can be given a comparison in Philip Gould’s recent book review on Steven Shapiro’s *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World-System* (2008). Although expressing how there are many insightful revisionist avenues explored, the reviewer writes on Shapiro’s need to turn towards jargon.

⁴⁶⁷ Graff, “American Criticism Left and Right,” 110.

⁴⁶⁸ Carton and Graff, vol. 8:277.

⁴⁶⁹ McGurl, *The Program Era*, 342.

⁴⁷⁰ Johnson, “Response to Lauren Berlant,” 867.

The first part of the book offers a sweeping synthesis of social and economic history of the colonial periphery of the British Empire, issuing statements like this one: The Caribbean trade probably ensured the Republic's survival as a political entity. Shapiro however offers a thorough analysis of the geoculture of this mercantile class, which was involved in the subjects of sensibility, sensation, slavery, and sentimentality. The second half turns to the writings of Benjamin Franklin and Charles Brockden Brown in light of this geocultural context. Though these readings are plagued by jargon, they offer insightful moments about individual texts, particularly Brown's novels.⁴⁷¹

As equally telling as the insightful moments, what comes through for the American reviewer is the author's turn towards academic jargon. This can seem perverse as Carton and Graff suggest and write:

This sort of objection to recent criticism has been frequently — and in some instances appropriately — raised. For this reason, it seems necessary before proceeding to take up the question of "jargon," partly in explanation of the current jargon we will be using in writing this history, but also because the jargon of recent criticism is the most persistent stumbling block for readers who might otherwise be willing to give that criticism a fair hearing. To many, such jargon seems to have no function except to confer a spurious mantle of expert superiority on the critic, shrouding the discussion of literature in mysteries that exclude lay readers and students. Moreover, jargon seems particularly reprehensible when applied to literature, since, in modern times, it is literature that has been supposed uniquely able to resist language's technological debasement. Finally, the perversity of jargon seems compounded when critics claim to seek the transformation of society while speaking in a vocabulary that is incomprehensible to those whose lives are presumably to be transformed.⁴⁷²

A similar claim is levelled more bluntly at Charlene's critical theory. Her unnecessary jargon in defamiliarising the language of common sense looks to make cases of egregious inequality seem like a structural condition, rather than exceptions to the national standard. Or, as Foucault would say "we have seen the enemy and he is us."⁴⁷³ Essentially portrayed as an "Old Left critic," Randy, with his allusions to Horatio Alger, is caught between Leftist evaluations of poststructural performances and a naively realist Cartesian epistemology. Bending a critical reformulation of Graff's on American poststructuralists Randy's "claim to designate reality as if it were out there prior to linguistic formulation is a logophallocentric mystification, regardless of what may have been intended by the claim."⁴⁷⁴ In *Cryptonomicon*, as in *The Baroque Cycle*, Charlene now bears all the hallmarks of a naughty child being allowed for too long to do her own thing.

⁴⁷¹ Gould, review of *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel*, 387-90.

⁴⁷² Carton and Graff, vol. 8:278.

⁴⁷³ See Graff, "American Criticism Left and Right," 114.

⁴⁷⁴ Graff, "American Criticism Left and Right," 112.

The understanding of being able to “to do your own thing” was covered in Graff’s response to Readings, and Bercovitch’s conflation of political scientist Sandel’s crisis concerns into a revision of continuity where the symbol of America continues to be the miracle of progress. Graff believed that those that followed the radical anti-consensus brigade had closed criticism off within the university, and he saw that as complicating the problem of how the political effects of criticism should be measured. Bercovitch argued that to do your own thing in liberal strands of individualist democracy was only part of the symbolic story nationalist America told itself. In *The Baroque Cycle*, Daniel’s brother Raleigh is similarly charged, alongside the banker Apthorp. They are conceived as playing a trick on the whole of a self-determining American culture (confirming Graff’s analysis of the ideological origins of the American Revolution) as they transform one former belief system (i.e. Catholicism and hereditary birthright) into another variant of the same dominant culture (i.e. British Whig parliamentarianism). This is a culture not so much conceived in liberation but in liberalism. As Jehlen argues, “it was a new home that the middle-class built for itself according to a design it deemed not only desirable but natural.”⁴⁷⁵ Natural laws (of the market) in the trilogy are underwritten by Newton’s natural philosophy (a Whig construct), and not theological matters or hereditary birthright. Bercovitch argues that this was the ideological context of the debate in the early republic (i.e. should our allegiance be imperial or national, Anglo-American or self-determined?) about the mission of American literature. In many ways, *The Baroque Cycle* is all about reclaiming ground from this ideological context. Enoch Root asks Daniel “who or what are you? And why does Creation teem with others like you, and what is your purpose?” (vol. 1, 880) Daniel rebukes Root for being too comfy with Newton and constitutionalist Locke (Routes to self-determination are maligned in this liberal political consensus formation, Root here being the operative word).⁴⁷⁶ Daniel takes the root of self-determination but only through a strand of an alternative form of colonial organisation. On the other hand, Enoch Root resembles both sides of the dominant contract now being enacted in England. He represents both Anglo-imperial aspects of American allegiance, and the spurious legacy of America conceived in a gentleman’s club liberalism. Daniel’s character is made complex. His alternate form of domination (self-determination) is run through the legacies of Leibniz, not Newton or Locke, and thus an alternative narrative in philosophy is given to America’s emergence from oppression. This debate in the early republic about the mission of American literature is circular (notwithstanding Neal Stephenson’s attempt to singlehandedly determine a new metaphysics of presence for the entire

⁴⁷⁵ Jehlen, “Middle Class in America,” 127.

⁴⁷⁶ See Hayles for how the double intended meaning of Enoch Root can be given an altogether resistant oriented context to forms of systemic domination. *My Mother Was a Computer*, 117-142.

early republic), and Graff accordingly concurs with the dissensus model to break this circularity, through which Bercovitch establishes his American symbolic lexicon.

Berlant's winnowing out an affective National Symbolic to draw out structural conditions of possibility challenge Bercovitch's observations on resolving crisis. She writes

Americaness is as central to their sense of entitlement and desire as any family name and tradition and sensation itself might be. The nation's presence in the generic citizen's daily life is more latent and unconscious than it is in his incidental, occasional relation to the national symbols, spaces, narratives and rituals: still, whether consensually or passively transmitted, national identity requires self-ablation. Citizenship becomes equivalent to life itself and also looms as a kind of death penalty: both activity in and exile from the political public sphere feel like cruel and unjust punishment. It is apparently a quality of nations to claim legal and moral privilege to inspire identification and sacrifice, as well to make citizens feel violated in public and private. Thus the complexity of Hawthorne's tone: the pain and pleasure of his citizenship and the sublime jocularity of his exile.⁴⁷⁷

Not only do we see Berlant move her terms from a Eurocentric model of the state to a post-nationally-concentrated cultural identity politics, but also from the issue of hegemony discussed by Raymond Williams, brought forward from Gramsci's stress on ideological hegemony as a totality "which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent that it even constitutes the limits of common sense for most people under its sway."⁴⁷⁸ Endemic to the American context, Berlant too conforms to the model of dissensus, under which Graff also moved his terms.

Alongside Berlant's critical reading (of Hawthorne) her defamiliarization techniques, in which "there is no inevitable America and dominant ideological and political formation that means America," were the postmodern unintelligible claims that resulted in overburdening the traditional identity.⁴⁷⁹ Charlene's posture with respect to the new national-utopian promise reflected in Kivistik resulted in the backlash to poststructural politics and postmodernist themes, and the approaching doctrine of multiculturalism. However, Berlant continues to take issue with the largely male-structured modes of address of the American Renaissance, and her National Symbolic is to express a commitment to literary form for literary historicism, resituating the American cultural object in a redefining mode of (historical) praxis.⁴⁸⁰

Two Sides of Glory

⁴⁷⁷ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 4.

⁴⁷⁸ See Berlant, *Anatomy*, 259, and Jehlen, "The Novel and the Middle Class in America," 127.

⁴⁷⁹ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 16.

⁴⁸⁰ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 29.

In my final reading of *Cryptonomicon*, I develop themes that sit within Bercovitch and Berlant's national reimagining of the postwar literary experience. Their twin aspects of reading Hawthorne are taken as a comparative lens, not interdisciplinary analysis, to focus on the institutionalisation of contemporary US literary criticism. In each case, the US is made to express and shape critically a particular culture's mode of resolving crisis. Bercovitch's view maximises the new historicist imaginary. Berlant's proposition is that an official state imaginary accounts fully neither for its own or its citizens' experiences, memories opinions or desires. She follows Stuart Hall in the *Anatomy*, arguing how the nation was suggestively "the horizon of the taken-for-granted."⁴⁸¹ Yet, as Giles argues, her reading of Hawthorne can hardly be understood except within the framework of particular contexts endemic to American culture.⁴⁸² Bercovitch's model of dissensus and her intimate public convertibility to politics (or to be something other than a failure to be politics) expend serious amounts of energy on what is the final outcome of the scarlet letter. Hawthorne's work in this context is not only an index to the profundity of his times, but a site of extraordinary expression. As such, Bercovitch and Berlant offer wedded but separate conflicting demands on contemporary US literary studies, and each can be given their merit of intercultural esteem within aesthetic concepts of cultural diversity and authenticity.

Rereadings of Hawthorne, although conducted in the late 1980s and 1990s, reflect a current site of contrast. What amounts to a disclaimer, expressed in a recent article by Berlant, suggests that this debate is still alive and current. Berlant's debate with Bercovitch would symbolize to Graff how it is active antagonism that restores traditional principles in the university, without repeating older alignments or forcing a further retreat into the professionalisation of literary discourse. Harney and Moten's slogan that "there is no distinction between the American university and professionalisation," in this context, is unnecessarily reductive, and which Graff would signal as only criticism that has become closed off within the university. Before she begins to write her review on Whitehead and Gibson (the same article on which Johnson writes his review of her) she offers this:

The essay to follow takes as its literary archive two models that are, in some strong sense, about the US [...] However it claims no interest in contributing to American literary history insofar as that project sees the US as the protagonist of its own story or even as the magnet that organises stories about it, however chaotically. Rather this essay takes on the linked problem of writing the history of the present and the literary history of the present. It sees the problem of affect, a problem of

⁴⁸¹ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 202.

⁴⁸² See Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections*, 164.

apprehending heightened moments in which certain locales become exemplary laboratories for sensing or intuiting contemporary life.⁴⁸³

Berlant now sees the contemporary period, and with it the male ethics of privilege, completely enshrined in Bercovitch's antagonistic model of dissensus. She continues to track in her own formalist aesthetic conditions of survival that enable the reproduction of normativity not as a political program but as a structure of feeling, and as an affect singling out that her mode of tracking injustice generates relief from the political, as it is a space managed by elites—and accordingly a field of threat that retraumatizes rather than offer conditions of possibility.⁴⁸⁴

As a culturally non-affirming type in relation to dissensus, in the *Queen* Berlant carries an early riposte to those that had developed a labile and optimistic cultural pluralist perspective. Her notion of “Diva Citizenship” as a “genealogy that is only now beginning to be written” is therefore made to express a salient point to 1990s feminist writers examining neglected women's writing of early American literature.⁴⁸⁵ The Diva for Berlant

Renarrates the dominant history as one that abjected people have once lived sotto voice, but no more; and she challenges her audience to identify with the enormity of the suffering she has narrated and the courage she has had to produce, calling on people to change the social and institutional practices of citizenship to which they consent [...] Her witnessing turns into a scene of teaching and heroic pedagogy.⁴⁸⁶

Berlant here alludes to Anita Hill's highly publicised sexual harassment claims as she testifies before the Senate and the American people. Berlant writes “yet in remaking the scene of public life into a spectacle of subjectivity it can lead to a confusion of wilful and memorable rhetorical performance with social change itself.”⁴⁸⁷ Berlant's argument here is that narrative revisions/normative optimism of the self and collective selfhood that are culturally affirming reproduce what Giles argues is “the conceptual matrix framing and informing those very categories which it seeks to evade or renew.”⁴⁸⁸ Berlant's affect formalism is a strategy, it can be argued, that turns nihilism into a complex fantasy of real belonging, and informs complementary dialogues such as Sianne Ngai's reinterpretation of classical aesthetic concepts as ugly feelings.

⁴⁸³ Berlant, “Intuitionists: History and the Affective Event,” 845.

⁴⁸⁴ Graff argued how realistic representation may always be a politically constituted activity; it is not clear that its politics can always be reduced to the sinister modes of normalization that Foucauldians monotonously find everywhere, further adding that “there remains the problem of how to characterise these moves and evaluate them politically.”

“American Criticism Left and Right,” 114-115.

⁴⁸⁵ Berlant, *Queen*, 222.

⁴⁸⁶ Berlant, *Queen*, 222-223.

⁴⁸⁷ Berlant, *Queen*, 223.

⁴⁸⁸ Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections*, 188.

In Berlant we see how artefacts in the intimate public that carries a vernacular sense of belonging overhaul weighted responses towards Republicanism and liberalism in national literary history (begging the question of Clinton's phoney compassion and boxer shorts jibe in attempts to inhabit intimate publics). In many ways, Berlant works her affect formalism on political spheres that require active antagonism, seeing a need to relate a complex sphere of intimacy to nationality or political metaculture. Peter Coviello writes in his review of Berlant's *The Female Complaint* that this "intimate public sphere is produced by agents and proponents of women's culture," begging the question of whether Stephenson is a kind of feminist.⁴⁸⁹ The compassionate view that is, circa 2003, recycled as the *Republican* view, promotes "highly symbolised, relatively immobile structures of intimate attachment from the family and the nation to God."⁴⁹⁰ Berlant is at odds with the ethics of privilege on compassionate conservative grounds.

Rorty's culture wars on the politics of difference brought a renewed sense of patriotic optimism towards American civic national pride. His pessimistic accounting of professionalism and institutionalisation held that un-patriotic behaviours extended harmfully into critical teaching practices of the national school curriculum. He wrote:

The heirs of the New Left of the 1960s have created, within the academy, a cultural Left. Many members of this Left specialise in what they call the politics of difference or of identity and recognition. The Leftist ferment, which had been centred before the 1960s in the social science departments of the colleges and universities moved into the literature departments. The study of philosophy – mostly apocalyptic French and German philosophy – replaced that of the political economy as an essential preparation in Leftist initiatives.⁴⁹¹

However, what is important for my reading of Berlant is how Rorty's highly publicised debates with Martha Nussbaum shifted literary emphases in a unique way as he urged for the central importance of "the emotion of national pride" and a "shared sense of national identity."⁴⁹² Berlant sought to challenge those that attempted to return to "what was sometimes called the American way of life" did so from a species assumption of what America was.⁴⁹³ She argues that not only is there "no inevitable America, no *ur*-American citizen, no simple emergent, archaic and dominant ideological or political formation that means America" but also that

In the patriotically permeated pseudo public sphere of the present tense, national politics does not involve starting with the a view of the nation that as a space of

⁴⁸⁹ Coviello, review of *The Female Complaint*, 407-409.

⁴⁹⁰ Berlant, "Compassion and Withholding," 4.

⁴⁹¹ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 76-77.

⁴⁹² See Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," in *Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, 4.

⁴⁹³ See Stephanie Coontz, *The Way we Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*.

struggle violently separated by racial sexual and economic inequalities that cut across every imaginable kind of social location. Instead the dominant idea marketed by patriotic nationalists is of a core nation whose survival depends on personal acts and identities performed in the intimate domains of the quotidian.⁴⁹⁴

In many ways, Berlant's the *Queen* offers an alternative to debates on ethical, cultural, moral and national educational curriculum reforms. In her seminal study on Hawthorne, Berlant moved within these terms (and backlashes to the new historicism) by concentrating on the culture and politics of emotion, which, it turned out described a particular kind of social relation. "Indeed, [she writes] it would be possible to make an argument about the image of the human the compassion archive provides for us that could bring down on our heads the whole project of feeling committed to compassion."⁴⁹⁵ Unlike Guillory, Bercovitch, Graff (or even Readings) Berlant writes from within the parameters of dissensus (being smart enough) but follows philosophical ideals (and dialectical images) of Benjamin, Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze and Gamben, which work against administrative and curricular strategies (and an endlessly repeated foundation) that consensus critics in the US promote.

Without pushing affect theory too far forward into what it can do for surrounding public spheres Berlant argues that it allows many critical theorists to shift between analyses of love and the social. She writes "the political question is how to understand the difficulty of attaching love from life-worlds that wear out life rather than sustain it."⁴⁹⁶ Berlant's argument is traced to the upsurge on literature surrounding sentimentality. Leonard Cassuto writes

Sentimentalism, in short, is enjoying an exciting afterlife in American literary and cultural studies, with no end in sight to its resurgence. Sentimentalism now functions as a kind of prism through which to understand myriad cultural realms. As a result, it has become a source of some of the most vital and creative work being done in today's American studies. That is a considerable historical legacy, but the effect of sentimentalism also extends to the present. Sentimentalism turns out to be a remarkably long-lived example of the power of the imagination to affect the organisation of real life. The real life in this case is the way that people think about family and domesticity and the way that they act – both privately and publicly – on their thoughts and beliefs.⁴⁹⁷

There is, then, no need to make outlandish proposals on the nature of Berlant's interpretive activism and affect theory (as it tries *not* to absorb in a pluralist semiotic the fractures of social hierarchy) other than it questions the nature of family and domesticity, and the relation between public and

⁴⁹⁴ See Berlant, *Anatomy*, 16, and *Queen*, 8.

⁴⁹⁵ Berlant, "Compassion and Withholding," 9.

⁴⁹⁶ Berlant, *Complaint*, 266.

⁴⁹⁷ Cassuto, "The Real-Life Myth of the American Family," 492.

private worlds. In one sense, we can see how language, in Berlant's affective complaint register of specific gendered norms and "the nation's presence in the generic citizen's everyday life," cast fears about the ways that families have worked in the past.⁴⁹⁸ It, however, does not offer newer arrangements for how they might work in the future, or as Berlant argues not at least in "an idiom of politics, or valued in the elitist terms of value that mark capitalist culture."⁴⁹⁹ This opens the space for a Rortyan dialogue where a cultural Left posited little in the way for notions of reform. However, Berlant's radical ambivalence, which Rorty (and Bercovitch, perhaps more complicatedly) would argue stops short of political involvement.⁵⁰⁰ In many ways, Berlant surrenders the play of policy to the elites, and deals in the common experience of the everyday, and to see how "the creative energy of living has gotten taken up in intimate spheres that promote such absorption."⁵⁰¹ She does, however offer endlessly uncompromised space through the holding together of the utopian promise and critical lack, in which one can sense the loss of a beloved object and to compromised conditions of possibility. Fluck writes

If the unifying conflict (and the tacit claim that it is the key to America) is established metonymically then various claims for submerged foundations can easily co-exist. Depending on what conflict is put at the centre, America looks different and yet it is always the same because all the different conflicts point to the same fundamental problem that of systematically produced forms of misrecognition. This is in fact the normative basis of the radical cultural critique voiced by diversity studies: a radical egalitarianism that can speak in one breath, as Lauren Berlant does, of the continued and linked virulence of racism, misogyny, heterosexism, economic privilege and politics in American culture. Which one of the submerged foundations is the key foundation – racial difference, gender difference, empire or the imaginary nation-state – need not be decided in the context, because, despite their difference they are manifestations of the same underlying principle. The American literary history that we currently have is that of different social movements which co-exist.⁵⁰²

Although operating under a project that comes from what remains a source of political depression, Berlant's intimate public, although held in Bercovitch's culture that absorbs in a pluralist semiotic the fractures of social hierarchy, remains a strong practical and defamiliarizing force.⁵⁰³ It is still a

⁴⁹⁸ Berlant, *Anatomy*, 4.

⁴⁹⁹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 24.

⁵⁰⁰ Rorty expressed how the Foucauldian academic left in contemporary America were so busy unmasking the present that they have no time to discuss what laws need to be passed in order to create a better future. The point he saw arising was the inability to form an effective political response to the dominance of a transnational economic polity.

⁵⁰¹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 27.

⁵⁰² From Fluck's perspective the dissensus model is in fact a reconciliatory term even as Berlant seeks to undermine it. McGurl's analysis becomes relevant in this context to take debates on an endlessly repeated foundation and a just as endlessly repeated antifoundationalism into new domains of sociological and institutional understanding. See *The Program Era*, and McGurl's follow up article "Ordinary Doom." See Fluck, "Romance with America," 12.

⁵⁰³ Paradoxical dynamics of dissent in which one can legitimise claims for an equal recognition of difference and at the same elevate this claim beyond the level of mere interest group pluralism i.e. nationality and political metaculture.

relevant angle of vision in current debate, even if it is only a rather compelling aesthetic vehicle for dissensus appreciation.

An apology of sorts for Berlant's argument is in need, because it is widely accepted in this current historical conjuncture that the substitution of an ethics of difference for political reason failed to uphold systematically cultural appeals over more traditional politics. In other words, there is now a problem with contextual philosophers who have shown a tendency to assign, no matter how reluctantly, some sort of favoured status to moral appeals which stress equality as well as mutual recognition and appreciation of different forms of life.⁵⁰⁴ Berlant writes that the urgency for counterpublic scholarship "has led to conventional distortions in the moral and political analysis of subculture, a concept that has been rightly critiqued for its tendency to homogenise members without having a concept of homogeneity as a desire."⁵⁰⁵ This illuminates not only fears surrounding a Left point of view facing obscurity, as traditional economic and political programs no longer have the same power to illuminate situations or motivate actions, but also interdisciplinary analysis now under increasing pressure from a new sociology of literature. As Shai Dromi and Eva Illouz write, literary ethical critique is now threatening to paralyse cultural inquiry, and see how "while the various offshoots of Marxian, Gramscian, and feminist approaches to texts and culture have been immensely useful in highlighting the social underpinnings of literature and its role in relaying formations of power, these perspectives now threaten to paralyze cultural inquiry by relying on mechanistic distinctions between the powerful and the oppressed."⁵⁰⁶ In the context, where there is an unplanned response to conservative laws of government, do characters such as Randy and Avi as they fly across the Pacific achieve any recognisable aims?⁵⁰⁷ Held as they are in readings of Frankfurt school theories of power and ensuing European-led poststructural reflections on presentism, relativism and cryptonormativism they preserve, as Habermas expresses,

⁵⁰⁴ For a recent article on how US authors are after "an otherness different from that demanded by multiculturalism." See Monika Barbara Siebert, "Repugnant Aboriginality: LeAnne Howe's *Shell Shaker* and Indigenous Representation in the Age of Multiculturalism," 110.

⁵⁰⁵ Berlant, *Complaint*, 24.

⁵⁰⁶ See Shai N. Dromi and Eva Illouz, "Recovering Morality: Pragmatic Sociology and Literary Studies," 352.

⁵⁰⁷ What makes *Cryptonomicon*'s radical anti-imperialism more problematic is that signs of the knowingness Rorty attributes to Stephenson elsewhere manifests in the transferral to the academics as they are placed in the service of the oligarch Kivistik. This overt sense of transferral of context onto text (Stephenson's knowingness transferred onto the academics) rather than read immediately through Bercovitch's model (which needs a more subtle explication of process as closure (pluralist closure) before an attempt is made to open a view how fractures of social hierarchy in the US are controlled in the narrative in the American strain that marks American culture the continued miracle of progress) is better understood through McGurl's attributing a paranoid nativist viewpoint to Stephenson. The point being that in the departure to ideas (and aesthetic criticism) to a relation where all ideas of collective political action and the potential for a more just society become deeply problematic we see how the discourse of difference in *Cryptonomicon*'s transferral of a problematic underlying pluralism draws the (school) system to itself in a form of ontological process. If cultural pluralism as an aesthetic discourse never made it past the school gates as McGurl argues then through his reading we see how this unmarked dialectical reverse orientation, the dialectical image that functions like a montage via Berlant's use of Benjamin, is a way through which we read Bercovitch's emphases on a particular culture's mode of resolving crisis. See McGurl, *The Program Era*, 383.

transcendental performances in the basic concept of power while driving from it every trace of subjectivity. Again, this is not a further mediation of those that mediate on Foucault per se, only that these political and economic arrangements of power, as Frank Lentricchia argues, “rob the self of itself by rationalising the self in the name of the genius of capital and the commodification of human labour.”⁵⁰⁸ Change was evidently needed in the US, but the entwinement of instrumental reason and domination that substitute economic and political programs of welfare state liberalism and socialism for the aporias of theories of power are now seen to have made unintelligible the American experimental potential space. The abstract quality of these appeals could only be upheld systematically by culturally contextualizing them, and thus making their validity contextual. While William Spanos argues that this gave Native Americans, blacks, women, gays, ethnic minorities a cultural context to answer back to dominant culture, E. D. Hirsch argued “at what cost?” Berlant remains once removed from these concerns, preferring to use the unplanned response to conservative laws of government, by binding the more abstract qualities of US citizenship (linking regulation to desire, affect to political life) to something that seems stable, like national, racial, sexual, gendered, and class identity. In this way, as Fluck points out, Berlant can speak in one breath of the continued and linked virulence of racism et cetera.

Is it possible to see, in *Cryptonomicon*'s writing on women's culture, debates about an ethics of privilege that has moved from the Great Society welfare state to a very small individualistic and self-sufficiency based one. Amy, in pushing Randy into having what Berlant calls a “humanising emotion” that is not a spectacle of subjectivity, offers the opportunity to reappraise these concerns. Charlene's compassion for the other, whose suffering is deemed to be social, provides energies of attachment that can indeed become, as Berlant argues “mobilised as counterpublicity but usually aren't.”⁵⁰⁹ On compassion, Berlant writes “yet in remaking the scene of public life into a spectacle of subjectivity cultivates the liberal cultivation of expensive, selfish and impotent subjectivity.”⁵¹⁰ In contrast to Amy's compassion for Randy, which is hard fought, Charlene's compassion is the cultivation of “expensive, selfish and impotent subjectivity [...] where permanent Cultural Revolution coexists with permanent political deadlock.”⁵¹¹ Charlene's compassion for Randy promotes confusion, as she aligns it through memorable rhetorical performance adduced with social change itself.⁵¹² Berlant writes “social optimism has costs when its conventional images enforce normative projects of truth and orderliness.”⁵¹³ Randy equates Charlene's policies for social change

⁵⁰⁸ Lentricchia, *Ariel*, 123.

⁵⁰⁹ Berlant, *Complaint*, 11.

⁵¹⁰ Berlant, *Queen*, 223.

⁵¹¹ Berlant, *Queen*, 285.

⁵¹² Berlant, *Queen*, 223.

⁵¹³ Berlant, “Compassion and Withholding,” 5.

to the “schoolmarmishness he sees in all her friends” (27). The academics in the novel are made to sit comfortably and uncomfortably in relation to Kivistik. Berlant writes “this kind of bargaining demands scrutiny, in that desires for progress in some places are so often accompanied by comfort with other social wrongs.”⁵¹⁴ Charlene, in her desire to be non-conventional, makes peace with comfort and security afforded by Kivistik, finding her conditions of possibility in a codified triangulation of dominance, exemplified in the novel as coming from somewhere else. The easy elision of the national into the transnational that *Cryptonomicon* makes in its use of the aesthetic form of metafiction as it is tied to leftist politics is made just as easily back again, as certain downward pressures are now placed on overtly pluralist fictions, and is most evident where the novel sits dangerously on the boundaries of US nationhood.

Beside Berlant’s dangerous boundary lines and intersects (cultural exchanges), *Cryptonomicon* stabilises the social hierarchy, and a pure hierarchy of goodness ensues. Of course the author of *Cryptonomicon* does not write from the New Critic’s church of impersonality (and thus he is not immediately sullied as the invisible whiteness in high poetic formalism), however his attempt to find a singular voice to unite within the shared subjectivism of the non-formalist historiographic method is undercut by a strong communitist appeal born out of racial (or national) not cultural allegiance to identity. This type of authorial self-expression relays a link to the Bercovitch model of reinstating history in aesthetic criticism that can now in turn be linked to the breaking of anti-consensus ties between antirealist or postmodern epistemology in the US. The reformulation allows us to reconsider those specific orientations of Leftist politics when approaching the reading of the text. Intersects between French *différance* and US cultural pluralism (transnational literary approaches) are, in other words, no longer deemed necessary or salient in approaches to reading literary fictions in the US. In fact, they are deemed as highly damaging by cultural historians in this field. The limited experiences of characters framed in large-scale wartime trauma in *Cryptonomicon*, rather than reflect a European-led response to the despondencies of the Second World War, highlight the shift in ethical priority of literary theory to the US (a return of history, class and economics). Berlant’s cultural work is significant in the US, in that she posits Giles’s uneasy awareness to the new nation’s own strategies of internal racial colonisation. As he argues, to “resituate American literature within a postcolonial matrix is not to confine it within a rigid theoretical model of coercion and resistance but to suggest how various vectors of authority and authorization criss-crossed each other in complicated patterns with time and space.” Bringing such a transnational literary based perspective is not my intention, yet it is important to see a reaction across the Atlantic to what Giles argues is a “doggedly antitheoretical outlook [...] of US cultural

⁵¹⁴ Berlant, “Compassion and Withholding,” 5.

scholars to reconceive national narratives in the light of wider global framework”: a debate that had already been covered as I have shown between Readings and Graff.⁵¹⁵

It is important finally to return to Guillory’s understanding of the subject who is supposed to know at this point. Guillory writes:

We observe that Lacan and de Man appear to set off resolutely in opposite theoretical directions but that they end up in the same place, the place of the subject who is supposed to know. The ineradicability of this subject for the disciples is evidence of how difficult it was for them to learn de Man’s lesson. But that is because their transference is an unconscious replication of psychoanalysis’s transference transferred and hence it displaces the desire of the disciple to nowhere by reducing it to a pathos which is only tangentially involved in the cognitive processes of teaching. The disciples cannot possibly know what to do with their affect because the transference it signifies is supposed to correspond to nothing in the teacher since he has no desire. In his impersonality he rather resembles language itself or more accurately he resembles his teaching about language. To return now to the argument about the resistance to theory we can see in retrospect that the disavowal of the intersubjective relationship in the context of teaching for de Man a necessary consequence of the advent of theory, which occurs with the introduction of linguistic terminology into the metalanguage about literature.⁵¹⁶

Guillory’s debate hinges on how theorists de Man and Lacan set off resolutely in opposite directions, yet end up in the same place: i.e. the subject that is supposed to know. This debate largely centres on the transferral of linguistic terminology into the metalanguage about literature. The argument becomes circular in the Graff/Readings debate as each critic believed the other’s model of the university promotes a second order observation on consensus. Readings implies that consensus cannot ultimately hold as an egalitarian assumption as the university of culture does not

⁵¹⁵ See Giles, “Antipodean American Literature,” 22.

⁵¹⁶ Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 195.

appear as a pure instance of communication and therefore communicational transparency is not what you get when you realise that domination is an effect of failed communication. Graff argues that Readings's University, where he is allowed "to do his own thing" has in fact reinstated traditional dominances through isolation, a point of view shared recently by Ayers. Readings's posthistorical University is largely the one that *Cryptonomicon* indicts for scandalous deregulation initiatives of the 1990s i.e. the one where no meaningful institutional engagement with public issues can be measured, characterised or evaluated. Randy's discomfort with the posthistorical university is displayed in a number of ways. He takes offense particularly with the way the academics openly destroy the image of the veteran, and their incessant talking on the Spectacle, while in the real world telecoms industries were plundering the global marketplace. The text, however, is always radically ambivalent, and as such the University itself could be, as Readings argues, not pure instances of communication between subjects, but that of brute examples of domination. We see how Charlene's university extracts a quarter of a million dollars worth of work from Randy while in turn handing out a much smaller amount for his services. An extreme form of cost-benefit analysis emerges from the university where subjects are calculated on the basis of their efficiency, and not their creativity. It is the transferral of the knowingness levelled at the author, whom in turn levels it at the academics, which is where, ultimately, an intentionalist reading for the novel can lie. Randy concurs, in this sense, with Bercovitch's dangerous narrative.

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