

Locating Disciplinary Change: The Afterlives of Area and International Studies in the Age of Globalization

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The common thread running through these books is their interest in how *location* functions as an organizing trope for contemporary work in the humanities and social sciences. Taken together, they explore the concept of location as places we study (such as literature *in America*, culture *in Africa*), places we study *in* (English departments, American studies programs, centers for East Asian studies, and others), and circumstances that define and structure our subjectivity as scholars and critics (such as the fact that I write this article as a white, upper-middle-class professor of English at a Midwestern, urban university). This shared preoccupation with locations, and the act of locating, is connected both to significant developments in theory and methodology in the humanities and social sciences and to profound political, economic, and cultural changes in the areas and regions we study. David Simpson's *Situatedness: Or, Why We Keep Saying Where We're Coming From* (2002) and the essays collected in *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies* (2002), edited by Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian and *Disciplinary at the Fin de Siècle* (2002), edited by Amanda Anderson and Joseph Valente, for example, would be unthinkable without the theoretical critique of essentialism inaugurated by Jacques Derrida, or Michel Foucault's work on subjectivity and the relationship between power, ideology, and institutions. However, these books also respond to profound dislocations and realignments connected to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, the intensification of globalization, and the current crisis surrounding US policy toward Islam and the so-called "war on terror." Together, these changes have begun to significantly influence the areas and regions we mark off for study, the structures within which we do our work, and our self-consciousness about our situatedness as critics.

*Disciplinary at the
Fin de Siècle*
Edited by Amanda
Anderson and Joseph
Valente
Princeton University
Press, 2002

*Learning Places: The
Afterlives of Area Studies*
Edited by Masao
Miyoshi and
H. D. Harootunian
Duke University Press,
2002

*Situatedness: Or, Why
We Keep Saying Where
We're Coming From*
By David Simpson
Duke University Press,
2002

This focus on location, place, and situation calls attention to how thoroughly scholarship and teaching in the humanities and social sciences have abandoned universalist models of truth in favor of analyses rooted in the historical, the contingent, the provisional, and the pragmatic. The historical analysis of disciplines and disciplinarity, the realignment and critique of “areas” in area studies, and our preoccupation with what Simpson calls the “rhetoric of situatedness” (7) are all connected to a postfoundational and postformalist commitment to understanding and making transparent the reciprocal relationships among how we structure areas of study and the areas we study, the questions and issues we explore and the theoretical and methodological premises that direct our study, and our formation as critical subjects and the critical subjects we explore. These theoretical changes have been accompanied by a set of political realignments that have begun to profoundly transform how we structure work in disciplines and areas, including

the transformation of colonized areas into postcolonial nations;
 the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War as an
 organizing force for work in the social sciences and the
 humanities; and
 the weakening in power of the nation-state in an age of intensifying
 economic and cultural globalization.

These changes have quite literally dislocated academic work in a variety of disciplines and areas. This is certainly the case in the study of English and American literature. Before the advent of contemporary theory and the social, cultural, and political changes I have just enumerated, literary study was organized using a national model: English literature involved the study of British, Irish and Scottish literature, American literature the study of writing in the US. This model has progressively given way to transnational forms of study that tend to treat English less as a national literature than a language in which people write from disparate parts of the globe and to treat American literature in a hemispheric context, as literature in or of the Americas. The transformations in these disciplines are mirrored in area and international studies. As Miyoshi and Harootunian point out, the whole question of the “afterlife” of area studies is born of the same disruptions that have dislocated the national model in literary and American studies: “What we mean by referring to the afterlife of area studies is a perspective that has surpassed the older global divisions inaugurated after World War II that informed the organization of knowledge and teaching of regions of the world outside Euro-America. . . . The afterlife thus refers to the moment that has decentered the truths, practices, and even institutions that belonged

to a time that could still believe in the identity of some conception of humanity and universality with a Eurocentric endowment” (14).¹ The “afterlives” of literary and American studies will be determined by these same disruptions and how we respond to them. We will need—indeed, we are now struggling to develop—critical perspectives and locational models for literary and American studies that surpass older global divisions that in the past defined the organization of knowledge, programs, and curricula within a narrow, Euro-American framework, models that accommodate the decentering of truths, practices, and institutions that has come in the wake of poststructuralism.

Each of these books insists on the importance of our making transparent the historically and ideologically constructed nature of the critical positions we take, the locations we study, and the disciplines within which we work. In this context nearly all of the authors are consistent in their use of keywords such as *place*, *location*, and *situation* as nouns and verbs. The focus in these books is almost always on the reciprocal, constitutive relationship between locations and *the act* of locating, between situations and *the act* of situating. They insist that the locations, places, and situations we study in academia are, to a significant degree, constructed *in the act of studying them*. They do not exist apart from the human act of measuring, delimiting, identifying, categorizing, and making boundaries and distinctions. These books call persistent attention to the material and contingent nature of the places we study, the locations in which we do our work, and the critical subjectivity directing our study.

Situatedness deals exclusively with this last issue in a way that is clearly linked to the preoccupation with location and locating in the other two books. Simpson is interested in our current preoccupation across a number of disciplines (law, the social and natural sciences, philosophy, and literary studies) with situating analyses, arguments, and truth claims in relation to our subject positions as scholars and critics. What Simpson calls *subject positionality* includes both a “knowledge of where one stands” as a critic and a statement that what we are saying is qualified by where “we’re coming from” (8). “Qualification” functions here in two senses. Stating our subject positionalities (I am from India, I am a woman, I am gay, I teach at a historically black college, and others) both presents our qualifications for talking about something and *qualifies*, or sets limits around, what we are saying. Such forms of positionality represent a broad shift away from making universalist or transcendentalist arguments toward an acknowledgment that all arguments and truth claims are situated in relationship to “outside forces” such as “ideology, environment, history, discourse, and so on” (20), that they are therefore socially constructed, interested, pragmatic, and located in

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temporal and geographical terms. Simpson writes rather narrowly about how the “rhetoric of situatedness” has transformed critical discourse, but in broad terms he is dealing with the larger preoccupation with location and locating taken up by the other two books. “Situations,” Simpson points out, “are appealing for their apparent implication in the local, the empirical, the visible, and the tangible” (2), and while *locatedness* suggests “a more objective embeddedness . . . less open to alteration or choice” than does *situatedness* (8), Simpson develops an intriguing exploration of how what Adrienne Rich long ago called “the politics of location” continues to play itself out in the rhetoric we use to place or situate arguments in a way that locates them in material and historical circumstances.²

While Simpson focuses on our tendency to locate our subject positionality, the essays in *Learning Places* are more interested in exploring how we structure or configure the locations we study. A good example of this tendency can be found in Rob Wilson’s “Imagining ‘Asia-Pacific’ Today.” Discussing the shift from Asian studies to Pacific Rim studies to Asia-Pacific studies, Wilson emphasizes how geographical areas are *regionalized* by critics and funding agencies in response to shifting political, economic, and cultural exigencies and by our critical response to those shifts. It is one thing to study the nation of Japan, but quite another, Wilson argues, to “regionalize a space” called “Asia-Pacific” so that it constitutes a “porous” area of “cross-border flows of information, labor, finance, media images, and global commodities” within which Japan is situated (233). Regionalizing a space involves an “act of social imagining” that has to “be shaped into coherence and consensus” (235). To be sure, Wilson is cynical about such operations, insisting that “‘Asia-Pacific’ reeks of the contemporary (transnational/postcolonial) situation we are living through” (235). While it replaces “warier Cold War visions of the ‘Pacific Rim’ as the preferred global imaginary in the discourse of transnationalizing and de-nationalizing corporate Americans,” the regionalized space of “Asia-Pacific” strikes Wilson as “the utopic dream of a ‘free market,’” the “post-Cold War trope of First World policy planners and market strategists” (235). Wilson’s critique here is cogent, and the concept he invokes of regionalizing spaces by *imagining* them is powerful. For example, he insists on distinguishing the concept of “‘*imagining* Asia Pacific’ as a region” from the “act of liberal consensus” or the “postcolonial construction of transnational ‘hybridity’” (236). He uses “the verb ‘imagining’” in the sense of “articulating a *situated and contested social fantasy*” that “involves ongoing transformations in the language and space of identity by creating affiliated representations of power, location, and subject . . . expressing the will to achieve new suturings of (national) wholeness within ‘the

ideological imaginary' of a given culture" (236). This strikes me as a very useful model for thinking about how we identify and organize the locations we study, since it puts the stress on how the locations we analyze are fluid, imagined spaces structured and demarcated in the context of political debates in which conjuring new places is understood as integral to the (re)constitution of identities, cultures, and power.

Wilson's focus on how we regionalize spaces for both economic development and academic study is dedicated to what he calls a "critical regionalism" (248), a term that can be used to characterize the critical project underlying many of the essays in *Learning Places*. A critical regionalism analyzes the history and politics of how particular spaces get "regionalized" (how, and when, for example, the "Orient," "the Middle East," "America," or the "West Indies" came into being as cohesive areas for academic study), and it fosters a contemporary revision and reconstruction of regions or areas based on new political and cultural realities and new theories and methodologies in the general field of international studies in both the humanities and social sciences. The main point of transition, of course, is between the Cold War and globalization. Miyoshi and Harootunian argue in their introduction to *Learning Places* that "American education has not freed itself from the ideology of a Cold War narrative. There is good reason for this because the Cold War can best be understood as a continuation of capitalism/imperialism that still goes on in the guise of neo-liberalism and globalism" (12). Just as area studies, in their view, "reinforced the claims of the national security state" (13), so too does globalization reinforce a structure of power dominated by global capital.³ A new approach to area studies, guided by a critical regionalism, simultaneously makes transparent the ideological, political, and pragmatic imperatives behind the regionalization of spaces during the Cold War and seeks to demarcate new areas for study (and the critical methodologies that will enable that study) in a way that avoids area studies simply doing the work required by global capitalism.

Miyoshi develops this key point in his own contribution to *Learning Places*, "Ivory Tower in Escrow." His essay argues that the autonomy of faculty in the research university in general and the humanities in particular has been compromised by "academic capitalism" (39), that changes we superficially celebrate as progressive—a focus, for example, on "particularity" and "diversity" (40)—are in fact complicit with the needs of global capitalism. In Miyoshi's view, the ideal of "multiplicity and difference parallels—in fact, endorses—the economic globalization" he criticizes in the first part of his essay (40).⁴ In his view, a critical regionalism would have to find a way for area studies to somehow gain an autonomy it

has never had, to resist cooperation and complicity both with the nation-state *and* global capitalism by restoring the “public rigor of the metanarrative” in service of “a new interventional project with which to combat the corporatization of the university and the mind” (49).⁵ Miyoshi gets himself in the somewhat paradoxical position of criticizing the use of globalization as a framework for rethinking the afterlife of area studies while at the same time calling for a global, “all areas” point of view that eschews particularity and difference in the interests of producing new metanarratives.⁶ There are some obvious problems with this argument, of course. The afterlife of area studies, following Miyoshi, seems fated to ignore the enormous body of cautionary literature about master narratives. It also must play down important distinctions between specific areas and regions and avoid anything but an overtly critical and resistant posture toward globalization.

While Miyoshi explores the afterlife of area studies in terms of its possible intersection with globalization studies, Rey Chow and Harootunian turn their attention to cultural studies and postcolonial studies, respectively, as possible sites for reimagining area studies. Chow suggests that cultural studies has emerged as a kind of progressive alternative to the ideologically compromised field of area studies, but she can only do so by reducing the rich heterogeneity of cultural studies to a form of subaltern and minority studies characterized by four types of analysis: “Orientalism-critique, investigations of subaltern identities, minority discourses, and culture-as-hybridity” (105–06). The “turn toward otherness” (107) in cultural studies (which, unlike Miyoshi, she endorses) is, for Chow, largely the result of deconstruction’s “displacement of the West as the universal ‘center’” of critical discourse (106–07). The “poststructuralist subversion” of this universal center focused attention on “the very historicity that *precedes* the poststructuralist subversion: the supplementary look at Europe’s others reveals anew the violence that was there, long before the appearance of ‘theory’” (107).

Of course this is an overly narrow characterization of cultural studies, and it blurs important distinctions between cultural studies and postcolonial studies.⁷ It is only by defining cultural studies in this fashion that Chow can propose it as an alternative to area studies. In her view cultural studies and area studies are linked by the attention they pay to “the cultures of the non-West” (107). However, while the study of non-Western cultures in area studies “has always been part of its universities’ function as the support for United States foreign policy” (107), cultural studies is “compelled” by its “theoretical premise” to not only affirm “otherness” but to “directly address the exploitative, asymmetrical relations inherent in the Western studies [sic] of non-Western cultures, relations that continue to

be deemphasized if not altogether denied by many area studies specialists” (108). Cultural studies must, in effect, displace area studies by policing its complicity with US foreign policy and with the racist assumptions underlying it. The value of cultural studies, moreover, lies in the attention it pays to the institutional construction of knowledge and locations: “Instead of the traditional Eurocentric frameworks of the nation-state, national language, and geographical area that constitute area studies, cultural studies offers modes of inquiry that require students to pay attention to the cultural politics of knowledge production” (110).

Chow’s version of cultural studies is less an “afterlife” for area studies than a critical alternative to area studies. It would be hard to imagine this form of cultural studies as offering anything less than a thorough rejection of the premises and practices of area studies.⁸ If it envisions an “afterlife” for area studies, it is an afterlife that interrogates the very relationship between culture and *power* that underwrote the Cold War practices of area studies. Like Miyoshi, Chow wants to move beyond banal invocations of what she calls multiculturalism’s promotion of a “liberalist politics of recognition” in which “every kind of expression, every kind of representation, and every kind of culture is as valid as others” (113). Unlike Miyoshi, however, she remains wary about reconstructing global metanarratives and instead insists that a multicultural, postnational cultural studies must focus on “the issue of power—of rights, laws, and justice” (114). The revolutionary nature of this practice, however, is not very clear, for in the end Chow seems to call simply for a return to, of all things, close reading: “Questions of authority, and with them, hegemony, representation, and right, can be dealt with adequately only if we insist on the careful analyses of texts, on responsibly engaged rather than facilely dismissive judgments, and on deconstructing the ideological assumptions in discourses of ‘opposition’ and ‘resistance’ as well as in discourses of mainstream power. . . . [W]e need to continue to train our students to read” (115).

Chow’s vision of a transformed approach to international and area studies is, in the end, underwritten by textualism and culturalism, both of which are rejected by many of the contributors to *Learning Places*, including Harootunian. In his discussion of the somewhat vexed relationship between postcolonial and area studies, Harootunian notes that while “postcolonial studies resembles the older practices of area studies programs with their intellectual and scholarly divisions of labor into regional subsets like East Asia, Middle East, South Asia, [and] Africa” (150), it is predicated on a critique of the very neocolonialism area studies helped prop up.⁹ However, he laments that “postcolonial studies has strangely converged with area studies in recuperating the privilege of culture and

cultural values” (169), rather than paying attention to economic and material conditions, to “the role played by capitalism throughout the globe and to the relationship between the experience of everydayness and the relentless regime of the commodity form” (173). Because the implications of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* got taken up by literary studies rather than by area studies, postcolonial criticism, in Harootunian’s view, was forced “to appeal to culturalism” (154) and the “textuality” of the “literary/semiotic disciplines” (155).¹⁰ For this reason, one effect of the “monopolization of colonial discourse by English studies and its gradual transformation into postcolonial theory is that the migration of colonial discourse to English studies meant that its emphasis would be textual, semiotic, and generic, whereas if area studies had confronted the challenge posed by the Saidian critique, there would have been greater concern for the social sciences and the role played by political economy, that is to say, materiality” (167).

Where Chow reduces cultural studies to postcolonial studies and then laments its inattention to textuality and culture, Harootunian reduces postcolonial studies to a form of textualized culturalism and then laments its inattention to material and economic conditions. Chow would replace area studies with a form of cultural studies that deals with real questions of power by close reading rather than through the appropriation of social science methodologies, while Harootunian would have area studies supplanted by a new form of postcolonial studies that eschews textualism and culture and instead incorporates social science methodology in the analysis of political economy and materiality. Where Chow imagines an afterlife for area studies in a textualized form of cultural studies, Harootunian insists that postcolonial studies should pay less attention to culture and more to the “presence of capitalism” (172) as a “deterritorializing agent” (172–73), thereby countering the role area studies has played as an agent of capitalism and deterritorialization.

In addressing the future of area studies these essays explore how academic fields and disciplines change, and they raise the question of whether or not disciplinarity is, in and of itself, conservative. This question is in fact a central concern of the essays collected by Anderson and Valente in *Disciplinarity at the Fin de Siècle*. Although academic disciplines and area studies programs are all “learning places,” there are of course significant institutional differences between them. Area studies, primarily rooted in the social sciences, are interdisciplinary fields, not disciplines, and they only came into being after World War II. Area studies are located in centers and programs, while disciplines, which have much longer histories, tend to be located in departments. Nevertheless, these very

different institutional structures are currently responding to many of the same developments, developments coming both from within the academy and from outside it. Anderson and Valente begin their introduction with a useful summary of these developments:

In the current era, the basic organizational unit of intellectual life in the academy—the discipline—finds itself under reconstruction, in response to both internal and external pressures. Outside the academy, much humanities and social science scholarship is dismissed as overly specialized, arcane, and ideologically invested, and for that reason, socially and economically irrelevant. Inside the academy, the value and merit of disciplinary boundaries and methods have become a highly contested issue. A number of traditional disciplines with secure institutional homes have sought to stretch their boundaries, while a highly visible group of “post-disciplinary” programs and units—such as women’s studies and cultural studies—have deliberately defined themselves against strict disciplinary affiliations, pursuing instead an eclectic combination of fields, methods, and theories. (1)

The editors point out that one result of this contestation is the claim that disciplines are tradition-bound and conservative, that they exercise *constraint* on intellectual inquiry while interdisciplinarity represents *freedom* and the potential for constructive transformation (an assumption implicitly questioned by many of the essays in *Learning Places*). The essays in Anderson and Valente’s volume, most of which focus on the historical conditions and developments of a variety of disciplines in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, show “that the dialectic of agency and determinism, currently distributed across the disciplinary/interdisciplinary divide, was at the heart of disciplinary formation itself” (2). The editors argue that, taken together, the essays “thwart any precipitous claims that the story of disciplinary formation is one of consolidation, constraint, or ideological justification” (2). They insist that “disciplines are always constituted in relation to, and in a kind of dialogue with, other disciplines,” and that, indeed, “the current antidisciplinary impulse within cultural studies” can be located in key moments in the history of disciplinary change (5). They insist that oppositional “claims to antidisciplinarity are always exaggerated,” that such claims consistently downplay the extent to which disciplinary critique is central to the lives of disciplines. This argument is tied to a general defense of disciplinary structures, a belief that “intellectual developments require recognizable disciplinary methodologies to be minimally intelligible” (5).

While many of the essays in the volume provide informative and sometimes provocative histories of disciplinary evolution and change, few deal in explicit terms with the issues Anderson and Valente highlight.¹¹ Arkady Plotnitsky's "Disciplinary and Radicality" is the most ambitious in terms of proposing a theory of disciplinary change along the lines the editors suggest. Plotnitsky is most interested in disciplinary change in the field of quantum physics, but he regularly links the pattern of these changes to similar ones in the humanities and makes provocative claims about how "radicality becomes the condition of disciplinarity rather than . . . being in conflict with it" (49). Invoking a distinction between "classical" theories and methodologies "that are both causal and realist" (49) and "nonclassical or radical" theories that renounce classical causality and realism (48), Plotnitsky argues that disciplines depend in a kind of dialectical way on *both* classicism and radicality. Disciplines are not threatened, or even thrown into a state of crisis, by radicality. They thrive on and develop within the context of radical forms of resistance to classical or traditional theories and practices. "Radicality," he insists, "becomes the condition of disciplinarity rather than, as it may appear at first sight and as it is often argued by the proponents of classical theories, being in conflict with it" (49). In the humanities, radical theory is for Plotnitsky represented by the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Georges Bataille, Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Paul de Man, and Derrida (49). For these thinkers, "radicality is, or at a certain point becomes, the condition of the continuity of disciplinarity and discipline" (52). One might even, Plotnitsky insists, locate in these thinkers an "extreme disciplinary conservatism" (52) because "some of the most radical epistemological thinking involves the deepest concerns in regard to the basic principles of their disciplines" (75).

There is not the space here to assess Plotnitsky's provocative argument with any thoroughness, but it seems to me this last claim is certainly true of, say, Derrida's relationship to philosophy or de Man's to literary study. In general, the study of British and American literature has developed in a remarkably fluid way, characterized by just the kind of pattern Plotnitsky identifies. As I have argued elsewhere, whatever coherence literary studies has is always the result of its regular response to fairly radical challenges from within, so that coherence and intellectual fragmentation actually depend upon one another.¹² This may be true as well for area studies, and it might be interesting to apply Plotnitsky's approach to disciplinary change to the developments currently taking place in area studies. To what extent will the "afterlives" of area studies be determined by the kind of reciprocal relationship between classicism and

radicality Plotnitsky discusses? Will area studies remake itself out of a radical rejection of the classical principles inherent in its post-Cold War practices in a way that proves Plotnitsky's point about how disciplinary work evolves, or will the afterlives of area studies break altogether with what has come before? And will the internationalization of literary and American studies—arguably the strongest form of dislocation we are currently experiencing—mark the end of the nationalist disciplinary paradigm, or the kind of “radical” revision of disciplinary thinking that paradoxically ends up strengthening it?¹³

A few things seem clear at this point. First of all, we cannot adequately assess the future of area studies, cultural studies, or literary studies through the kind of restricted perspective we get in *Learning Places*. As I mentioned earlier, this is largely a book about Japan studies and area studies in East Asia. Any attempt to think systematically about the history and future of international studies in the humanities will have to consider other locations such as Africa, the Caribbean, and South Asia. The geographical scope of *Learning Places* is simply too narrow to warrant making broad generalizations, and it sometimes leaves out issues that are crucial. Discussions of race, for example, are largely missing from both *Learning Places* and *Disciplinary at the Fin de Siècle* (they figure more largely in *Situatedness*). The critique of multiculturalism and critical discourses of identity in *Learning Places*, in this context, seems like an unfortunate attempt to somehow get beyond race, and it tends to marginalize whole areas and intellectual movements where the intersection of race and class with economic exploitation is critical. Surely the history of area studies should include figures like W. E. B. DuBois and Frantz Fanon, and we ought to consider how its “afterlife” might be influenced by the work of someone like Paul Gilroy, whose *Black Atlantic* is only mentioned in passing by one contributor to *Learning Places*.

The same must be said for the inattention to gender in both volumes. Plotnitsky's invocation of “Nietzsche, Heidegger, Bataille, Levinas, Blanchot, Lacan, Foucault, Deleuze, de Man, and Derrida” as representative figures of disciplinary radicality is all too symptomatic. Indeed, the essays in *Disciplinary at the Fin de Siècle* for the most part ignore the patriarchal roots of the disciplines they discuss and do not pay any attention to the impact of feminism and the women's movement in discussing disciplinary change. Both *Learning Places* and *Disciplinary at the Fin de Siècle* miss the opportunity to explore how changing roles for women both within the academy and outside of it have radically reshaped both the spaces we study and the work we do in the academy. Future work on disciplinary and the future of area studies ought to pay serious attention to these issues.

Area studies, postcolonial studies, and cultural studies also need to find ways to avoid the kind of schematic division between “culturalist” and “materialist” orientations conjured up in the essays by Chow, Miyoshi, and Harootunian. It is a little late in the history of poststructuralism to be invoking such rigid binaries. Surely it is clear by now that culture and textuality are embedded in economic and social relations and that material economies are inextricably connected both to cultural forms and to structures of discourse and representation that are open to textual analyses. It also should be clear that the study of identity, including the complex roles that gender, sexual orientation, cultural affiliation, and popular culture play in its formation, is an important field that cannot simply be dismissed in a commitment to the study of capital flows and economic exchange.¹⁴ There is much to value in the Marxian perspective we get from Miyoshi and Harootunian, but surely there is a productive middle ground between their condemnation of literary, cultural, and postcolonial studies for being too textual and cultural and the complaint of conservative, and even some liberal, cultural commentators that these same fields have become hijacked by a politically correct, left-wing ideological agenda.¹⁵ Clearly the so-called politicization of the humanities depends, as Simpson would say, on *where you’re coming from*. If you are coming from the Marxian left of Miyoshi and Harootunian, the humanities have become co-opted by textuality, culture, and the economic imperatives of globalization. If you are coming from anywhere to the right of the political center in the US, however, the humanities have been seized by the very Marxism represented by Miyoshi and Harootunian. Simpson, of course, would point out that our perspective on what constitutes intellectual and political resistance depends upon our *situatedness* as critics, that there is no objective position outside of specific, situated arguments and politics from which to measure the level of political resistance in an institution like the university.

We also need to find a way to revise and realign the locations we study, and the locations we *study in*, so as to avoid the charge of academic commodification, the charge, that is, that the engagement of cultural and literary studies in the West with new locations outside Britain and the US is simply an expansion of academic markets akin to the economic expansion going on under globalization (or worse yet is complicit with the aims of US hegemony in the way area studies once was). This is a concern running through many of the essays in *Learning Places*, and it is rooted in healthy conflicts about globalization that have yet to completely work themselves out. Clearly the expansion of American studies into a “pan-American” enterprise, the enormous contribution postcolonial studies has made to the humanities, and the cultural range and geographical

scope of work in cultural studies represent a dramatic shift toward a more sophisticated approach to the study of areas that are at once outside of, yet intimately connected with, the US and in a direction that certainly moves beyond the dominance of state ideologies formerly at work in area studies. However, the question of the complicity of these changes with the uneven forms of development under globalization is an important one. Does the rise of “global English” represent an exciting new field for literary studies or is it simply the latest form of Western academic colonialism? Will the afterlife of area studies in the age of globalization avoid the kind of complicity it had with the politics and economic interests of the Cold War, or will it be subsumed by the interests of corporate globalization, the “war on terror,” and the politics of “preemption”? The political orientation of those contributing to *Learning Places* strongly suggests the latter will not happen, but it is perhaps too soon to tell how the afterlife of area studies will play out or to measure the extent to which area studies will melt into, and realign, work in other areas of the humanities.

Notes

1. It should be noted that most of the essays in their collection are restricted to discussions of Japan and East Asia. Africa, South Asia, and the Caribbean are completely absent. This means their perspective on area studies and speculations about its “afterlives” are more limited than the book’s title suggests (I will have more to say about these limitations later). Of the 15 essays in *Learning Places*, 9 deal very specifically with Japan and East Asia. Most of the others engage general theoretical and methodological issues and often contextualize their discussions only in relation to East Asia. There is no sustained attempt to deal with area studies outside of this region.
2. See Rich.
3. Many of the essays in *Learning Places* trace the development of area studies in the post–World War II period in response to the intelligence and foreign policy needs of the US government. The most detailed and cogent overview of this history can be found in Bruce Cumings’s “Boundary Displacement: The State, the Foundations, and Area Studies during and after the Cold War,” 261–302. Anyone who believes that the humanities have recently become “politicized” ought to read Cumings’s essay to see what the political cooptation of higher education really looks like.
4. Where others see a value in focusing on diversity and difference Miyoshi sees a debilitating strategy of division and fragmentation. “If the strategy of division and fragmentation is not contained and moderated,” he writes, “with the idea of a totality – its context – it may very well lose its initial purpose and end up paradoxically in universal marginalization” (42). Miyoshi is very critical of the discourse of multiculturalism on this score. I don’t have the space here to do justice to Miyoshi’s

argument, which is lucid, challenging, and full of assertions to argue with. See, esp., pp. 39–50.

5. Of course, this may seem like an odd time to complain, as Miyoshi does, that the humanities are in “retreat” from “intellectual and political resistance” (40). We live in a time when the humanities have been hammered by conservative and moderate critics alike for becoming mired in a pedagogy dominated by a left-leaning intellectual and political resistance that has supposedly compromised the autonomy and objectivity of academic inquiry (see, for example, David Horowitz’s “Academic Bill of Rights”). Miyoshi’s position begs the question of how the academy can be both captive to the left’s agenda of intellectual and political resistance and at the same time complicit with the ideology and needs of global capitalism.

6. “The academics’ work in this marketized world,” Miyoshi concludes, “is to learn and watch problems in as many sites as they can keep track of, not in any specific areas, nations, races, ages, genders, or cultures, but in all areas, nations, races, ages, genders, and cultures. In other words, far from abandoning the master narratives, the critics and scholars in the humanities must restore the public rigor of the metanarratives” (49).

7. Chow’s characterization of cultural studies would seem quite odd to cultural studies critics interested, say, in popular culture, fashion, and the media.

8. It should be pointed out that, in Chow’s view, the differences between cultural studies and area studies depend on the important role theory plays in cultural studies. The entire essay is organized around a defense of the use of Western theory to study non-Western cultures. If pursued in an “anti-theoretical mode,” according to Chow, culture ends up being treated in the same positivist, essentialist, and nativist mode as it is in area studies and simply “becomes a means of legitimizing continual conceptual and methodological irresponsibility in the name of cultural otherness” (111). See, esp., pp. 109–13.

9. Harootunian writes that “because of the relentless kinship area studies formed with strategic policy making [during the Cold War], serving national interests and ‘contract research,’ it was never able to free itself from the pursuit of a knowledge bonded to the necessities that had given it shape” (157). See Cumings’s contribution for an extended discussion of the relationship between area studies and Cold War neocolonialism.

10. In making this argument, Harootunian exaggerates the extent to which post-colonial criticism has come to dominate literary studies in general and English in particular. In the interest of indicting postcolonialism for its complicity with literary studies (as over against “functionalist social science” [155]), Harootunian seems to forget that Said was in fact a literature professor who wrote important books on Conrad and the English novel. It is, therefore, no surprise that postcolonialism found literature departments hospitable. But surely it is an exaggeration to claim, as Harootunian does, that “English studies became postcoloniality” (168).

11. Students of English and American literature will probably find John Guillory’s “Literary Study and the Modern System of the Disciplines” and Gauri Viswanathan’s “Subjecting English and the Question of Representation” most engaging. Guillory traces the development of English out of the early conflict between philology and belles lettres, the one quasi-scientific in its impulse and

methodology, the other broadly “humanistic.” In doing so he isolates in the historical development of literary disciplinarity a series of developments that belie the idea that English developed in solidarity with a single, dominant, ideological orientation characterized by constraint and rigid adherence to a single tradition. Viswanathan tends to make something like the opposite kind of argument, insisting that literary studies has always been the instrument of a dominant moral and ideological orientation interested in “cultural management,” both in England and its colonies, particularly in India (178). He observes the shift in this context from a moral to an intellectual to an ideological function for literary studies (184), but he also notes that the emergence of “religious pluralism” complicates, and ultimately disrupts, each of these functions, for in his view “religious pluralism creates possibilities for new kinds of definitions for literature, just as it also enables resistance to a single point of reference from which to” study it (193).

12. See my essay “Globalization and the Postcolonial Condition,” 82–83.

13. A good example of the internationalization of American studies is the recent formation of the International American Studies Association (IASA), which is located in the Netherlands. The IASA seeks to further the “international exchange of ideas and information among scholars from all nations and various disciplines who study and teach America regionally, hemispherically, nationally, and transnationally” (“Charter”).

14. There is no doubt some truth, for example, in Miyoshi’s criticism of “identity politics” and how it “often turns into a policy of self-promotion” or a “self-serving sales policy in which a history of victimization becomes a commodity[.] . . . as if self-identity were an article of private property” (45). Here Miyoshi mirrors Simpson’s skepticism about rhetorics of situatedness grounded in the authority of various culturally specific identities. But surely there are approaches to the politics of identity that are important and productive.

15. One place to start would be with Arjun Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996).

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