

Introduction

The Shining of America

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In the first televised debate between presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama, on September 26, 2008, the Democratic nominee expressed his wish to restore “that sense of America being that shining beacon on a hill.” His use of the demonstrative *that* indicated his confidence that the audience—at least the voting audience—would know to what particular sense and, most crucially, to what particular beacon he referred. That the allusion would be familiar to the white, educated, and, especially, Christian voter is indisputable. More questionable is whether it would be recognized by the disenfranchised as a positive sign of the change envisioned by the Democratic Party. The Puritans’ hill is not Martin Luther King Jr.’s Mountaintop; Beacon Hill may be a distinctly American location, but it is no Mount Pisgah. In using this timeworn image Obama showed his command of Yankee oratory, even if he seemed to confuse the beacon and the city. However opportune his incorporation of the adjective “shining” to modify “beacon,” it is important to note that it was Ronald Reagan who first borrowed “shining” from the sea of “America the Beautiful” in his farewell address to amplify, rather redundantly, that original beacon. Using a rhetoric associated with righteousness and moral responsibility Obama took the high moral ground

away from his opponent's recourse to mere personal experience and pragmatic policymaking (at least in this particular instance).¹

What is significant in Obama's use of that most common of all presidential allusions is that it appeared in response to a specific question about America's safety: "What do you think the likelihood is that there would be another 9/11-type attack on the continental United States?" Whether calculated or not, Obama's response pointed directly to the dependence of the idea of America's role as example to the world on the existence of an enemy. It was less a direct answer than an attempt to address the restoration of American credibility in the world in a way that indirectly blamed the Bush regime for jeopardizing the country's standing in the world. Yet Obama's use of the allusion provided what politicians would refer to as a "big tent"—with all its revival meeting resonances—to which the only entrance requirement is a desire to be American and to belong. As an encapsulation of the providential role of the United States in the world, the allusion to the founding text of American exceptionalism reinforced that the core of the country is neither a nation nor a state, but an idea that somehow possesses the force to guarantee the safety of the country's citizens.

The founding text in question is, of course, John Winthrop's famous sermon delivered on board the *Arbella* as the Puritans set out on their perilous but emancipatory "errand into the wilderness" in 1630. Although the notion of "exceptionalism" is a later coinage, the idea of America as charged with a mission to be an example to the world permeates narrative reconstructions of the nation's political and cultural history. And as the new millennium shapes itself on an increasingly globalized stage, on which the United States continues to play a crucial, if not always appreciated, role, the rhetoric of exceptionalism is experiencing a return to its most extreme variant, the typological thinking of the Puritan divines who divided the world into good and evil and read the events of their day as enactments of scriptural fate. Even as it came under fire over the following centuries, the rhetoric continued to pervade a number of discourses, such as when Obama voiced its redemptive promise in a moment when he needed, above all, to appear presidential.

In a disciplinary context, the exceptionalist myth is generally seen as having launched American Studies in the 1930s and produced its first cohort of interdisciplinary Americanists in the aftermath of World War II, "the first [generation] to take exceptionalism as an American given" (Noble 2002, 26). Although it has since waxed, aided and abetted by

the cold war, and waned, in the wake of the presumed “end of history” heralded by the fall of the Berlin Wall, serious challenges to it still come up against established institutional as well as popular obstacles such as the Tea Party movement. As Seymour Lipset shows in *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (1996) the term has undergone a significant transformation from Alexis de Tocqueville’s early-nineteenth-century understanding of exception as simply denoting a difference—however complex—from a known norm or rule, to a value judgment implying “better than” or “superior to” that norm. The exceptionalism vaunted by the United States is not equivalent to the perceived uniqueness to which most nations subscribe, nor is it important simply because the country’s actions are “more consequential” (Shafer, vi) on the global scale. Rather, the ethos of exceptionalism provides the nation with justifications for making exceptions to norms, rules, and laws established, and adhered to, by other nations in ways that are often baffling to outsiders.

The distinction between rule and exception has taken on new urgency as we witness a state of exception becoming the rule in a country that has always prided itself on its principled adherence to the rule of law. It is as if we are witnessing the logical conclusion of an inherently paradoxical tension between rule and exception, where, because of its emblematic role in a national allegory, the latter is destined to triumph whenever the tension is heightened into crisis. It is not surprising, of course, that American foreign policy continues to have consequences for the world, but the economic crisis of the fall of 2008 that has had worldwide repercussions arguably began with a change in domestic policy—regarding sub-prime mortgages—which pertained to the political promotion of the “American dream” of equal opportunity, a central tenet of the exceptionalist ethos. The continued emphasis on exceptionalism today, when the name of the game is difference, is also a bone of contention in the debates between the neoconservatives and their ideologues, such as Samuel P. Huntington, or even liberal Americanists of the “old school” like Leo Marx, and the “New Americanists” represented by the likes of Donald Pease, John Carlos Rowe, Amy Kaplan, and George Lipsitz.

The present book began as a conference held in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, whose participants were mainly literary and cultural critics and historians. The emphasis on the humanities is reflected not only in the subject matter of the essays included but also in the methodologies used. The emphasis is squarely—and this was indeed the intention of

the conference—on the persistence of exceptionalist *rhetoric* as symptomatic of the survival of its ideology in a variety of cultural and historical documents. Although the conference theme was prompted by the resurgence of this long-criticized rhetoric in the context of the “War on Terror,” the latter is only tangentially addressed here, even as it inevitably haunts any contemporary discussion of the role of exceptionalism in the construction of a national identity. What we have tried to do is bring together a historically and politically varied repertoire that illuminates the pervasiveness of the ethos of exceptionalism through history and through fields of human—cultural, social, and political—endeavor. The generative force of this powerful rhetoric is reflected in the variety of contexts in which it appears, which also accounts for the plural in our title. As our collection shows, however, as long as the rhetoric itself is not seriously questioned, all of these apparently disparate phenomena do, in the end, contribute to the continuance and foreclose any profound scrutiny of what is an inherently nationalist and racialist ethos.

Most reconstructions of the genealogy of American exceptionalism situate its birth in the Puritan sermon, a religious expression of sincere dedication to a Christian mission, with scant thought given to the concept of nation to which it would become so fatefully wedded. What emerges in this endeavor is a coherent narrative stretching from the “city on a hill” in the seventeenth century, through the Declaration of Independence in the eighteenth, Manifest Destiny in the nineteenth, *Pax Americana* in the twentieth, and the War on Terror in the budding twenty-first century.

It is not surprising, of course, that American exceptionalism, with its inevitable grounding in an assumption of the centrality of “nation”—absent from its foundational moment on board the *Arbella*—has become subject to debate in an age of globalization. How can any claim to exceptional national status be reconciled with a postnational world, in which cultures and identities are no longer coextensive with political boundaries and where transnational or diasporic affiliations are stronger than national ones? One answer is found in David Noble’s *Death of a Nation: American Culture and the End of Exceptionalism* (2002), whose title illustrates the interdependence of nation and ethos. Noble shows the—salutary—end of exceptionalism to be inevitably linked to the challenges posed by feminists and antiracists, but he also shows that, even as the ideological construction became increasingly accepted as a social fact, it was nevertheless questioned in Americanist circles as early as the

1940s. He thus shows the “Great Divide” that his contemporary Leo Marx identifies with the sixties as less a generational than a political one. This view is hardly comforting at a time when the discourses of neoconservatism and neoliberalism often sound peculiarly similar, with differences remaining on a level of policy rather than in any questioning of the assumptions underlying America’s national self-fashioning.

Recent events show the rumor of the death of exceptionalism to be highly exaggerated, however. The resurgence of religion in political rhetoric is equally shared by almost all poles on the political spectrum. As the debate between Leo Marx and George Lipsitz and Amy Kaplan shows,² it is exactly the status of the “nation” and the affect it elicits that lie at the heart of the disagreements. What Leo Marx, with tongue in cheek, labels the “ur-theory” of American Studies was a matter of double allegiance: to political opposition against capitalism and a deeply felt “belief” in the ideals of America. As Marx indicates in recounting an anecdote about a meeting between British Cultural Studies pioneer Richard Hoggart and an unidentified American Fulbright scholar in 1957, the role played by “belief” in the founding of the discipline is what has led outside observers to identify the United States as “a nation with the soul of a church” (Chesterton 2009, 10) and its ideology as “the American Creed” (Myrdal 2009, 573). Among American Americanists it is perhaps Richard Hofstadter who expressed it most succinctly: “It has been our fate as a nation not to have ideologies, but to be one” (qtd. in Lipset 1996, 4).

If the beliefs, however differently defined, in America were what held together an otherwise varied group of scholars in the early days of American Studies, it is the realization, implied in Noble’s title, that “America” is only one of many aspects of identification of a number of what Huntington calls “subnational identities” within the United States that hold the New Americanists together. A loosely defined group of scholars whose critique of exceptionalism is closely allied with the social movements originating in the sixties, particularly those related to questions of race, gender, ethnicity and—though not nearly enough, according to Walter Benn Michaels—class, the New Americanists are scathing in their refutation of the recent Bush government’s recourse to an imperialism of brute force under the aegis of an exceptionalist rhetoric that sees “dissent as a minor form of treason” (Pease 2006, 73). William Spanos’s analysis of the willful forgetting of the Vietnam War reminds us that this fundamentally paranoid move was not unique

to the George W. Bush regime. The war, Spanos argues, was the logical consequence of exceptionalist thinking, and the American defeat proved the untenability of the premise underlying its national ethos: the brutal extermination of those perceived to stand in the way of its providential task. American interventions in Vietnam, and now Iraq, repeat the same “errand into the wilderness” that Perry Miller first identified as the origin of the national narrative, and which Sacvan Bercovitch convincingly reinterpreted so as to explain the paradoxical conflation of lament and optimism at the heart of the American jeremiad.

It is that paradox that still makes of every mission whose accomplishment turns out to be illusory an occasion for a call to the nation to come together ever more determined to brave whatever obstacles are put in the way of its democratizing mission. The wilderness into which light has to be thrown at all costs is now the Old World, more specifically the Middle East, the cradle of both Western and Eastern civilization, and liberal democracy—and market capitalism—the new gospel to be spread, the new product to be exported whether the recipient wants it or not. It is the stubbornness of the discourse of exceptionalism that makes it so difficult to turn the ground of the debate from the moral high one to the more pragmatic and political, yet profoundly ethical one, concerning the definition and limits of democracy and the role of nations that is subject to lively debate among scholars of globalization.

If the critique of exceptionalism has taken a more vociferous turn since September 11, 2001, the revival of interest in the notion precedes the events of that day. It is sobering to read Daniel Bell’s premature lament for its death, “The End of Exceptionalism” (1975) a generation later. Where Spanos in retrospect sees the Vietnam War as hoisting exceptionalism on its own petard, as it were, Bell in 1975 saw the war as a corollary of the “end of ideology,” the subject of his controversial 1965 book to which his essay clearly alludes. The fact that Bell attributes the demise of exceptionalism to the death of political partisanship seems prophetic in the aftermath of a presidential election that has shattered so many received views of partisanship. But it is also ironic insofar as the reactions to the outcome of the election are frequently couched in the very rhetoric of exceptionalism. But it is the end of the cold war that inspires a renewed critique of exceptionalism, an ideology premised on the existence of an identifiable antagonist external to the nation. The reexamination began with Byron Shafer’s collection *Is America Different? A New Look at American Exceptionalism* (1991)³ and Michael

Kammen's "The Problem of American Exceptionalism" (1993), followed by Lipset's magisterial *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (1996). Deborah Madsen, whose essay leads our collection, published her analysis of the cultural uses of the myth, focusing on the influence of religion and biblical exegesis on American literary and cultural discourse, *American Exceptionalism*, in 1998. The consensus among all of these seems to be that the exceptionalist narrative is likely to survive, as it has through history, even as its actors change.

Noble's *Death of a Nation* inaugurates the questioning inspired by the events of 9/11 and their aftermath which led to a heightened interest in the moral and legal ramifications of exceptionalism illustrated in Michael Ignatieff's collection *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights* (2005). Non-Americans who may never have heard the word *exceptionalism* are almost certain to know something about extraordinary rendition, the Patriot Act, and American reservations about the International Criminal Court. While Ignatieff identifies three variants of exceptionalism in American rights legislation—exemptionalism, double standards, and isolationism—he also demonstrates the active role played by the United States in international human rights legislation, even at times when such legislation imposed restrictions on the country. He takes pains to point to the nonpartisan nature of such efforts, represented by FDR as well as Ronald Reagan, even if they preferred to see legislation based on American models: "America teaches the meaning of liberty to the world; it does not learn from others" (Ignatieff 2005, 14). This claim has proved particularly true of the recent Bush regime, which has also extended the city/beacon allusion to hitherto unexplored territory. The obligatory allusion appeared, as one would expect, in President Bush's speech to the nation on September 11, 2001, when he referred to his country as the "brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world" and promised that "no one will keep that light from shining." More recently this somber allusion has turned culinary; a menu for a state dinner in 2006 offered the nation's governors a new dessert, "'city on a hill' caramel cake."⁴ In retrospect the injunction to eat this particular cake accrued an ominously prophetic resonance as the regime left an impoverished country ripe for revolution (even if Marie Antoinette seems an unlikely model for the First Lady). The question may not be whether there will be a revolution but rather whether a nation can have its exceptionalist cake and eat it too.

The fact that apologists for the continued legitimacy of exceptionalist claims and their critics are equally products of the same rhetoric,

one that is inevitably caught up with assumptions of patriotism—more often than not confused with nationalism—makes criticism particularly difficult. Noble’s observation that “[a]n overarching conceptual framework for a non-exceptionalist history of the United States is not yet in place” (Noble 2002, 35) is corroborated by the most ambitious recent attempt to “explain America to itself and to its foreign observers” (ix), Peter H. Schuck and James Q. Wilson’s *Understanding America*, which is subtitled “The Anatomy of an Exceptional Nation.” Donald Pease contends that the problem with even the work of the proponents of New Americanist Studies (often accused of anti-Americanism) is that “it is not yet not americanist” (Pease 2006, 101). The word *Americanist* is ambiguous in itself, and Pease’s choice not to capitalize it is deliberate; as Daniel Bell points out, it can refer to someone who subscribes to “Americanism . . . the religion of America” (Bell 1975, 206). In other words, exceptionalism will not lose its hold on Americanist Studies until the field has ceased to be coextensive with national boundaries.⁵ But, as Pease contends in his most recent book, *The New American Exceptionalism* (2009), exceptionalism since 9/11 is itself no longer coextensive with the nation’s boundaries but has become a “state fantasy” of a “Global Homeland” whose most vulnerable citizens are no longer seen as in need of protection but as potential security threats.

In another recent book on the subject, Godfrey Hodgson debunks *The Myth of American Exceptionalism* (2009) by pointing to the European provenance and continued importance of its tenets and by painstakingly tracing the gap between perception and reality throughout American historiography. The fact that Hodgson, a Brit, finds such a project necessary illustrates the tenacity of the myth. It is indeed intriguing to note how many of the most often quoted definers or exponents of exceptionalism are non-Americans, from the Massachusetts Bay Puritans, British subjects whose disagreement was with the Church rather than the Crown per se, to Crèvecoeur, Tocqueville, Chesterton, Myrdal, and Ignatieff . . . and now the editors of this volume. When we organized the conference we were surprised—and slightly annoyed—at the dearth of submissions from an identifiably conservative viewpoint. We tried, without success, to find a voice willing (within our limited means) to defend the premises of exceptionalism. We also found a widespread assumption among American scholars that they would find a sympathetic audience for criticism of exceptionalism in Canada. Canadian scholars, on the other hand, seemed content not to have to question their own

country's now rather tainted assumption of a higher moral ground, what with peacekeeping and universal health care as the pillars of its dedication to "peace, order, and good government." Still, we want to emphasize that the essays chosen for inclusion are not interventions in a political debate but rather case studies illustrating both the history and the pervasiveness of the assumptions underlying the political debate about the role of the United States in the world. Our premise is that exceptionalism, whether one calls it an ideology, a myth, a creed, an ethos, or a god-given truth, inflects every discourse involving relations between the United States and its—internal as well as external—others and that even dissenting counterdiscourses rely on the commonality of assumptions underlying the national ethos.

The authors are from the United States, Canada, and Australia, but what they have in common is a desire to understand how and why the rhetoric of exceptionalism has shaped, and continues to shape, the writing of history and culture in the United States. Historically, the essays stretch from early exploration narratives and Puritan sermons and chronicles to postmodern popular culture. Deborah Madsen's inaugural essay brings the two historical moments together by tracing the dependence of recent political rhetoric on the trope of witchcraft, which has come to define our understanding of the heritage of Puritanism but which also inflects the new discourse on global terrorism. The witch is the ultimate "un-American," but the witch is also that which protects those on the inside from invisible dangers. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the witch returns at times of perceived threats to homeland security, as indicated by Madsen's genealogy from the Puritans to PNAC. The collection ends as it begins, with the Puritans; Matthew Strohack's essay presents a mirror image of Madsen's by way of a study of H. P. Lovecraft's modernist inversion of Puritan tropology in his short stories. This narrative loop closes the collection of essays, but rather than leave the debate with academics, whose work remains within the framework of institutions often caught within, or based on the inheritance of, exceptionalist rhetoric, we have chosen to leave the—always provisional—last word to its original exclusion on American soil. The native Trickster is given voice in Choctaw scholar Terri Baker's afterword, which, as it follows the presumed end and reveals, rather than attempts to resolve, the contradictions and paradoxes that the essays have analyzed, may provide a way out of the inevitable circularity and centeredness of argumentation and perhaps even hold out the possibility of new beginnings.

Following Madsen's transhistorical study, we return with James Allegro to pre-Puritan exploration narratives that construct a cosmography in which America is seen in relation to Asia rather than Europe. All exceptionalist rhetoric focuses on the youth of the "new" world, which is a world of potential and promise, against which the "old" one stands out as tired and stagnant, burdened by tradition. In this early orientalist discourse, however, it is not Europe but Asia that represents the "old" against which America is eventually defined as an exception. Allegro thus situates himself in recent critical debate that questions the Eurocentrism and the Atlantic focus of the discourse of exceptionalism.

Emily García brings us to the founding of the nation, focusing on the imbrications of nationalist exceptionalism with universalism that characterize the writings of Thomas Paine. She traces a narrative in which this intertwining goes back to John Winthrop, distinguishing four key conjunctures of the two aspects: coincidence, confluence, paradox, and contemplation. García thus illustrates how the shifting relationships between exceptionalism, with its inevitable nationalist resonance, and universalism, shape American political rhetoric from Winthrop to the present.

Matthew Brophy takes us into the literary critique of exceptionalism, often associated with Herman Melville but which he shows begins with Washington Irving and which he locates in the genre of the burlesque, a subgenre of satire, which criticizes "the sanctification of violence" that both writers see as an inherent part of the ideology. Through a Foucauldian reading, Brophy points to the sacred status of the American rhetoric of exceptionalism and its inherent kinship with violence, which Melville and Irving critique without, as in traditional satire, proposing a corrective counterideology but rather leaving the reader faced with a moral dilemma. The early critiques of exceptionalism authored by Irving and Melville have since found a place in the literary canon. Yet the satirical burlesque hardly represents American popular culture as does the ever-popular Western with its inevitable association with Manifest Destiny and the frontier myth. Christine Bold's careful and inventive reconstruction of the birth of the Western shows it to have a lot to do with the transatlantic interests of British imperialism. The first popular Western writer, Owen Wister, whose *The Virginian* became a bestseller, and the publishing industry that followed were very much the creation of what Bold poignantly dubs "the frontier club," a group held together by shared "stock" interests, in several senses of the word.

Contemporaneously with the evolution of the “frontier club” on the western front developed the notion of Anglo-American—Protestant—culture as the road to “world salvation,” which Nathaniel Cadle sees as presaging current rhetoric about globalization. Reading such writers as Josiah Strong as representing a shift between Winthrop at one end and Ronald Reagan at the other, Cadle points to their early advocacy of an interventionist stance, aided by technological innovation, on the world stage. Among influential intellectuals in this debate at the turn of the last century was also W. E. B. Du Bois, according to whom the foundation of American democracy on racism made the nation the least suitable model for the world. Cadle’s reading of Du Bois draws the conclusion that African Americans are the “talented tenth” of the entire nonwhite world and hence best placed to save the world for modernization. As different as they are in focus and motivation, Strong’s Christian mission and Du Bois’s pan-Africanism share the missionary rhetoric of the United States as the beacon of modernization that is the necessary condition for saving the world.

Crucial to all debates about exceptionalism is the issue of immigration and assimilation, questions dealt with by both Strong and Du Bois and which continue to shape political debate in the present. Considering its foundational structure, which requires a division between “us” and “them” that is almost invariably tainted with a degree of racialism, it is not surprising that exceptionalist rhetoric becomes particularly visible at times of perceived threats to the nation, among which war and immigration loom large. Carl Bon Tempo defines the tenets of exceptionalism in his study of the debate between restrictionists and liberalizers in recent debates about immigration and traces its relationship to contemporary discussions of multiculturalism.

The last four essays turn to popular culture. Anthony Stewart shows how Du Bois’s notion of African American exceptionalism has been turned on its head through a reading of Percival Everett’s novel *Erasure*. A century after Du Bois’s advocacy of the “talented tenth,” the relationship between rule and exception has been reversed in white clichéd constructions; the truly exceptional African American—the criminal, the athlete, and the entertainer—has become the model, while the ordinary individual, whose only dream is of a “normal” middle-class life, has come to be seen as exceptional. Furthermore, Everett shows how the African American exception continues to be called into the ideological service of an overriding American exceptionalism dominated by whiteness.

That the critique of exceptionalism has entered the realm of popular culture is also clear in Roxanne Harde's intervention into the debate about capital punishment by way of the songs of Steve Earle. The United States is somewhat of an exception in the Western world as one of very few countries that still practice capital punishment, and Earle questions the compatibility of a practice of legislated murder with a democracy in which each individual shares the responsibility for actions taken in the name of the nation. The analogy between the penal and the military systems drawn by Earle is particularly relevant today. Based on violence and exclusion, judicial power comes close to bringing war home and the link between slavery, the penal system, and the military is such that it casts actors into one of two roles: executioner or victim. Yet it is the kind of activism represented by the likes of Steve Earle that also defines American exceptionalism as the quality that allows, and indeed calls for, individuals to dissent when they perceive that the nation does not live up to its democratic mission.

If Steve Earle holds American exceptionalism to account, so to speak, he also criticizes the sensationalization of crime that shores up capital punishment as a form of redemptive righteousness rather than the vengeance it is. Oprah Winfrey, on the other hand, falls into exactly the trap he warns against, according to Sarah Humphreys's study of her "Watch List" designed to call the nation to act against the problem of child abuse. Oprah's uncritical use of the rhetoric of good and evil, Humphreys shows, leads to a vigilantism that does more to perpetuate the exceptionalist narrative than to prevent crime and which, in the process, also re-victimizes the victims of crime.

Matthew Strohack's return to the Puritan origin of the exceptionalist discourse by way of the stories of H. P. Lovecraft forms an appropriate bookend, bringing us back to the genre conventions of the allegorical origins of the narrative of American exceptionalism but with a twist. Somewhat like Irving and Melville, Lovecraft leaves the reader in suspension rather than proposing an alternative narrative, but it is a suspension associated with horror rather than with burlesque. Although these writers share a certain pessimism, they show that it is in the very nature of the exceptionalist paradigm that once it leaves the realm of easy interpretation, represented by Puritan typology, it leaves the reader/citizen faced with only the promise—or threat—of something else, whose content is for the individual to shape. As Lovecraft's fictions illustrate,

it is the shapelessness of that which cannot be interpreted, that which is yet unnameable, that invokes such horror and triggers the yearning for certitude that typological exceptionalism provides. We are back at the double-edged sword of a rhetoric that on the one hand can provide a comforting shelter for those who want to be told what to think, who want to be reassured of being part of a protected “we” based on the exclusion of dissenters and, on the other, opens a space for an ethical encounter with individual responsibility.

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Notes

1. It is equally ironic the Obama’s support in the arts community is prominently represented by the “Manifest Hope Gallery,” a movement that “highlights the central themes of the progressive grassroots movement—Hope, Change, Progress, Unity and Patriotism” (<http://manifesthope.com/about.php>). The providential associations of the word *manifest* are inevitably tainted with the exceptionalist ethos. The McCain camp, on the other hand, has a solid support base on <http://theshiningcityblog.com/tag/macain/>.

2. See *American Literary History* 17, no. 1 (2005).

3. The fact that Shafer’s collection, to which ours may be seen as a sequel, began as a conference on American Exceptionalism at Oxford reinforces our observation about the long-standing fascination with the topic to non-Americans.

4. See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/02/20060226-4.html>. Unfortunately no picture is available of this intriguing dessert.

5. On the exclusions operated by the adjective *American* see also Janice Radway’s presidential address to the American Studies Association, 1998.

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