

# Preposterous Encounters: Interrupting American Studies with the (Post)Colonial, or *Casablanca* in the American Century

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What did these devils want? Precisely why had they come? [The Americans] said that they had come to help the people and to search for water, that there was gold underneath the sands and that they would extract it and distribute it among the people, but what did any of that have to do with their books or the questions they asked?

‘Abd al-Rahman Munif<sup>1</sup>

Is it rude, in company, to interrupt? Not a social question, of course, but a field question—namely, how not to be properly disciplined? The same question, rephrased: when is critical preposterousness warranted?

This essay responds to critical impasses in the encounter of American Studies and postcolonial studies: competing assertions that the United States is from the start postcolonial versus denials that it has ever or yet undergone decolonization and institutional disincentives and disciplinary impulses against comparative, multilingual, and multi-sited work. Drawing its urgency from the multiple emergencies made visible and exacerbated by 9/11/01, especially the pedagogical and institutional crises that follow that rupture, the essay argues for a “preposterous encounter” of the two critical approaches, one which productively harnesses the energies signified by the word *preposterous*, a word which etymologically yokes the pre- and the post-. Such an encounter focuses on unraveling the pernicious uses of temporal/spatial/linguistic manipulation named by Henry Luce’s phrase “the American century” and performed by his 1941 essay of the same title, a manipulation that is the hallmark of U.S. cultural production representing the foreign since 1941 and the place of U.S. cultural production in globalization. In its first half, this essay outlines a series of tactics of critical interruption of “Americanist” work, which despite frequent attempts at political resistance is paradigmatically bound within an exceptionalist circle of its own making. Insisting on the inseparability of the cold war and the postcolonial period, I argue that accounts of U.S. cultural production since entry into WWII—which announces the U.S. rise to global power status that marks the last six decades and is the catalyst for the more rapid globalization of the U.S. economy—are severely delimited by not fol-

lowing the global presence of that cultural production and the ways in which those texts and, in turn, “Americanness” are understood and recoded abroad. In the essay’s second half, I discuss an exemplary and influential text—the 1942 film *Casablanca*—and understand the film’s own manipulation of time/space/language and the silent wrenching apart of an historically demonstrable confederation of African American and North African during the 1930s and 40s as a performance of the logic of Luce’s so-called “American century.” By summoning a Moroccan archive of critical and creative responses to *Casablanca* as a tactic against such a manipulation, I attempt to stage the type of “preposterous encounter” of American Studies and postcolonial studies discussed earlier and interrupt American(ist) understanding of the film in particular and the critical impulses in the study of U.S. cultural production in general.

## Preposterous Encounters

Considerations of the state of postcolonial studies in 2003 can’t help but consider the relationship of that diverse field to the interdisciplinary field of American Studies.<sup>2</sup> It’s a conversation that goes both ways. A decade after Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease’s influential collection *Cultures of United States Imperialism* made the statement that American Studies had to return to the question of empire repressed at its founding, and the editors’ own various projects and publications, it has become less possible to avoid the consideration of U.S. global power within studies of U.S. literature and cultural history.<sup>3</sup> In the postcolonial camp, eight years after Jenny Sharpe’s much cited *Diaspora* essay attempted finally to settle the question “Is the United States Postcolonial?” those who find themselves working on post-

colonial formations and subjectivities are similarly unable to avoid a deeper engagement with U.S. politics and cultural production. Sharpe's intervention addressed both academic fields: "I want us to define the 'after' to colonialism as the neocolonial relations into which the United States entered with decolonized nations."<sup>4</sup> In this regard, an engagement with U.S. global "relations," broadly considered, would be crucial for postcolonialists and would necessitate a rewriting of the scholarly and theoretical account of that postcolonial cultural production which had previously seemed to be responding only to the experience of European colonialism, albeit in complex ways (e.g., India, the Maghreb, Vietnam), by taking into consideration the expanding matrices of political power and cultural influence within which all social and cultural production of the past six decades operates.

Such an understanding of postcolonialism also implicates twentieth-century Americanists, who by this definition would need to engage seriously the history of European colonialism and the double-edged role of the U.S. in the decolonization period from at least the 1940s in order to properly historicize and contextualize *all* post-1941 cultural production by U.S. citizens and residents (whether they work in English or not), as well as by those artists, writers, and scholars who creatively engage or critique U.S. politics and cultural production from outside the U.S. Robert Young's recent reminder that the transition from colonialism to postcolonial forms of domination is "at the heart of the struggle for global mastery in the Cold War" is consonant with this claim because it rightly links the U.S.-Soviet contest with the political struggle for and within Europe's former colonial holdings and the cultural formations that emerge in the wake of that contest.<sup>5</sup> Among its many ramifications, considering the cold war inseparable from the postcolonial period encourages studies of post-1941 U.S. culture to consider the frequent representations of the foreign in U.S. literature and film in a different, more nuanced light. The well-noted frequent representations of foreignness in 1940s and 50s culture—in everything from science fiction films about alien invasion to Biblical epics set in the Middle East to Orientalist costume dramas and musicals to *noir's* obsession with contagion—should be seen not only as reflections of fears of the Soviet threat, third terms of a cold war binarism, but also as ways of figuring the diverse theaters in which the cold war was played out.<sup>6</sup> Crossing disciplinary borders we must recall that all those "third terms" have had very real histories and were affected by very real engagements and interventions by the U.S. state, which through its own apparatus (the station chiefs and diplomatic corps of the State Department and the cultural arms of the USIA and USIS and the scholars and pro-

grams they funded) was simultaneously figuring and judging the foreign and basing U.S. policy on those judgments.<sup>7</sup> The critiques and creative recodings of American political and cultural projects that emerge from these diverse locations—such as 'Abd al-Rahman Munif's *Mudun al-Milb* [*Cities of Salt*] novel trilogy and 'Abd al-Qader Laqt'a's film *al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida* [*Love in Casablanca*], which I discuss below—are thus deeply linked to the American figurations of the foreign that are (a part of) their own context as cultural producers working in North Africa and the Middle East; they may no longer be considered outside the terrain of Americanist work.

Despite important interventions by Pease, Kaplan and Sharpe, for the moment the conversation of postcolonial studies and American Studies is still tentative and lacks a sustained method. There are disciplinary root causes that have thus far limited a more serious engagement. For American Studies, the difficulties of escaping the exceptionalist logic and over-reliance on the nation-form at the foundation of the field during the early cold war are strongly reinforced by the disinclination to work in languages other than English and contexts outside the United States.<sup>8</sup> Such a disinclination unwittingly forces the majority of American Studies scholars and students to look inward for evidence with which to disrupt hegemonic patterns of exclusion rather than to "break the magic circle between text and context, to hold in suspension those conditions whereby the progressivist formulas of American studies would—naturally, as it were—underwrite a rhetoric of emancipation," as the British scholar Paul Giles puts it in his argument for a transnational, virtual approach to American Studies.<sup>9</sup> For postcolonial studies, disciplined by departments of English (via hiring practices and the training of graduate students, both of which are powerful tools for perpetuating an inclination within a field), U.S. literature has been considered extraneous—or even dangerous—to a field that has relied on its revision and expansion of the British canon.<sup>10</sup>

Elsewhere, on a smaller scale, a parallel situation is evident. As French departments in the U.S. respond to challenges to their own survival and relevance via the institutionalization of positions in francophone studies, the colonial pattern is repeated, and comparative work in Arabic and its regional dialects, Vietnamese, Wolof, Bambara, and other languages of sub-Saharan Africa, etc., is rare. The institutionalization of francophone studies positions in U.S. French departments is of course an ironic twist because it is the loss of the French language's cachet as the global language of diplomacy—a downgrading that is directly related to France's loss of its colonial empire—that has hurt enrollments. Further, the divvying up of much of the non-

European world by the already extant academic programs and departments—French gets sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb, Vietnam and parts of the Caribbean; English gets India and East and South Africa; and American Studies (or the Americanist branch of an English department) gets Latina/o studies, Asian American, and African American studies—not only repeats the colonial ordering of the world, but also encourages us to miss by devaluing that literary production that doesn't fit this order. In the case of the Maghreb, for example, not only is literary and cultural production in Arabic barely studied in the U.S.—considered marginal to Middle East studies programs, when they exist at all, and disciplined out of French departments' interest in the Maghreb—but the important body of Maghrebi cultural production in Tamazight (Berber) languages and increasingly in *English*—more startling and theoretically and historically complex—is unknown; we think we already know where the boundaries of “anglophone African writing” end.<sup>11</sup>

Like American Studies, postcolonial studies is an area that has been deeply concerned with questions of the geographic and institutional locations of the critic and the intellectual history of the field's creation and propagation.<sup>12</sup> Yet a conversation that relates the development of the two fields to one another has not yet been staged. Its major scenes: the formation of American Studies after WWII in relation to cold war politics (fueled by right wing money and organized by leftist faculty, a situation which led to what Paul Giles calls “a consensus criticism of the consensus”); the further retrenchment of English departments and the dominance of New Critical and then deconstructive paradigms; the powerful unsettling of those paradigms (by now mostly detached from American Studies) by the “internal critique” of Edward Said's work *Orientalism*.<sup>13</sup> This is obviously a sketch in very broad strokes, but my impulse to relate the two subfields to each other and within cold war cultural politics is a gesture toward unseating the disciplinary assumptions that have restricted both from a more intense engagement with each other. My approach seeks to remind us of the question of institutions to which the work of Edward Said repeatedly draws our attention.<sup>14</sup>

The need to address the rippling effects of 9/11 on our work in the classroom and the academic journal is urgent. In the terms of the trade, left-leaning American academics tend to imagine 9/11 as the hyperbolic collision of the disenfranchised subjects of the new world order with the U.S. as global and neocolonial power, staged from the start in a postnational symbolic register (World Trade Center as symbol of multinational trade versus the Pentagon as symbol of U.S. military) and as postmodern media spectacle. But a theoretical under-

standing of that scenario that does not affect our teaching and research methods leaves us poorly prepared for the post-9/11 generation of U.S. university students. With the final shattering of the enabling myth that the Atlantic and Pacific oceans leave the (continental) U.S. at some special remove from global conflict, a new generation of American and U.S.-based students will increasingly find themselves rejecting the return of the cold war binarism that has emerged as the Bush administration's preliminary response. They will eventually see that response as one that parodies and exaggerates the very object the postnational al-Qaida terrorist network and its confreres hold up as their target. (In the Muslim world itself, the U.S. propaganda films about American Muslim bliss and Radio Sawa's blend of Bush-administration propaganda and pop music offer immediate parodic examples of the U.S. government's simplistic understanding of their part of the world.<sup>15</sup>) U.S. students are finding that they do not have to reject patriotic sentiment in order to critique the binary global logic that has already demonstrated its own impossibility; but where to go from there? The conversation of American Studies and postcolonial studies must provide a method and an inspiration to our students or else demonstrate the university classroom's own irrelevance or—a still worse possibility—render ineffective committed scholars and activist students. Timothy Brennan has recently called for a reinvigoration of postcolonial studies and urged practitioners to focus on the relationship of culture to the capitalist system, to practice clarity, and to make visible the unpayment and other systemic acts of violence by the state that cultural production has rendered invisible.<sup>16</sup> And if the postcolonial canon has become overly familiar on syllabi and in journal publications, as Neil Lazarus has contended, a refreshed examination of the global flows of peoples and cultural production will help both American Studies and postcolonial studies break out of the fictitious borders they have been disciplined into and return to concerns that have eluded both.<sup>17</sup>

I opened with the promise (a threat risked, following Derrida) of undisciplined interruption.<sup>18</sup> When does interdisciplinary work, the current championing of which should give us pause, become a refusal to be disciplined and therefore socially risky? The cutbacks and hiring freezes that university humanities departments are beginning to implement, after the bursting of the economic bubble that had seduced many of us into thinking that ten percent annual returns were a safe bet, makes crossing disciplinary lines seem all the more attractive from a budgetary point of view. And in the face of the overwhelming corporatization of the university, interdisciplinarity might even seem to be the campus analog to globalization, where profit (cost cutting) is the

motive for crossing borders, while making sure they continue to exist on paper (and websites), and where local resistance (departmental integrity) might seem the appropriate response. However anachronistic the national literature programs—including “English”—may at this point be, they may be maintained within the interdisciplinarity I am urging as strategic essentialisms, to co-opt and redirect a phrase of Gayatri Spivak, even as pedagogical tools.<sup>19</sup> But only when they are marked by truly comparative syllabi, reading lists, and scholarship that highlight the inventedness of the national literary traditions and the ways in which they have buttressed themselves against global flows of peoples and resisted the linguistic and epistemic challenges represented by those flows.

The necessary analog and the approach informing my statement is to be found in critical work on globalization, where the nation is a “tolerated anachronism,” as Donald Pease has put it.<sup>20</sup> Pease, whose massive project for a postnational(ist) American Studies has broken much ground, alerts us to the theoretical intricacies of the encounter. Pease argues that globalization (as an economic and cultural system) and postcolonialism (itself not singular) differ radically in their understanding of the nation’s change in status. Whereas postcolonialism narrates resistance to transnational capital and frequently critiques the nation as the state’s mystification, sometimes offering new national narratives strategically, globalization *narrativizes* the processes by which transnational capital manages national populations, thereby accommodating capital belatedly. This process reproduces “the collective illusion that the state is an imaginative correlate of an individual’s desires,” that is, the world she or he wants rather than a world imposed by the state, and silently reclaims national narratives as instruments of state rule. We might wonder about the efflorescence of a colonial nostalgia within U.S. popular culture during the 1990s—some major examples include the Hollywood film versions of *The English Patient* and *The Sheltering Sky*, the J. Peterman clothing catalog with its colonialist anecdotes and sketches, the sophisticated urban clothing stores Banana Republic and Anthropologie, and the faux colonialist interiors of chain stores such as The Bombay Company and Ralph Lauren after the 1990 Safari campaign—all of them especially sensual sites. Following Pease’s framework, we can understand this nostalgia for a colonial encounter the U.S. never had, in the wake of the break up of the Soviet Union and the shift in the global economy, as a process that helped establish the U.S. state and its major corporate apparati as global managers, accomplished by producing and benefiting from sensual fictions of the older (colonial) order in which the imperial state was allied with desire. In any case, for Pease, the postnational as

critical site offers a wedge against such processes and names “the complex site wherein postcolonialism’s resistance to global capital *intersects* with the questions the global economy addresses to the state concerning the nation’s continued role in its management.” Inspired by the delineation of this complex site, let us return to campus and interdisciplinarity—we should henceforth call it “postdisciplinarity.” We must be able to account for the ways in which the political resistance and activism that animates many workers in American Studies and postcolonial studies in their scholarship intersects with the management of those areas by literature departments and disciplines in ways that are enfeebling. This may be the place that what I’m calling postdisciplinarity diverges from the corporate university’s impulse toward “interdisciplinarity”: the latter supports the traditional humanities departments and the apparati that maintain their “integrity” (especially via tenure review, which structurally privileges remaining within a field or subfield), and by interdisciplinarity seeks merely to spread those faculty resources thin to get maximum value and mask the fact that temporary labor is doing the lion’s share of the teaching. To champion postdisciplinarity is surely not to dispense with academic rigor, with deep knowledge of an area or region, or with disciplinarily distinct approaches to a region or topic; in fact, it’s to call for the impossible task for young scholars to seek the depth of a traditional area studies approach across multiple contexts.<sup>21</sup> Before it is possible to achieve that depth, not to consider national/disciplinary borders, blockades, or even check points is crucial to doing the work of the post-9/11 moment. Even then, and surely in the meantime, tactics are needed.

We are working during a moment of emergency, or more accurately, multiple moments—simultaneous and yet radically disjoined from one another—multiple emergencies. Urged by a sense of emergency, and the promise-threat of the coming emergency that the post-9/11 generation will pose, I propose *interruption* as a critical tactic for literary studies. I mean various, related tactics of interruption: interrupting dominant accounts of texts with various suppressed or forgotten archives; locating interruptions within literary texts (whether narrative interruptions or the interruption of “foreign” languages and etymologies within the language of the text); locating the interruptions that certain occluded texts when reintroduced cause to a national literature (and the enabling fiction of the national literature); interrupting the presumption that national literatures and cultures operate in a single, coherent language (this is especially true and rich with regard to the Maghreb, one of my own areas of research, and also resonates with the movement to reconsider U.S. literatures in multiple languages); and with reference to the concept of global

Englishes, interrupting the idea that the English increasingly employed around the globe is firm evidence of the Americanization of the world or that global Englishes are transparent to Anglo-Americans (and when they are not, that it is not evidence of the “error” or “improper” usage by those who are manipulating English).<sup>22</sup>

Interruption as pedagogical tactic for American Studies: what happens when Arab texts are allowed to interrupt an “American literature” syllabus? Is ‘Abd al-Rahman Munif’s great trilogy *Mudun al-Milb* [*Cities of Salt*]*—*a Tolstoyan epic published in the 1980s that reimagines the encounter of American oil interests and their scouts with the Arabian peninsula and the recreation of the tribal villages and chieftains into what would become the Gulf states and a corrupt monarchy—a part of the U.S. literary tradition? If one says, “Of course not! (Preposterous!)” is the answer based on the nationality of the writer (he lives in exile, his books banned in Saudi Arabia), the language of its composition (“American literature,” that constructed thing, must be in English, perhaps, but what about “literatures of the U.S.,” a phrase coming into prominence?), or the location of its composition (never a reliable marker)? And since literary traditions are the things of class syllabi and anthologies, by which the state apparati and institutions render invisible the rupture between the demographic make up of those living within the national boundaries and the idea of the nation useful to the state,<sup>23</sup> the interruption performed by the inclusion in the “American literary tradition” of Munif’s representation of American projects and personalities is considerable.

A preposterous encounter, then, that of American Studies and postcolonial studies, from the start. But here the preposterousness is enabling, rather than being the stakes of the debate. My adjoining of pre- and post-attempts to sidestep the critical impasse resulting from a series of debates about the applicability of the term “postcolonial” to American literature. I refer to the hackles raised when Lawrence Buell claimed that Anglo-American literature after the revolution of 1776 might be thought of as postcolonial and Anne McClintock’s denial that the United States has yet undergone decolonization.<sup>24</sup> Prepostcolonial, then? (These are important discussions, but we must not become mired in them.) By highlighting the pre-post-erousness of this critical encounter, I mean to move us away from the impulse to encapsulate totalities and create neat periodizations of and around the U.S. cultural experience and move toward the multiple temporal registers and spatial ruptures that Arjun Appadurai and others in the *Public Culture* collective have taught us to see were always in operation simultaneously in the U.S. and globally.<sup>25</sup> “Preposterousness” emphasizes the time lag at the center of accounts

and representations of U.S. imperial designs since the late nineteenth century, and especially since 1941, and attempts to redirect or unravel those manipulations via critical interruptions such as those I’ve outlined above.<sup>26</sup> (Employing the word surely does not mean that such a critical encounter is “absurd,” by any means; rather that it places itself in opposition to the critical “common sense” of the time.) Seizing the force of the preposterous—I’ve always felt a powerful torque at the center of the word—is itself of course yet another tactic by which to interrupt and redirect dominant discussions about “the American century.”

### Following *Casablanca*

Perhaps the most influential representation of U.S. empire is the descriptive term “the American century,” as *Life* magazine editor Henry Luce dubbed the century and everything in it in 1941. Ten months before the bombings at Pearl Harbor, Luce’s editorial for *Life*, quickly published as a small book, was an argument for support of U.S. entry into World War II. For Luce, the promulgation of American “principles” was an imperative America could not refuse: “America is responsible to herself as well as to history, for the world environment in which she lives. Nothing can so vitally affect America’s environment as America’s own influence upon it.”<sup>27</sup> If such an “environment” confused moral with economic goals, what is intriguing about Luce’s argument is his nomenclature. For Luce, U.S. isolationism was not possible in the twentieth century; yet internationalism for Luce means that the world becomes “our” world, an “American” world, an “American century.” The time-lag of that phrase, the way that the spatial remove of other parts of the globe are figured as temporal—the *century* has a nationality placed on it—is Luce’s own interruption, which is productive for *his* argument against those who would avoid or delay entry into the war. This is repeated in Luce’s naming of the entire century some four decades in, an act that reaches backwards temporally, just as his adjective reaches outward geographically. Luce’s is an act of such authorial confidence that it recalls Gertrude Stein and her playful yet cutting pronouncements from within the early 1930s on which writers belonged to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, irrespective of chronology. The temporal and special manipulation of Luce’s gesture—preposterous in the usual sense of the word, summoning more of its power from Luce’s own institutional and economic base than from his rhetorical interruption—is the tactic by which he succeeds in promulgating his terminology and its logic. The time lag is Luce’s space-clearing gesture.<sup>28</sup>

A critical interruption of the logic of “The American

Century” as it permeates outward through so much U.S. rhetoric about, and cultural representations of, the international space requires unhinging the easy assumption of American temporality as perquisite of global supremacy. In the case of Luce’s essay, it is important to note, the manipulation of space via an American time is understood as partially created by American cultural production—and more largely by what Luce will call “imagination.”<sup>29</sup> And for Luce American cultural production already was international before the American people (as represented by the readers of *Life*, his target audience) were ready to engage, or “imagine,” the foreign and is thus summoned to justify the logic of his argument. Luce’s examples—American slang, jazz, Hollywood film, and U.S. technology—reveal that by “internationalism” Luce means the export of U.S. cultural products rather than a mingling of cultural forms; these examples suggest the linguistic manipulation central to his project (that the linguistic register, like the temporal one, must be American). The second half of this essay attempts to stage a critical interruption of the compounded logic of the various manipulations of “the American century,” by which I now mean the logic of an internationalism bound up in an exceptionalist understanding of “America,” which applies as much to the kind of American Studies I have critiqued in the first section of this essay as it does to Luce. I will do so here by reading a major and exemplary American representation of the United States’ international role: *Casablanca*. The interruption is staged in part by following the film through an archive of foreign responses that re-imagine and creatively recode the American text.

The time lag of geographic manipulation is central to the 1942 war film *Casablanca*, a major text of “the American century,” one that might be said to enact it.<sup>30</sup> When Rick asks, “Sam, if it’s December 1941 in Casablanca, what time is it in New York?” the time lag of the question, like that in Luce’s “American century,” is mobilized as an argument for American engagement and internationalism. The explicit point of Rick’s rhetorical question is that in retreating to Casablanca—a place imagined here to be in a different temporal register—he had meant to leave behind the world (“Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine,” he will say a couple of lines later). And yet in naming a specific and charged moment (December 1941, the month of the Pearl Harbor bombings, roughly a year prior to the film’s release) and given the widely noted political parable of the film, the implicit point of Rick’s loaded question is that Americans abroad, such as Rick, know already before the Pearl Harbor bombings that the U.S. can no longer afford to be on a different time zone from the rest of the world—“I bet they’re asleep in New York. I bet they’re asleep all over Amer-

ica,” Rick says after his rhetorical question—and must engage immediately in the global conflict. But Rick’s question also suggests that Pearl Harbor will reorganize U.S. participation in the war and the world and reorient the center of both to an American time frame. It will be an American century, in Luce’s sense.

Sam’s response to Rick’s question is to say, “My watch stopped,” which is suggestive of the conservative racial politics of this hypercanonical film, a film that masquerades as liberal.<sup>31</sup> In this context, Sam’s line provides a vivid representation of what Michael Hanchard has called “racial time,” namely “the inequalities of temporality that result from power relations between racially dominant and subordinate groups.” Hanchard argues that racial time has operated as a “structural effect upon the politics of racial difference” and is one of the ways that racial difference, the materiality of which is elusive, neither reified and static nor mere social construct, has material effects on individual and group interaction.<sup>32</sup> When coupled with Sam’s trademark song “As Time Goes By” invoking the “fundamental things” against the “speed and new invention” of the present, a song that he repeats on demand “again” and again, both the lyrics and the repetition further identify him with temporal stagnation. Here, performing at the center of Rick’s Café Américain, the expression of racial time silently places Sam in the imagined temporal register of those Moroccans who live in Casablanca, invisible within the film. This is the very same register Rick was seeking in his flight to Casablanca from a France associated with Isla—the subsequent scene will be a Paris flashback sequence ending with Rick (and Sam) abandoned by Isla at the train station under a big clock. If Rick expected or hoped that Casablanca would remain on a different temporal register, however, both the “world” and Isla have found him and made him redirect that temporal register back toward Europe (and on the level of the political parable I discussed above, bring Casablanca temporally into “the American century”). But the script of *Casablanca* will not permit Sam to move temporally, and he remains on the old Casablanca time.<sup>33</sup>

The complex yet readily apparent ways in which *Casablanca* brackets or suppresses concerns of gender and race—Ilsa’s infamous willingness to allow Rick to think for the two of them and Sam’s participation in what can only be called the film’s slave economy via the subplot of whether he will or won’t consent to work at the Blue Parrot for Signor Ferrari (Sydney Greenstreet) for double the pay—is a way of distracting viewers from a more potent possibility repressed by the film. Namely, that Sam as a racialized subject of U.S. colonialism might enter into a conversation with the colonized Moroccan subjects who are relegated to the film’s background.

Such conversations did in fact take place when African American writers and artists such as Josephine Baker, Claude McKay, and Jessie Fauset traveled to North Africa in the 1920s and 1930s and were well known via Fauset's articles on Algiers for *The Crisis* in 1925, McKay's autobiography *A Long Way From Home* (1937), and suggested by Baker's film *Princesse Tam-Tam* (1935), shot in Tunisia. More immediately, the interest that African Americans had in the war in Africa had been suggested by left-leaning African American journals and press, such as *The Negro Quarterly*, in the early 1940s.<sup>34</sup> Such a confederation might have exposed or made more visible by compounding the various hypocrisies of "the good war," specifically the segregation of U.S. troops and the alliance of the U.S. with the French colonial bureaucracy in North Africa even while the U.S. spread propaganda in North Africa describing the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter.<sup>35</sup> The potential for such a diasporic confederation of African American and North African haunts *Casablanca* and emerges even while it is apparently suppressed by the time lag of Rick's question and the racial time of Sam's response.

"*Casablanca*" names the peculiar collusion of U.S. cultural production and post-1941, postcolonial foreign relations, a major and precise moment when U.S. texts become worldly in a new way. It is, no less, a word that Warner Brothers thought they held a copyright on and, in an extreme version of representation-as-ownership, went so far as to claim as much in 1946 when the Marx Brothers were filming *A Night in Casablanca*.<sup>36</sup> We are less shocked by that claim—shocked!—when we consider that from a marketing point of view, Warner Brothers itself had early on sought to confuse its own corporate interests with geopolitics.<sup>37</sup> The surprise landing of the U.S. Armed Forces at Casablanca (and elsewhere on the Moroccan and Algerian coast) on 8 November 1942, the initial operation of the North African campaign, and the media it occasioned, was the catalyst for Warner Brothers to speed up production of their film and reschedule its premiere several months early—Thanksgiving 1942—to take advantage of the shifting war coverage. The ad campaign celebrated Warner Brothers' "split-second timing" in yet another moment when geographic space clearing was named as temporal break. The same ad boasted "the Army's Got Casablanca – and *So Have Warner Bros!*" under a photograph of a stopwatch.<sup>38</sup> And while the film enjoyed a successful general release in January 1943, defining the word "Casablanca" in American terms for millions of cinemagoers, Franklin Roosevelt was in Morocco for the Casablanca Conference, meeting on the side with Sultan Mohammed V, who represented a people still and throughout the war under a French-administered Protectorate. That meeting, according to the late Sultan's

son, King Hassan II, who himself ruled Morocco from 1961 until his death in 1999, was a particular inspiration for the independence movement. (Indeed, in 1943, a Moroccan organization calling itself the Roosevelt Club was founded to help Moroccan political elite meet senior members of the U.S. military and was active after WWII in the independence struggle.)<sup>39</sup> According to Hassan, who was then a fourteen-year-old *prince héritier*, Roosevelt as much as promised his father that collaboration with the Allied effort would have dividends. "Sire," F.D.R. reportedly told Mohammed V in 1943, "given the effort which Morocco—in so far as it is a protectorate—has agreed to give to defend the cause of peace, I can assure you that ten years from now your country will be independent."<sup>40</sup>

What seems clear now is the ways in which Roosevelt's implicit deal sets the stage for the postcolonial relations between Morocco and the U.S., shifting the paradigm of global power from the colonial model generally accepted in 1943 to something different. That Roosevelt does so while employing a familiar invocation of "racial time"—the injunction by the dominant group for the subordinate group *to wait* for one's rights, where FDR's grandiloquent promise of independence in a decade is also a deferral of the immediacy of the Moroccan claim—suggests the continuity of colonial ways of addressing the African that will persist in the postcolonial period. Prior to the November 1942 landings, in classified reports, U.S. intelligence services had predicted that after the war the Moroccan sultan would be ready "to throw himself in the arms of Mr. Roosevelt. Provided Mr. Roosevelt will accept him and his country."<sup>41</sup> The point is not only that the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was investigating such matters, but also that it understood national protection to be the stakes of global domination, while FDR was already imagining postcolonial forms of patronage. Similarly, as William Hoisington has shown, Resident-General Charles Noguès was concerned that anti-French sentiment among Moroccans left the field open for the establishment of a U.S. protectorate.

What *Casablanca* the film renders invisible is the way in which the strategic alliance of the United States and the French regime that controlled the colonies in North Africa—criticized by left leaning journalists during the war; justified by historian William Langer in 1947 as "Our Vichy Gamble"; yet named within *Casablanca* itself as "the beginning of a beautiful friendship"—was not only expeditious for war goals, but also redefines the meaning of the war and the postwar settlement itself.<sup>42</sup> Post-WWII articles in the U.S. popular press that reported on the return of ex-GIs to North Africa establishing businesses that would sell the products introduced to the local population during the North African

campaign of 1942-43 furnished such a redefinition explicitly. Under titles such as “Young Man, Go to Casablanca” and “We’re Invading North Africa Again,” the popular press redefined the earlier military campaign in corporate terms, now mobilized within cold war interests: the development of “underdeveloped regions” under Truman’s Point Four program.<sup>43</sup>

Although *Casablanca* (the film) is an especially tempting site for tracing a dialectical relationship between cultural production and foreign relations, for reasons I’ve begun to suggest, I don’t want to take for granted an easy relationship between cinematic text (including its marketing and reception, even in the case of this massively popular and influential film) and U.S. foreign and economic policy. Much work in American Studies leaves underexamined the supposed dialectical relationship between cultural production and what is called the political, whereby literary and cinematic texts either reflect the ideology of a period, or they help to inform it even while being informed by it. As an alternative, then, and as a parry in staging the encounter of American Studies and the postcolonial that I have described in the first section of this essay, let me outline some critical interruptions in reading *Casablanca* that might get us beyond such an impasse. First is to extend the critical interruption I’ve begun to develop above: paying attention to the only named “Moroccan” character in the film, “Abdul” the doorman (Dan Seymour), and the ways in which Sam and Abdul are not in conversation—in other words the diasporic confederation that isn’t allowed to form and the resulting invisibility of contacts and connections between African Americans and North Africans before and during WWII. To do this fully involves a close reading of certain scenes in the film, which I don’t have the space to develop here, and archival work that pursues the historical connections and contacts that did occur between these populations.<sup>44</sup> A second set of interruptions plays out some of the postdisciplinary work I have called for, moving beyond the linguistic and national boundaries to which American Studies work generally restricts itself. To do so is to follow the significant presence of *Casablanca*—a film made in a Warner Brothers lot, one whose screenplay erroneously places the coastal city of Casablanca in the desert (despite the map in the opening sequence) and employs no Moroccan characters, language, or actors—in Morocco itself.

Though anyone who has been to Casablanca would recognize the 1942 film’s ignorance of specificities of the place, reproductions of the film’s poster grace cinemas and cafés across Morocco.<sup>45</sup> In the large hall of the Cinéma Renaissance, on the Avenue Mohammed V in the capital Rabat, one watches projected films through the parentheses of two giant wall paintings: a towering reproduction of the *Casablanca* poster on one wall and,

on the facing wall, an image of the poster from Josef von Sternberg’s *Morocco* (1930), another film shot entirely in California. Whether the film being projected is from Hollywood, Morocco, or Egypt (the three most likely provenances for films screened at the Renaissance, with the lion’s share from Hollywood), the location of the cinema theater itself is marked as Moroccan, and Moroccan cinema might in turn seem to be marked as originating with these two Hollywood inventions of the place.<sup>46</sup> But rather than understanding the frequent reminders of *Casablanca* in Morocco as a culturally insecure search for external validation of the country’s place in (cinema) history further evidence of Hollywood’s hegemony we might begin to see Moroccan representations of *Casablanca* as critical interruptions in a variety of contexts. References to *Casablanca* and *Morocco* allow Moroccan cultural producers to refer to the classic period of cinema—which corresponds to the height of French colonial control of Morocco (1912-56)—without reference to the French and their own powerful representations of Moroccan culture.<sup>47</sup> In this sense, Hollywood representations of those years are obvious and distant fantasies and offer a less threatening site than those more elaborate and proximal French representations of Moroccan reality—in literature, history, anthropology, etc.—that Abdallah Laroui so trenchantly critiqued in his revisionist *History of the Maghrib*.<sup>48</sup> Paying attention to Moroccan responses to *Casablanca* is thus a fruitful site for students of postcolonial Moroccan cultural production because it triangulates the postcolonial Moroccan response to the powerful French legacy, and is its fuller context. Those responses affirm that postcolonial Moroccan cultural production—francophone or arabophone—from the start is operating in a global context in which the U.S. is deeply present as a liberating alternative and, simultaneously, as a new form of domination. If after leaving the Cinéma Renaissance, you travel south on Mohammed V, passing Rue Patrice Lumumba, you’ll eventually come to Avenue Franklin Roosevelt.

In the context of American Studies, cultural studies, and film and media studies, Moroccan representations of *Casablanca* interrupt both Western criticism of *Casablanca* and, more generally, a tacit sense of the overdetermined relationship of American representations of the foreign to the actual foreign (in this case, of *Casablanca* to Casablanca).<sup>49</sup> Attending to Moroccan representations of *Casablanca* disrupts the operating liberal assumption within much of American Studies and film studies work that the export of U.S. cultural production, especially popular culture, is unidirectional, unchallenged, and fully legible. I will confine the remainder of this essay to this particular set of critical interruptions. In what follows, to be clear, I will not be suggesting that



Moroccan recodings of *Casablanca* are acts of cultural resistance. As Brian Larkin has pointed out, addressing African studies and media studies, “concepts of resistance...often depend on a reductive binary distinction between oppression and resistance. The effect of this is that phenomena that cannot be neatly organized within that binary distinction then fall out of view.”<sup>50</sup> In his article, Larkin discusses the popularity of Bombay Hindi films in northern Nigeria in the 1990s and the influence of Indiana cinema on the very popular and controversial Hausa *littatafan soyayya* [love stories], a pamphlet-type market literature. In so doing, he highlights the circulation of media within and between non-Western countries and how such media flows disrupt “the dichotomies between West and non-West, coloniser and colonised, modernity and tradition,” instead creating what he calls “parallel modernities.” This is Larkin’s interruption of academic accounts of transnational media flows that assume a Western provenance for all media that circulates transnationally, an assumption that Larkin argues necessarily deprivileges those modernities that do not fit the model (Larkin’s project is in this sense akin to Hanchard’s elaboration of “Afro-Modernity” discussed above), and tends to ignore texts that do not fit their disciplinary models as well as the practices of actual audiences. While the case I am discussing involves Moroccan engagement with a Western cultural import—a particular American film—and not Moroccan popular interest in non-Western media forms and products (an important part of a larger understanding of Maghrebi popular culture), I refer to Larkin’s discussion to emphasize the ways in which accounts of parallel modernities may productively upset a dichotomous and dichotomizing understanding of transnational cultural flows. Following *Casablanca* to Casablanca, *Casablanca* takes on and sheds a variety of meanings, sometimes standing as alternative to French representations of Morocco thereby triangulating the references of postcolonial cultural production, sometimes as a synecdoche for American fantasies of the Maghreb (or Western fantasies in general), then again recoded as canonical film text in order to buttress a new vision of Moroccan contemporary society.

The cover illustration for a book by one of the most prolific Moroccan film scholars, Moulay Driss Jaïdi, is a starting point, perhaps an idiosyncratic one. On the cover of Jaïdi’s *Public(s) et Cinéma*, published in Rabat, a *Casablanca* film poster (in its French incarnation) dominates the page, somewhat confusingly, however, since the work itself is a detailed sociological study of audience makeup and attitudes toward cinema going among different demographic groups in the Moroccan city.<sup>51</sup> The relationship of the cover image to Jaïdi’s book would appear to be that the audiences surveyed in the

book itself were drawn from the city of Casablanca. But the shorthand of quoting *Casablanca* to refer simultaneously to cinema and to Casa, as Moroccans call the city (or Dar al-Baida, as it is known in Arabic), announces Jaïdi’s subtle interruption of the film’s lack of attention to the particularity of the city itself. The careful and elaborate attention paid in Jaïdi’s book to Casablanca as cinematic city, as a city of cinema going, with its charts and careful distinctions between which groups in Casablanca watch which foreign films and which watch Moroccan films, seems to run against the complete lack of Moroccan particularity signified by *Casablanca*. One wonders: does the careful attention to Casablancon cinema-goers in the book itself silently critique the lack of attention to Moroccans at all in *Casablanca*?

If the choice of an image for Jaïdi’s cover further suggests some anxiety about *Casablanca*’s power to define contemporary Casa to the rest of the world, those who live in Morocco and have any contact with the tourism industry—the largest or second largest source of foreign income in the 1980s and 90s—are well aware of the Western-created fantasies that most international tourists (at least those from Europe, the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and Japan) bring with them.<sup>52</sup> Rather than resist these stereotypes, the Moroccan tourism industry has generally adopted the strategy of performing the stereotypes and profiting off the performance.<sup>53</sup> By countless accounts in U.S. and European newspapers, business travelers and tourists from around the world come to Casa looking for *Casablanca*, only to be frustrated. Sometime in the mid-1980s, the Casablanca Hyatt Regency decided to profit from that frustration, and opened “Bar Casablanca,” a piano bar that loosely recreates the ambiance of the film and is decorated with film stills and poster reproductions from *Casablanca* and staffed by Moroccans wearing Bogartesque trench coats and fedoras and 1940s French colonial uniforms.<sup>54</sup> A piano player plays the obvious song on request. Not only does the bar profit from the foreign business travelers who come looking for “Rick’s Café Américain” from the film, satisfying the need they have—and will satisfy nowhere else in the city—to find “the real” behind the fiction, but the staffing of the bar also interrupts, retroactively, and recodes the film itself. This is partially done by satirizing Warner Brothers’ casting; here Moroccans play *all* the roles. If Moroccans play Bogart, they also play the roles of Renault and the French police; the pianist has been a Lebanese, an Egyptian, and an African American, at various times and for various tenures. And as I’ve suggested above, Warner Bros.’ refusal to pay attention to the Moroccan population either in plot or casting is the aversion of a dangerous alliance in the film, one not addressed in the huge body of film criticism on *Casablanca*, which has the ef-

fect of silencing by erasing from the historical archive the alliance of African American with North African.<sup>55</sup> Bar Casablanca, in which the piano player is the focal point, doesn't let us forget that alliance. Here in Bar Casablanca the frequent repetition of the song "As Time Goes By," rather than an example of postmodern timelessness and placelessness, is the Moroccan site's continual interruption of the filmic meaning of the song where it signified Sam's inability to dispense with racial time. It is made here newly dynamic.

The further interruption of the Bar Casablanca is that it relocates the site represented by *Casablanca* from a U.S. narrative of WWII imagined from afar (or, alternatively, depending on one's position, from the nether world of Hollywood nostalgia) to the geographically located, postcolonial Casablanca. This happens daily when tourists and visitors enter the bar and is further propagated by occasional travel articles in the foreign press and by foreign travel guidebooks. Occasionally, Bar Casablanca reaches out itself: in November 1992, on the fiftieth anniversary of the film (and of the Operation Torch landings), the Casablanca Hyatt held a large party, flying from London the winner of a trivia contest, and further identifying itself as the "real" location of the film. The Moroccan tourism industry, which after the 1991 Gulf War dropped off precipitously and remained low for several years despite the fact that Moroccan troops joined the U.S.-led alliance against Iraq, itself knows that such identification is important. As Abderrahim Daoudi, Casablanca's then-director of tourism, said in 1992: "There's no similarity; the movie was filmed entirely in a studio. But it had an enormous impact. Every day, somewhere in the world, it's shown.... It's an excellent publicity ad."<sup>56</sup> A decade later, a Moroccan beer company is latching onto the mystique with Casablanca Beer; its motto: "the legendary beer from the legendary city." Casa itself was not of course legendary before 1942; it is an elaborate French construction of the early twentieth century, as Gwendolyn Wright has shown, and made "legendary" by the American film.<sup>57</sup> The Moroccan beer company invents a tradition by piggybacking on an American one.

If Bar Casablanca relocates *Casablanca* to Casablanca, the Moroccan critical interruption is yet more complex when 'Abd al-Qader Laqt'a brings the Bar Casablanca into his feature-length film, *al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida* (Love in Casablanca).<sup>58</sup> In an important scene, Laqt'a invokes the 1942 film and reorients its plot and power for his own purposes. His critical interruption of the Hollywood film reveals its presence in postcolonial Moroccan filmmaking and the ways in which a Moroccan director can disorient an American understanding of *Casablanca*. It is in this latter regard a major creative recoding of a major work of American culture, yet one

that is virtually unknown in the U.S., including in film studies and cultural studies discussions of *Casablanca*. Yet Laqt'a is ultimately not (primarily) interested in interrupting American understandings of the film, though my discussion of his film in this essay implicates him in that process. I'm not suggesting that Laqt'a doesn't have extra-Moroccan aspirations for his films; indeed a recent film of his has been shown in a couple of international film festivals. But in *Al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida*, his first feature length film, Laqt'a incorporates *Casablanca* within a film directed at a Moroccan audience. His recoding of *Casablanca* is in the creative service of an argument about contemporary Moroccan culture.

Part of the local (i.e. national) dimensions of Laqt'a's project here emerges from the mechanics of distribution of Moroccan film. Laqt'a's choice to make the film in the Moroccan dialect of Arabic inhibits it from "traveling" fluently across the Arab world, on the one hand, or to Europe on the other.<sup>59</sup> Egyptian Arabic, conversely, travels much more easily across the Arab world and the Arab diaspora; Laqt'a might also have made the film in French had he been primarily interested in disrupting Western imagination of *Casablanca*. *Al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida* is not officially distributed outside of Morocco. Though it is well known in Morocco, it isn't readily available inside the country due to the ways in which Moroccan video clubs and film distribution outlets operate; it is much easier to purchase a Hong Kong action film, an Egyptian film, or a dubbed copy of an American film in a Moroccan video store than a copy of a Moroccan film. *Al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida* occasionally plays on 2M, a Moroccan television station. The copy of the film I viewed was a duplication of a duplication of a tape made from Moroccan television. Still, circulating in such fashion and via its repeated showings on 2M, the film exhibits a significant presence in the media culture of Morocco.

In the film, Seloua (Mouna Fettou) is a young woman caught between two men. Trying to extricate herself from an affair with an older lover, Jalil, she becomes involved with a young photographer, Najib. In one of the many scenes filmed in readily recognizable Casablanca locations, Seloua and Najib walk into the Bar Casablanca and sit down to have a drink. The camera focuses on a poster from *Casablanca* hanging on the wall, then pans down to the couple. Najib asks Seloua if she's seen the film; Seloua says no. Najib recounts the film's basic plot, but in a way that serves both Najib's purposes and *al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida*'s concerns. "It's a bit old, from about the 50s," Najib says, speaking in Moroccan *darja* (colloquial Moroccan Arabic), clearing space for his own version of the American film via a temporal displacement, relocating the Hollywood film by a decade.<sup>60</sup> He's seen it in a ciné-club, he says, a

comment which naturalizes the fact of viewing the American film as something typically Moroccan. "It's the story of a woman who loves two men," Najib says. Seloua looks down, feeling the immediacy and relevance of the plot to her own situation. "She finds herself in a dilemma," Najib goes on, "whether to go back to her husband or with her lover." Seloua, bothered, embarrassed, and intrigued, suggests taking a closer look at the film stills mounted on the wall. The camera cuts to film stills posted on the wall, lingers over them, and then cuts back to a shot of the couple approaching the photographs. The film thus distinguishes its own relationship to *Casablanca* from that of the characters in the scene; *Casablanca* is being used doubly. That Najib's unfamiliar synopsis of the film is idiosyncratic and revolves around his own interests is confirmed by the stills on the wall, which include a portrait of Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman as Rick and Ilsa and representations of a couple of other scenes, but which don't depict Victor Laszlo (Paul Henreid), Ilsa's husband in *Casablanca*. "A shame," Najib says, turning the lack of a still of Laszlo to his advantage, "that the husband isn't here." Seloua asks about the resolution of the woman's problem. "In the American cinema," Najib explains by way of an answer, "the woman goes back to her husband, rather than follow her lover. The cinema has to preserve traditions in order to avoid problems with the censor." He steps away to see if he can get the piano player to perform music from the film, and Seloua regards the stills alone. As she focuses her attention on a headshot of Bogart, she hallucinates and imagines the visage of Jalil peering between the photos, as if reflected in the glass from a position behind her. Startled, she glances over her shoulder; seeing no one, she looks back at the photos. Again, Jalil's face appears. Visually, Jalil's face overlaps Rick's (Bogart's), and the viewer is presented with a palimpsest of images from *al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida* and *Casablanca*, where the older film is the background upon which the Moroccan film plays. This visual palimpsest figures and orders the narrative palimpsest that Laqt'a's dialogue stages.

If the story told in *al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida* about *Casablanca* seems a misreading of the American film, it is clearly a productive one for Laqt'a. In this, the director's first feature length film, the older film is summoned up as support for the director's plot and his daring and controversial representation of a sexually liberated young Moroccan woman. That Laqt'a brings *Casablanca* into his own film might suggest his own sense of belatedness, or an anxiety of influence in making a film set in *Casablanca* after *Casablanca*. If so, we might see Laqt'a as responding to that anxiety productively through an act of creative misprision, with the visual palimpsest of Jalil's and Rick's faces representing dramatically a textual

haunting. Whether or not we accept a psychoanalytic anxiety of influence, however, or imagine a different paradigm of quoting/recoding, Laqt'a's retelling of *Casablanca* is a significant creative act. It is clear in Laqt'a's recoding of *Casablanca*, which recasts the American film as pertaining to an older and outdated cultural moment, that the local and contemporary referent is the more immediate concern. In this sense, in the creative imagination of the film, *al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida* pertains to a dynamic and modern Moroccan culture and *Casablanca* to an American one stuck in moribund traditions. Moroccan audiences who view *Casablanca* after *al-Hubb al-Dar al-Baida*, or who visit Bar *Casablanca* for that matter, cannot help but view the earlier text(s) through the lens of the later film. This itself is a key interruption of both Moroccan and American national narratives and rewrites contemporary Morocco as young, vibrant, and modern, and the U.S. as antiquated and outmoded.

Laqt'a and his films have been controversial within Morocco because of their frank treatment of sexuality and their uncompromising look at the less appealing side of *Casablanca* life. *Casablanca*—his version of *Casablanca*—lends Laqt'a narrative authority to make his controversial films about *Casablanca*, both because of the American film's international cultural capital and Laqt'a's own ability to manipulate its plot/meaning.<sup>61</sup> Further, the American film provides him with a defense for refusing to conform to Moroccan cultural traditions, in a manipulation that is yet a further interruption of American accounts of American culture. When Najib tells Seloua that the happy resolution of *Casablanca* is forbidden by American cinema's requirement to stick within "traditions" else be censored, he both recounts a truth about U.S. cinema from its classic period and interrupts American accounts of the U.S. as liberal and modern. Najib employs the word *taqalid*, a word that translates as "mores" or "traditions," and one that implies "blind adoption, unquestioning following."<sup>62</sup> It is of course well known in the U.S. that Hollywood has always operated under various production codes, particularly enforced during WWII.<sup>63</sup> But in this scene of *al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida*, the image presented of American cinema is of an institution bound blindly to "tradition," and of a country that censors that which errs from conservative morality. American society and cinema is imagined in the dialogue as more conservative than that of contemporary Morocco, a place where such a film might be made. American self-presentation in the international scene, particularly in comparison to a Muslim Arab country, is surely bucked by this marvelous scene. And because I insist on incorporating Laqt'a's text into American cultural and film studies accounts of *Casablanca* and of American Studies accounts of U.S. cultural

production that represents the foreign, Laqṭ'a's interruption of *Casablanca* becomes an interruption of American exceptionalism, both as national narrative and academic practice. American exceptionalism, as I have been arguing, is itself another name for American Studies until it has had its preposterous encounter with the postcolonial.

### The End of the Beginning

The danger of bringing a globalized American Studies into the postcolonial studies conversation is that the latter will be colonized by the former, in a way that mirrors the neocolonial apparatus of U.S. empire and that will further limit attention to local languages and peripheral cultural formations that challenge the nation form buttressed silently within globalization. Jenny Sharpe, whom I invoked at the start of this essay, enunciates the problem: "Although characterizing America as 'postcolonial' is intended to displace the center/periphery binarism belonging to colonial systems of meaning, its effect has been to reconstitute the margins in the metropolitan center."<sup>64</sup> C. Richard King, surveying the rejection of the inclusion of the U.S. in postcolonial studies by certain eminent critics, calls for a strategic and provisional usage of the terminology and theories of postcoloniality, one that doesn't abandon the "uneasiness associated with theorizing and examining postcoloniality in American culture."<sup>65</sup> While I am in agreement with both of these critics, I hope it is also clear that I am not suggesting that the U.S. is "postcolonial" at all; rather that it participates deeply in the postcolonial context. The comparative, interdisciplinary work I am suggesting is of course difficult, but in its absence U.S.-based scholars who bring together postcolonial studies and American Studies can only repeat the nationalist logic of the early cold war period and, I believe, fall into the traps to which King and Sharpe alert us.

The preposterousness of the U.S. in postcolonial studies is a recognition that in the post-1941 period there are simultaneous impulses on the part of U.S. cultural producers and members of the state department and government apparatus toward an affinity with decolonizing nations based on a shared sense of freedom from former colonial domination (no doubt learned through the major texts of the nineteenth century, such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, which exhibit a tension with European literature and cultural forms) and the strong impulse toward neocolonial domination, repetition-with-a-difference of the European colonial empire. It is important to keep the pre- (which is also a neo-) and the post- simultaneously in mind here in order not to fall into the trap of proclaiming an exceptionalist

U.S. form of imperialism (except that all historical cases and trajectories are exceptional in some way). Critical preposterousness, in this case, allows us to move toward an engagement with the institutions that the current state of emergency requires of us. And before you write off such a project as preposterous, let me remind you that the antonym to "preposterous" Microsoft Word 7.0 provides—disciplined again by the right click button so near at hand—is "sensible." Will interruption and critical preposterousness allow us to escape the "common sense" of our moment?

### NOTES

Some of the ideas presented in the first section of this essay were worked through in talks delivered during 2002 at Columbia University, UC Berkeley, a Northwestern School of Communication summer institute on media and globalization, and the MLA meeting in New York. I'd like to thank Jonathan Arac, David Damrosch, Dilip Gaonkar, Jay Grossman, Dorothy Hale, Eric Naiman, Harsha Ram, and Gayatri Spivak for invitations to speak and/or thought provoking questions and comments. My gratitude to Kate Baldwin, Brian Larkin, Sadik Rddad, and the journal's outside reader for helpful comments on the essay. I am grateful to Rebecca Saunders for her detailed and thoughtful editorial comments and suggestions.

<sup>1</sup>Abd al-Rahman Munif, *Cities of Salt*, trans. Peter Theroux (New York: Vintage, 1989), 287.

<sup>2</sup>In using the adjective "American" rather than the more accurate "U.S." to describe this field, I am following the major association of the field—the American Studies Association (ASA; it is revealing that there seems never to be confusion with the other major association that uses the same acronym, the African Studies Association)—as well as most academic departments and programs. I capitalize "Studies" in order to signal a resistance to the naturalization of the adjective "American." When I use the noun "Americanist," I am also following usage within the ASA and English and history departments. Tensions in the naming of the field are themselves revealing about the difficulty of evading its nationalist foundational logic. Despite the fact that some of the most important and theoretically useful work emerging from the field has engaged the question of the United States' southern borders and comparative American cultures and in spite of occasional debates within the ASA about changing the name of the association, the name still stands. For a less heralded study that reminds American Studies of Canada and makes an argument about the border as contact zone and "transnational 'home'" for leftist thinkers, see Caren Irr, *The Suburb of Dissent: Cultural Politics in the United States and Canada during the 1930s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>3</sup>"Imperialism has been simultaneously formative and disavowed in the foundational discourse of American studies." Amy Kaplan, "Left Alone with America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 5. Among the projects I am referring to are Donald Pease's New Americanist

series published by Duke University Press; several special issues of *boundary 2* edited by Pease; and the annual summer institutes on American Studies at Dartmouth College directed by Pease and Robyn Wiegman. See also a special issue of *Cultural Critique* edited by Robyn Wiegman, "The Futures of American Studies," *Cultural Critique* 40 (1998). In C. Richard King's edited collection, *Postcolonial America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), Rachel Buff's essay "Internal Frontiers, Transnational Politics, 1945-54: Im/Migration Policy as World Domination," is most exciting in its activation of archival work. Buff juxtaposes U.S. immigration and federal Indian policy in the early cold war and constructs an argument about U.S. hegemony that accounts for the diverse (and related) movements across national and tribal borders. In contrasting the restrictions on immigration imposed by a conservative Congress in 1954 (the McCarran-Walter Act) and a liberalized policy that allowed third world workers to enter the U.S. (the Bracero Program, 1946-64), she concludes that U.S. policies of the post-war period "sort immigrants into 'political' and 'economic' groups consonant with the United States' political and economic alliances in the post-war international arena." During the same period, the so-called "Termination policy" with regard to treaties with American Indians and a new interest and permissiveness toward development in native lands of the American West activated the vocabulary of civil rights against claims of native organizations. Elena Glasberg, "On the Road with Chrysler: From Nation to Virtual Empire," in *Postcolonial America*, stages an encounter of American Studies and postcolonial theory and outlines a reading of a virtual Antarctica presented in a 1994 Chrysler ad that demonstrates the "contradictions and complicities between transnational virtual empires and national-colonialist formations" (158).

<sup>4</sup>Jenny Sharpe, "Is the United States Postcolonial? Transnationalism, Immigration, and Race," *Diaspora* 4:2 (1995): 181-200. Sharpe's essay is also in King's collection, where it stands as a formative text in the crossover.

<sup>5</sup>Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 59.

<sup>6</sup>See my "Yankee Pashas and Buried Women: Containing Abundance in 1950s Hollywood Orientalism," *Film & History* 31:2 (2001): 13-24, which argues that Hollywood musicals and epics set in North Africa and the Middle East were not merely escapist entertainments, but in fact constitute a key part of early cold war rhetoric. The article also advances a hypothesis about the relationship of the cold war to the Gulf War and resulting attitudes toward the Arab world and its diaspora in the U.S.

<sup>7</sup>For an argument about representations of the foreigner in ideas about the nation and its foundation, see Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Honig's excellent work of political theory focuses on the foreigner within the national space (as founder, as immigrant, as citizen) rather than the foreign space abroad.

<sup>8</sup>The exception to this complaint is of course the field of Latina/o studies, which, not coincidentally, has for some time been productively concerned with theoretical questions of borders, especially linguistic and national. See Gloria

Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Spinners/Aunt Lute, 1987); and José David Saldívar, *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>9</sup>Paul Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 263. Giles's interest in virtualization as a critical process, emphasizes "reflection and estrangement" and a comparative angle of vision (in his case, the U.S. and Great Britain) by which to denaturalize the assumptions framing cultural narratives of the U.S. and "how its own indigenous representations of the 'natural' tend to revolve tautologously, reinforcing themselves without reference to anything outside their own charmed circle" (2). See also Rebecca Saunders's trenchant critique of Stanley Fish's understanding of text and context, a theory of reading that relies on a public "purified" of foreigners and that leads away from the denaturalization of the text by alternative contexts. Rebecca Saunders, "The Agony and the Allegory: The Concept of the Foreign, the Language of Apartheid, and the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee," *Cultural Critique* 47 (Winter 2001): 215-64, esp. 221-23.

<sup>10</sup>There are of course many accounts of the emergence of the field of postcolonial studies. For a useful overview, see Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, "At the Margins of Postcolonial Studies" (1995), reprinted in *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 3-23.

<sup>11</sup>My essay "Fanon's *al-Jaz'a'ir*, or Algeria translated," *Parallax* 8:2 (April-June 2002): 99-115, examines Frantz Fanon's Algerian writings and the ways in which Fanon incorporates Arabic words and etymologies into his French prose, a process that both destabilizes French as a national language and performs the disappearance of the local; and which underlines his more explicit argument about revolutionary communication. In so doing, I address the relationship of Fanon's texts on the Algerian struggle for independence to processes of globalization of language, both the global French that Fanon imagined/staged and the global English that he witnessed emerging and to which he testified.

<sup>12</sup>Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); and her essay "The Naming of Yale College: British Imperialism and American Higher Education," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Kaplan and Pease, offer major examples of the interest in excavating the colonial connections of literary field of study and their implications on U.S. institutions. See also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Resident Alien," in *Relocating Postcolonialism*, ed. David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson (Malden: Blackwell, 2002).

<sup>13</sup>Giles is adapting a phrase coined by Nina Baym in 1981 to characterize classic American authors valorized by Lionel Trilling and the Americanist literary establishment at the time. Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors," *American Quarterly* 33:2 (1981), 129. For accounts of the founding and history of the field of American Studies, see Sigmund Diamond, "The American Studies Program at Yale: *Lux, Veritas, Pecunia*," *Prospects* 16 (1991): 41-55; Gene Wise, "'Paradigm

Dramas' in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement," *American Quarterly* 31:3 (1979), 293-337; Michael Denning, "The Special American Conditions': Marxism and American Studies," *American Quarterly* 38:3 (1986): 356-80. See also Richard Ohmann, "English and the Cold War," in Noam Chomsky, et al., *The Cold War & the University* (NY: The New Press, 1997). "Internal critique" is Sharpe's phrase regarding Said, in distinguishing the field of postcolonial studies from minority studies in U.S. English departments, despite sometimes shared texts. Timothy Brennan very usefully places Said's *Orientalism* in the post-Vietnam moment, marked for Brennan by the "powerless prophetic anarchism" of beat poetry and the counterculture, the "plaintive radical liberalism" of C. Wright Mills, and "reputable, but slandered traditions of American communism, made toothless by Cold War prejudices." Brennan argues that with *Orientalism*, Said was able to "manage an American critique that fell into none of these categories while drawing on all of them. Its intellectual importance was a matter of its positional freshness, not only its geopolitical or racial location." Timothy Brennan, "The Illusion of a Future: *Orientalism* as Traveling Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 26:3 (Spring 2000), 577.

<sup>14</sup>Paul Bové highlights the importance of Said's work as institutional critique and analysis of the U.S. state: "Said's writing is very much an analysis of the American deployment of power in the world and, as such, of the American institutional arrangements for producing 'knowledge'—which in this case consists merely in systematic representations guided by the interests of its producers." Despite Said's crucial intervention—or perhaps because of the ways it unsettles assumptions of an easy relationship between state and civil society so central to and so unexamined by American Studies work, which according to Bové "tends to make all intellectual work into a commitment to will alone, into a politics of truth defined totally by representative and representational categories of struggle"—Bové sees Said's work as not embraced by American Studies. Paul A. Bové, "Can American Studies Be Area Studies?" in *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 206-30. Brennan, "The Illusion of a Future," makes the point that from the time he composed *Orientalism* Said was more interested in the question of institutions than of discourse.

<sup>15</sup>For a summary of the propaganda films, see Jane Perlez, "Muslim-as-Apple-Pie Videos are Greeted with Skepticism," *New York Times*, 30 October 2002, A1. Radio Sawa and some Arab responses are reported in Felicity Barringer, "U.S. Messages to Arab Youth, Wrapped in Song," *New York Times*, 17 June 2002, A8.

<sup>16</sup>Timothy Brennan made his comments during his presentation at the "Postcolonial Studies and Beyond" conference held at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, April 2002.

<sup>17</sup>Lazarus made his comments during his presentation at the "Postcolonial Studies and Beyond" conference held at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, April 2002.

<sup>18</sup>Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or the Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 77 n. 3. The context of Derrida's comment is his

discussion of the language of the other and the "promised sentence," which I find useful in my project of unsettling disciplinary boundaries with comparative work and an attention to the language of the other. My "Fanon's *al-Jaza'ir*, or Algeria translated" incorporates a brief discussion of the Derrida text.

<sup>19</sup>For the context of Spivak's phrase, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic*, ed. Sarah Harasym (NY: Routledge, 1990), 107.

<sup>20</sup>Donald Pease, "National Narratives, Postnational Narration," *Modern Fiction Studies* 43, no. 1 (1997), 1-23. See also Ronald A. T. Judy, "On the Politics of Global Language, or Unfungible Local Value," *boundary 2* 24:2 (1997), 101-43.

<sup>21</sup>Bové, "Can American Studies Be Area Studies?" provides an extended critique of American Studies scholarship and paradigms; he elaborates the intellectual work that Area Studies does for the state and outlines the logical and practical impossibility of American Studies doing such work. Immanuel Wallerstein has argued that one of the unintended consequences of cold war area studies was that many U.S. faculty were "radicalized, politically and intellectually, by the contact with the area." Wallerstein, "The Unintended Consequences of Cold War Area Studies," *The Cold War & the University* (NY: The New Press, 1997), 227.

<sup>22</sup>See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon, 1995). See Werner Sollors, ed., *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature* (NY: New York University Press, 1998); and Marc Shell and Werner Sollors, eds., *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: A Reader of Original Texts with English Translations* (NY: New York University Press, 2000). On global Englishes, see especially Ronald A.T. Judy, "Some Notes on the Status of Global English in Tunisia," *boundary 2* 26:2 (1999): 3-29.

<sup>23</sup>Thus the conservative function of U.S. multiculturalism when it remains domestically bound, when it insists on English as the only language of U.S. literature, and when it keeps Latino and Asian populations represented by a text or two on the Am. lit. syllabus, or a single faculty member added on to the faculty by the administration in response to student pressure. On the last point, see Richard H. Okada, "Areas, Disciplines, and Ethnicity," in *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 190-205.

<sup>24</sup>Lawrence Buell, "Postcolonial Anxiety in Classic U.S. Literature," *American Literary History* 4, no. 3 (fall 1992): 411-42; a revised version, in which Buell responds to some of his critics, appears in Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, eds., *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 196-219. Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism,'" *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 84-98.

<sup>25</sup>Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). See also Hamid Naficy, *The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian Television in Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

<sup>26</sup>I do not mean to suggest that this temporal/spatial ma-

nipulation is unique to U.S. cultural representations of the foreign or originates with WWII, even if Hollywood cinematic representations of the foreign are especially engaged in this sort of manipulation. (The linguistic manipulation is a bit more nuanced and does shift in the post-WWII period in part because of the globalization of technologies such as cinema, TV and the so-called Information Superhighway.) In her fine discussion of the concept of the foreign(er) within globalization, Rebecca Saunders reminds us of the temporal disparities that mark European modernism and modernity: “[I]n this temporalized geography of modernity, to be foreign means to be backward, dependent, immobilized in time past.” For Saunders, what changes within globalization is that the “global foreigner” becomes marked as representing “pathological stability within, and intractable obstacle to, global imperatives of mobility and speed.” Saunders, “Uncanny Presence: the Foreigner at the Gate of Globalization,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 21:2 (2001), 91.

<sup>27</sup>Henry Luce, *The American Century* (NY: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941), 24.

<sup>28</sup>This is a somewhat different sense of “time-lag” than that propounded by Homi Bhabha in his essay “The Post-colonial and the Postmodern,” which I discuss in note 49 below.

<sup>29</sup>“American internationalism...will take shape,” Luce predicts, “by imagination.” He goes on: “As America enters dynamically upon the world scene, we need most of all to seek and to bring forth a vision of America as a world power which is authentically American and which can inspire us to live and work and fight with vigor and enthusiasm.” Luce, *The American Century*, 35.

<sup>30</sup>Major studies of *Casablanca* include Robert Ray, *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Film: 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), with a long chapter on *Casablanca*, explores film language and the film’s fusion of Western and romance genres; Aljean Harmetz, *Round Up the Usual Suspects: The Making of Casablanca—Bogart, Bergman, and World War II* (New York: Hyperion, 1992) places the production details in their historical moment and provides much useful information; Leslie Fiedler’s “Come Back to the Raft Ag’in, Huck Honey,” in *An End to Innocence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955) is a classic reading; Robert Gooding-Williams, “Black Cupids, White Desires: Reading the Recoding of Racial Difference in *Casablanca*,” *The Black Columbiad: Defining Moments in African American Literature and Culture*, ed. Werner Sollors and Maria Diedrich (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), a reading of racialized coding of desire and difference in *Casablanca*, is a major and crucial critical intervention that opened up readings of the film.

<sup>31</sup>Howard Koch, *Casablanca: Script and Legend* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1973), 94. My use of the word “hyper-canonical” alludes to Jonathan Arac’s brilliant study of Huckleberry Finn and its fate within cold war U.S. literary studies, whereby the more troubling and persistent problems of the present were located in the literature of the previous century, celebrated, and thereby imagined resolved. See Arac, “Criticism between Opposition and Counterpoint,” *boundary 2* 25:2 (Summer 1998) special issue “Edward W. Said,” ed. Paul A.

Bové, 55-69. See also Gooding-Williams, “Black Cupids, White Desires.”

<sup>32</sup>Michael Hanchard, “Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora,” *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 253. Hanchard’s delineation of what he calls Afro-Modernity—“the selective incorporation of technologies, discourses, and institutions of the modern West within the cultural and political practices of African-derived people to create a form of relatively autonomous modernity distinct from its counterparts of Western Europe and North America”—is consonant with the moves I make in following *Casablanca* to Casablanca below. In that regard, I would especially like to invoke Hanchard’s sense that Afro-Modernity “is no mere mimicry of Western modernity but an innovation upon its precepts, forces, and features” (247).

<sup>33</sup>The association of Morocco—and Sam via too close an identification—with stopped clocks resonates with earlier American Orientalist representations of the Maghreb. See my discussion of Edith Wharton’s association of stopped clocks with national immaturity in her 1920 travelogue *In Morocco*, an association that I argue Wharton brings into *The Age of Innocence* (1920) and its critique of U.S. political isolationism and gender segregation. Brian T. Edwards, “The Well-Built Wall of Culture: Old New York and Its Harems,” *The Age of Innocence (Norton Critical Edition)*, ed. Candace Waid (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 482-506.

<sup>34</sup>See, for example, John Pittman, “Africa Against the Axis,” *The Negro Quarterly* 1:3 (fall 1942); and Kweku Attah Gardiner, “African Opinion and World Peace,” *The Negro Quarterly* 1:4 (Winter-Spring 1943). The former article noted the relevance of U.S. wartime involvement in Africa to African American concerns and noted that the African American press was “extremely alert to African questions.” The latter article, written by a contributor identified as a native of Gold Coast resident in the U.S. for eight months, took the mainstream U.S. press to task for ignoring the people of North Africa in coverage of the North African campaign and for refusing to discuss the workings of colonialism in Africa or to poll African opinion about the war in Africa.

<sup>35</sup>The Atlantic Charter declared U.S. “respect [for] the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live.” In March 1948, the U.S. Department of State Policy Planning Staff referred—in a memorandum then classified as “Top Secret”—to the spreading of these documents among the “native inhabitants” as “propaganda” meant “to create a favorable atmosphere for our forces” and noted that such wartime activity was now “in part responsible for the recent spur to North Africa[n] nationalism and for the present unrest in the area.” *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1948, vol. 3, Western Europe (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974), 684.

<sup>36</sup>With characteristic brilliance, Groucho Marx suggested his entity’s control of the word “brothers” and ended the stand-off. Groucho Marx, *The Groucho Letters: Letters from and to Groucho Marx* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1967).

<sup>37</sup>I am layering allusions in this sentence in order to suggest a contemporary analogue. The allusions are of course to Captain Louis Renault (Claude Rains) in *Casablanca* and to

White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card's eerie statement regarding the Bush administration's aggressive advocacy of an invasion of Iraq only after Labor Day, 2002, even though the decision had been made earlier in the summer—"from a marketing point of view, you don't introduce new products in August." Elisabeth Bumiller, "Bush Aides Set Strategy to Sell Policy on Iraq," *New York Times*, 7 September 2002, A1, A6.

<sup>38</sup>Italics in the original. For a reproduction of the ad, see Harmetz, *Round Up the Usual Suspects*, 265.

<sup>39</sup>C.R. Pennell, *Morocco since 1830: A History* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 263.

<sup>40</sup>My translation of "Étant donné, sire, l'effort que le Maroc a consenti, en tant qu'État protégé, pour défendre la cause de la paix, je peux vous assurer que d'ici dix ans votre pays sera indépendant." Hassan II, *La mémoire d'un roi: Entretiens avec Eric Laurent* (Paris: Plon, 1993), 18.

<sup>41</sup>U.S. Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch, *Morocco* (Washington, D.C., 1942), quoted in William A. Hoisington, Jr., *The Casablanca Connection: French Colonial Policy, 1936-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 284 n. 73. Hoisington mentions discussions between Sultan Mohammed V and other top Moroccan leaders of "ending the French protectorate and creating some joint protectorate or inter-Allied mandate in which the United States and Britain would share authority with France and Spain."

<sup>42</sup>In a foreword to his war correspondence, dated August 1943, Kenneth Crawford addressed this relationship. For "liberals of all shades," according to Crawford, the U.S. government's collusion with French colonial bureaucracy was "disillusioning and distressing," and part of "a series of fatal moral compromises": "Some of them argued that, in winning the battle for North Africa, we had lost the moral values for which the war was being fought." Kenneth G. Crawford, *Report on North Africa* (NY: Farrar & Rinehart, 1943). For discussion of William Langer's *Our Vichy Gamble* (NY: Knopf, 1947), see Irwin M. Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945-1954* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>43</sup>Richard Toledano, "Young Man, Go to Casablanca," *Harper's Magazine* (September 1948). Demaree Bess, "We're Invading North Africa Again," *Saturday Evening Post* (18 June 1949). Point Four was an extension of the Marshall Plan.

<sup>44</sup>I extend my reading of *Casablanca* in these directions and discuss the work of McKay, Baker and Fauset in my forthcoming book *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb*.

<sup>45</sup>Harmetz points out that the *Casablanca* production team borrowed sets from *The Desert Song* (the Warner Brothers remake of the 1929 Warner Bros. film by the same title), which had just finished shooting before *Casablanca's* shooting began. According to Frank Miller's *Casablanca: As Time Goes By* (Atlanta: Turner, 1992), a commemorative edition, Warner Bros.' research department did see photographs of French colonial architecture (noted by Otero-Pailos).

<sup>46</sup>For a compelling ethnography of cinema-going in northern Nigeria that theorizes the cinema house's particularity, and emphasizes the locatedness of cinema-watching, see Brian Larkin, "Theaters of the Profane: Cinema and Colonial Ur-

banism," *Visual Anthropology Review* 14:2 (1998-99): 46-62.

<sup>47</sup>See Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), particularly the chapter "Governing Morocco."

<sup>48</sup>Abdallah Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

<sup>49</sup>Considerations of *Casablanca's* relationship to the city are common in travel guides and the popular press, where a Nexis search turns up many short travel articles over the last couple of decades by Americans gone searching for *Casablanca* in Casablanca. A repetition of this pattern occurs more subtly in academic considerations of *Casablanca* that are entranced by the prospect of finding "postmodern" repetitions of *Casablanca* in Casablanca. Jorge Otero-Pailos begins an article on French colonial architecture and Hollywood cinema set building with a reference to the Casablanca Hyatt, which he claims "could be anywhere in the world." He misses any sense of Moroccan particularity to the Moroccan quoting of the hypercanonical film. The traveler in the narrative with which Otero-Pailos begins his article is "probably an American," who looks intently at a "young professional woman...sipping a Martini," while a bartender, whose nationality is not named, "quietly smiles" at the American's stare. The placelessness of this "postmodern" place is made possible by the critic's aversion of his eye from the Moroccan staff of the bar; the piano player to whom journalists invariably refer is replaced in this article by an "almost imperceptible...PA system" playing "As Time Goes By." Thus, Otero-Pailos unwittingly replicates the racialized logic of *Casablanca's* structuring love triangle, the smiling Moroccan bartender now in the place of the desexualized "cupid" Sam (see Gooding-Williams, "Black Cupids, White Desires," for a reading of Sam as cupid). Jorge Otero-Pailos, "Casablanca's Régime: The Shifting Aesthetics of Political Technologies (1907-1943)," *Postmodern Culture* 8:2 (1998). Homi Bhabha, in his essay "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern," similarly confuses the city of Casablanca with the logic of the film, though Bhabha equates "Casablanca" (inconsistently italicized) with a Western conceptualization of fixed time. In a discussion of structures of temporality, Bhabha distinguishes between the temporality of Tangier and the fixity of time in Casablanca. What becomes clear is that Tangier for Bhabha is equated with Barthes's invocation of the city in *The Pleasure of the Text* and Casablanca with the line of dialogue "Play It Again, Sam" (famously not in the film) and the lyrics of "As Time Goes By" (written by Herman Hupfeld in 1931 for a Broadway play, recorded in the thirties by Rudy Vallee, but made famous by Dooley Wilson's rendition in *Casablanca*). Bhabha doesn't of course trace the lyric through its various incarnations; rather he writes in the "Tangiers or Casablanca?" section of the essay: "There is, however, an instructive difference between Casablanca and Tangiers. In Casablanca the passage of time preserves the identity of language; the possibility of naming over time is fixed in the repetition: 'You must remember this....' The repetition of 'Casablanca,' for Bhabha, is "an invocation to similitude," whereas "Tangiers [via Barthes] opens up disjunctive, incommensurable relations of spacing and tempo-



rality *within* the sign.” Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (NY: Routledge, 1994), 182. Though Bhabha’s delineation of time-lag challenges the concept of historical agency and political critique outside of theory, I think it fair to take him to task for collapsing these two major and vibrant cities, with markedly different (yet intertwined) political histories, with two texts that are so unconcerned with the specificity of their populations as subjects or subjectivities. It is precisely from within the political and cultural histories of those populations—the political and cultural particularities of the International Zone period in Tangier; the crucial turning point in the Moroccan struggle for independence emerging from Mohammed V’s 1947 visit to Tangier; the rapid and enormous population boom in Casablanca since its establishment by the French as a port in the early twentieth century—that critiques of Western fixity of time emerge, as I am attempting to show.

<sup>50</sup>Brian Larkin, “Indian Films and Nigerian Lovers: Media and the Creation of Parallel Modernities,” *Africa* 67, no. 3 (1997); reprinted in *The Anthropology of Globalization*, ed. Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo (New York: Blackwell, 2002), 353.

<sup>51</sup>Moulay Driss Jaïdi, *Public(s) et Cinéma* (Rabat: Al Majal, 1992).

<sup>52</sup>For an account of economic pressures on Morocco to develop the tourist industry in the late 1980s, see Francis Ghiles, “Desert Kingdom Sells Itself as Tourist Oasis,” *The Financial Times* (London), 9 February 1989, I:8. A less heralded and significant portion of the tourist economy (not discussed by Ghiles) is that of Gulf Arab men, who bring with them a different set of cultural stereotypes about Morocco, namely that it is a liberal Muslim Arab country where alcohol and prostitution are openly tolerated.

<sup>53</sup>This differs noticeably from the Tunisian tourism industry, which takes an apparently nationalist approach and satirizes Western stereotypes (through its many silly camel t-shirts and toys) while presenting a corrective image of Tunisia in museums. Algeria aggressively discouraged foreign tourism in the 1990s, both in policy and in practice, with its “no visas, no visitors” policy. In 1997, Libya began marketing itself for international tourism, emphasizing its Mediterranean beaches.

<sup>54</sup>In the early to mid-1980s, Hyatt Regency purchased and remodeled the former “Hôtel Casablanca,” itself built in the 1970s, on what is now known as Place des Nations Unies, abutting the *medina*. The *Casablanca*-theme bar was not a part of the earlier hotel. For early press accounts of the bar, see Judith Miller, “From Soup to Stew, A Gastronomer’s Oasis,” *New York Times*, 31 August 1986, sec. 10, p. 12; Christopher Walker, “Casablanca’s Dream of Humphrey Bogart Fades as Time Goes By,” *The Times* (London), 23 May 1989.

<sup>55</sup>This parallels the historical amnesia regarding African American interest and involvement in the Soviet Union. Kate Baldwin recovers what she calls the “Soviet archive of Black America” and thereby remaps “Black Atlantic” models of transnationalism in Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

<sup>56</sup>Quoted in Terril Jones, “As Time Goes By, Casablanca Lure Grows,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, (9 January 1993), sec. 2, p. 23.

<sup>57</sup>For discussions of French colonial architecture as interpretation of Moroccan culture and means of political control, the major texts are Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) and Rabinow, *French Modern*.

<sup>58</sup>*Al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida*, written, directed, and edited by ‘Abd al-Qader Laqt’a (Abdelkader Lagtaa); cinematography Abdelkrim Derkaoui; starring Ahmed Naji, Mouna Fettou, Mohamed Faouzi (Cinestar [Morocco], 1991).

<sup>59</sup>Morocco has a population of approximately 31 million people and is a significant market in itself.

<sup>60</sup>My translations from colloquial Moroccan Arabic.

<sup>61</sup>Indeed, in panning Laqt’a’s 1999 film *Les Casablancais*, Karim Al Amali complains that Laqt’a exploits the equation of Casablanca with the romance of cinema, due to its association with *Casablanca*, and yet fails to justify locating his own exposition of social problems in the particularity of contemporary Casablanca. Al Amali’s formulation is complex; he establishes *Casablanca* as a film thoroughly detached from Moroccan reality, yet one which is “the true performance of specialists in the ‘cinematic dream.’” Al Amali critiques Laqt’a harshly for leaving behind the realm of cinematic dream (which would include nightmares as an antipode), and moving “simply to a gratuitous hatred” for his subject. Karim al Amali, “De la Romance au Cauchemar,” *Maroc Hebdo*, 393 (12-18 November 1999), 35.

<sup>62</sup>Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1980), 786.

<sup>63</sup>For discussions of U.S. censorship of wartime films and journalism, see John Morton Blum, *Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976); and George H. Roeder, Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>64</sup>Sharpe, “Is the United States Postcolonial?” in King, *Postcolonial America*, 107-8.

<sup>65</sup>King, *Postcolonial America*, 9.