

## Forum

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### American Studies and Critical Identity

TO THE EDITOR:

Apparently, I am guilty of the sin of "the logic of . . . totalized autolepsis," at least according to Djelal Kadir, in "America and Its Studies," his introduction to the special topic *America: The Idea, the Literature* (118 [2003]: 9–24).

Specifically, Kadir on page 19 cites, as confirming the sin, my essay "On Becoming Oneself in Frank Lentricchia" from its first published version in *New Americanists 2: National Identities and Post-national Narratives* (*Boundary 2* 19.1 [1992]). This essay also appears, in an expanded form, as the last chapter of my book *Radical Parody: American Culture and Critical Agency after Foucault* (1992).

In both places I think my critical project at the time was made clear. My aim was to demonstrate the truth of the Nietzschean perspective on identity, that one becomes what one is, and its truly prophetic Blakean critique, that one becomes what one beholds. Or, to use explicitly here the Foucauldian discourse I used there, any *rapport à soi* is necessarily a highly mediated, hybridic, potentially conflicted, and improvisational phenomenon, ever open to further critique and revision.

In sum, whatever else critical identity may be, the logic of totalized autolepsis it ain't!

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*Reply:*

I thank Daniel T. O'Hara for his response to "America and Its Studies," my introduction to the January 2003 special topic. It would be difficult to find a better demonstration of the logic and practice of autolepsis, or self-seizure, than his self-referring "*rapport à soi*," as he terms it. What is less clear in this