

# Reprinted Essays



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## **Inter-American Studies as an Emerging Field: The Future of a Discipline<sup>1</sup>**

Inter-American Studies is an exciting and fast developing new field, one that has the potential to revolutionize not only how we think about the Americas (including their relationships with Europe<sup>2</sup> and Africa and their pre-Columbian worlds) but about the various disciplines – from literature to economics, from politics to law, and from anthropology to music – that link them together. Although we must credit historians like Herbert E. Bolton with having charted the original conceptual framework for this undertaking early in the twentieth century, and though we have seen interest in the Inter-American project wax and wane through the years, we are now living in a time when, for a variety of reasons, interest in Inter-American relations suddenly looms larger and more urgent than it ever has before. Concerned with a wide range of issues and agencies, such as NAFTA, popular music, literature, and law, the Americas have become, in the early years of the twenty-first century, a deeply interconnected site of tremendous energy and potential. And of conflict.

However, as an emergent (and therefore disruptive) intellectual discipline, Inter-American Studies must also be considered part of the larger process of “globalization” that, like the arrival of the banana company train in García Márquez’s *Cien años de soledad* [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*], is causing so much upheaval and consternation in so many places. Major players in this vast international game, the Americas are taking note of each other as never before, and the Inter-American paradigm (understood as involving both Francophone and Anglophone Canada, the United States, Spanish America, Brazil and the Caribbean) offers an excellent, though by no means foolproof, method of ensuring that this difficult process of

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2 See Jean Morency, “Forms of European Disconnection in Literature of the Americas,” *Topia: A Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 2 (1998): 11–21.

rediscovery and reconsideration proceeds with fairness and accuracy. This is our challenge.

But nowhere is the pressure of change being felt as acutely, perhaps, as in the closely related fields of American Studies and American literature, mainstream academic areas involving vast numbers of students and where “a broad critique of the narrow, nationalist conflation of the American and the United States has sparked vigorous efforts to resituate the study of United States literature and culture in a hemispheric or Pan-American context.”<sup>3</sup> Although our understanding of what it means to speak even of the literature of the United States has, since the 1970s, itself been steadily evolving, Inter-American Studies is fast becoming an integral part of this process and, as such, seems certain to change the ways traditional units, such as Anthropology, English and American literature, African American Studies, History, French, Economics, Law, Spanish and Portuguese, and Comparative Literature, envision their missions, their subject matter, and their relationships with each other. It is a rare opportunity to be able to help shape the development of a new and still relatively uncharted field, but that is precisely what we, the authors of the essays in this collection, feel we have before us.

Rather than trying to sum up what we already know about Inter-American Studies as an academic discipline – that it is appealing to some and subversive to others and that it is both immensely complicated and, quite often, contentious, for example – I would like, in this essay, to enumerate what I take to be the five major problems that eventually have to be confronted and dealt with before even a well-intended program in Inter-American Studies can flourish – in any discipline. Some of these issues deal with course content and orientation while others deal with philosophic and methodological matters, but all are crucial, I believe, to the healthy growth and development of this field. It is my hope that by raising these issues at the outset, they will serve as a kind of theoretical and procedural backdrop against which the reader can better consider the particular issues raised by each of our distinguished contributors.

## I. The Language Problem

Perhaps the greatest obstacle we must confront is what some are terming the “language problem,” the fact that in order to perform teaching and research that engages even two or three of our American cultures, we need linguistic competency in, as I will argue, at least three of our New World languages, a grouping

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3 See Paul Jay, “Beyond Discipline? Globalization and the Future of English,” *PMLA* 116: 1 (2001): 32–47.

that includes our numerous Native American languages as well as our European-based tongues (in alphabetical order): English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese. This issue is a problem because many of us simply have not had extensive, serious linguistic training in our own doctoral programs. Those who would like to get into Inter-American Studies are all too often mono (or, in some cases, bi) lingual, simply ill-equipped, in terms of language preparation, to do so. But, in truth, we cannot allow ourselves to be derailed by this problem, which, if it cannot be quickly overcome, can certainly be mitigated.

In the short run, the easy solution is to use translations. While this is not an altogether adequate solution, especially when issues of style, authorial development, or cultural context are involved, it does have the advantage of getting more scholars immediately involved in the Inter-American project. And it is a realistic recommendation since many of us will simply elect to use translations anyway. Then, too, the question of whether to rely on translated material or not is more of a problem for some disciplines than others. Speaking from the perspective of a literary scholar, I see little value in arguing that we should remain totally ignorant of great New World writers like Guimarães Rosa, Clarice Lispector, Nicole Brossard, Maryse Condé, Neruda, or Borges simply because we feel we cannot – or should not – use an existing translation. We should take some care, of course, with the particular translation we use (the Scott-Bucchleuch/Penguin translation of Machado de Assis's great *Dom Casmurro* simply omits certain key chapters from the original, for example), and we should always be cognizant of what inevitably “gets lost” in even the best translations, but, in the end, we should feel that it is better to know an author even partially via a good translation than not to know her at all. A similar argument pertains for other disciplines as well, I believe, though its particularities will certainly vary.

In the long run, however, we need to change the ways we train our graduate students. Specifically, we need to require them to have real proficiency (if not necessarily native fluency) in at least three of our American languages. This is absolutely imperative for the long term development of Inter-American studies as a field because of the growing pressure of what might be termed the “binary model,” the methodological approach that I fear is fast establishing itself as the norm in Inter-American Studies (which, even in its incipient form, is coming to be dominated by what some in the academy, in a moment of high irony for Latin Americanists, are now referring to as the “imperialism” of both English and Spanish) and that calls for linguistic competence in only two languages, and then perhaps only minimally. To be able to work only in, say, English and Spanish, is simply unacceptable because it ignores the profound linguistic diversity of our Americas while at the same time restricting the greater scope of the overall Inter-American initiative. Methodologically

and conceptually, two languages simply constitute too narrow a perspective for this project. We know only too well that people in the United States have never been much interested in serious language training, but the signs are all around us that the times are indeed changing, and that this old isolationist and parochial attitude is dying out. We can only hope so. And, as a new field of intellectual inquiry (one that both relates to and connects many different disciplines), Inter-American Studies could well play a major role in its demise.

In practical terms, however, to demand that our doctoral students in Inter-American studies must be able to work in at least three languages means, of course, that not everyone who applies will have the requisite background and training necessary to enter into this type of doctoral program. We will have to be very selective, therefore, choosing only those students who are naturally bi or tri lingual or who have studied enough language in undergraduate school (and, if we are serious about this, in elementary and secondary school as well) that they could pick up at least their third (or, depending on their areas of interest, perhaps fourth) required language as part of their doctoral course work. Given the extreme importance of verifiable language competency, then, to our project, the selection of students for advanced study in Inter-American Studies will thus be a most painful one, with many otherwise excellent candidates not being chosen, but if we are to properly chart our discipline's future course of development, it is absolutely essential that we maintain the highest entrance requirements. To fail here will be to fatally imbalance the development of Inter-American Studies as a methodologically valid field of intellectual inquiry by allowing it to become the near exclusive province of only one or two languages. This scenario, which privileges certain languages (and their cultures) while relegating others to second and third class status, must be avoided at all costs.

As they are currently configured, many departments of English and American literature (to speak of the obstacles one particular – and absolutely essential – unit will have to overcome very quickly) are finding themselves in an unexpectedly precarious situation in this regard. Unless they are rash enough to “confuse,” as Stephen Greenblatt observes, “the globalization of literary studies” with “American triumphalism and an insurgent English-language parochialism,”<sup>4</sup> programs in American literature are finding it necessary to confront and deal with the fact that the United States is itself deeply and irrevocably pluralistic, that it is only one of several, interrelated Americas, and that, replete with their own voices, histories, and cultures, these are now demanding recognition and attention, acknowledgment of

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4 Stephen Greenblatt, “Racial Memory and Literary History,” *PMLA* 116: 1 (2001): 48–63.

their rightful places in the New World sun. Innovative, engaging literature has long been written throughout North, Central, and South America in languages other than English, and if English department faculty and students do not know at least two or three of these hitherto “Other” tongues they run the very real risk of being left behind, limited to texts originally written in English or to what they can glean from what translated materials exist. How large, influential units like English accommodate this sea change in our approach to the entire concept of what it means to be “American” constitutes a great challenge for our traditional programs in American literature (as it does for a great many other disciplines, history, for example, or political science), and their response to it will almost immediately emerge as one of the decisive factors in the development of Inter-American Studies generally.

It must be said, in this same regard, that, at least initially, bi- or tri-lingual Canadianists and Latin Americanists could enjoy distinct advantages as the field of Inter-American Studies develops since, in terms of the requisite language preparation, they are also natural and experienced comparatists, having long studied their literatures (those of English and French-speaking Canada, Portuguese-speaking Brazil, and Spanish America) in terms of other, more “canonical” texts and literary traditions. Something very similar can be said of scholars working in a variety of other disciplines as well, I suspect. What this means, in realistic terms, is that Latin Americanists and Canadianists have long had to know more – much more – about the literature, culture, and history of the United States and Europe than students of European and “American” literature (meaning that of the United States alone) have traditionally had to know about Canadian or Latin American literature, culture, and history. Thus, another problem we face here (one well known to comparatists) is that of balance, of knowing one thing very well but another, closely related thing not at all, and feeling compelled to examine them both together.

Beyond this issue (daunting as it is), it is interesting to consider the “language question” with respect to Canadian and Latin American literature and culture themselves. No where in the Americas, perhaps, has language been more viscerally connected to issues of cultural identity than in Quebec, though giant Brazil, too often overlooked even within the larger context of Latin America, has long defined itself on the strength of its mellifluous and quirky language as well, though perhaps not as militantly. Indeed, interest in Brazil/Québec studies has been steadily rising in recent years (as work by Zilá Bernd, Yvan Lamonde, Gérard Bouchard, and others admirably demonstrates),<sup>5</sup> with some scholars coming to regard these

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5 For information regarding Professor Bernd’s new CD on Inter-American literature, go to the following address: [www.ufrgs.br/cdrom](http://www.ufrgs.br/cdrom). See, also, *La nation dans tous ses états*:

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two very unique New World cultures as the most marginalized of all, the two cultures most consistently – and most conspicuously – ignored in the Inter-American purview. Yet on balance it also seems likely that there has been closer linguistic and literary interaction between England and France in Canada than between Spain and Portugal in Latin America, a cultural and historical setting in which Spanish America and Brazil have evolved separately and “apart, since the first days of the discovery and conquest of the New World.”<sup>6</sup>

In sum, one must conclude that, as the complex and demanding field of Inter-American Studies continues to develop, we will need to think in terms not of the past, and the ways we were trained as doctoral and professional students in our respective disciplines, but of the future and the new kinds of training (particularly linguistic training) that we want our graduates to have. If we are to make them successful Inter-Americanists, we must train them better than we were trained,<sup>7</sup> and we must remain steadfast in insisting that certain standards be met (foremost being the linguistic requirement). This, I believe, is essential, for in truth we are preparing a new generation of scholars for a multi-dimensional, fluid, and rapidly evolving new field, and we must ensure that they are prepared to deal with it fully and properly, to become, in short, leaders in the field.

## II. Programmatic Cohesion

Since I am adamantly in favor of requiring our doctoral students in Inter-American studies to work with at least three separate languages, I also favor requiring them to work with the three culture groups associated with them. The goal here, I believe, is to help our students select courses that will allow them to develop, semester by semester, a coherent, logically unified program, one that, with careful planning, will enable the student to develop a primary area of specialization (out of which a dissertation might well arise) as well as secondary and tertiary areas of teaching and research interest. Advising will thus become of paramount importance, as will the issue of the course selection for each student’s program. For the student, then, as well as for the advisor, the goal, always, must be the creation of a unified, cohesive program of study, one that coalesces in meaningful, professional ways, that avoids

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*Le Québec en comparaison*, Yvan Lamonde and Gérard Bouchard, editors. Montréal: Harmattan, 1997.

6 Emir Rodríguez Monegal, *The Borzoi Anthology of Latin American Literature*, vol. 1 (New York: Knopf, 1984): xiii.

7 This is a point that Robert K. Martin has made as well. See, Martin, “North of the Border: Whose Postnationalism?,” *American Literature* 65: 2 (1993): 358–361.

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being merely a conglomeration of disconnected courses, credits, and topics, and that clearly features the student's primary area (or areas) of interest.

But until Inter-American Studies develops as a separate field to the point that it begins to produce a job market calling, specifically, for Inter-Americanists, I also believe that we must insist that our students ground themselves in the requirements of a traditional doctoral program. This, for me, would reflect the student's primary area of specialization, though, this, too, would have a clear and fundamental Inter-American dimension to it. For the time being, at least, I therefore feel we should be training Inter-Americanists who can compete successfully in the job markets that currently exist for more traditional Ph.D.s in these same areas. Inter-American literature, for example, enjoys a close affinity with Comparative Literature in that both require that work be done in more than one language and both rest on issues of methodology, on how and why certain texts can be brought together for study (by genre, theme, period, or movement, for example). Yet as we have seen, Inter-American scholarship is also very germane to the type of work being done by Latin Americanists, by Canadianists, and by Caribbeanists, all of whom possess particular areas of expertise and specialization that could be of keen interest to a wide range of academic units, including some not normally considered in this context, such as law, education, and medicine. In contrast to trends and developments in the job market, the academic structure of the university changes very slowly and so we would want our fledgling Inter-Americanists to be trained so that they would be immediately attractive to a college of Law, Medicine, Music, Business, or Education as well as to a typical department of History, Comparative Literature, English, French, Ethnomusicology, Political Science, Economics, African American Studies, or Spanish/Portuguese.

There are at least two reasons why they should be: first, our students would be prepared to teach the traditional courses required of such a department and, second, they would also be prepared to offer new courses in a vibrant and rapidly evolving new field – Inter-American history, literature, anthropology, politics, law, education, and music, to mention just a few of the most immediately promising possibilities. Such a person will, I think, be highly desirable for any department seeking to remain current and up to date or to forge ahead into new areas, which, as we all know, is a worthy goal of nearly every college and university.

### **III. Course Coverage and Faculty Expertise**

Operating, once again, at the level of the practical, my concern here is with how an actual Inter-American course is structured, how it is organized, and how it selects certain texts and readings and not others. My comments here stem from my

own experiences in designing and teaching courses in Inter-American literature, which I have done now for nearly twenty-five years. Although the same organizing principles may not work for every discipline when it comes to the construction of Inter-American courses, I am strongly in favor of breadth rather than depth, excluding, of course, graduate seminars that focus on more limited or specific Inter-American issues. At all levels, however, I advocate courses that have representation from all five of our New World literatures (English and French Canada, the United States, Spanish America, and Brazil), and including both our Native American heritage and the Caribbean, a region rightly understood by many people as the “crossroads of the Americas” and one fully emblematic of both the potential and the challenge of the entire Inter-American enterprise. The responsibility of the professor is to demonstrate to the students that the very concept of Inter-American Studies necessarily involves all of the Americas and not just a few selected parts of it. Research papers and areas of future specialization can certainly be scaled down to reflect each student’s linguistic preparation and area of interest, but a basic conceptual and organizing principle of each Inter-American class should be a commitment to inculcating in the student the need to reach beyond narrow, binary thinking, the kind that produces the two-sided, two-language scholarship that, unfortunately, we are seeing more and more of in this type of study. It is, I believe, critical that in our courses we expose our students to issues that manifest themselves, often in very different ways, in all our New World nations and cultures and that we continuously remind them of the Americas’ extraordinary diversity as well as of their common (but not identical) heritage.

In doing this, however, I am not claiming that everyone needs to be an expert in everything, for to do so would be fatuous in the extreme. Rather, I am claiming, via the inclusiveness of our courses, that to be a properly trained Inter-Americanist of any particular stripe (literature, history, economics, law, religion, music, etc.) it is necessary to possess at least a rudimentary understanding of how any given topic plays out in the rest of the Americas. To do anything else, to organize courses only centering on, say, certain English and Spanish speaking sectors of “nuestra América” (as Martí put it in his seminal 1891 essay), is to fatally undercut the very argument of hemispheric commonality that we use to justify the entire Inter-American outlook. While the primary thrust of the course may well be limited to three of our New World cultures, we, as faculty, should take the time and trouble to ensure that our students at least consider, if only in passing, how the topic under consideration relates to the other American cultures, the ones not being focused upon in more detail. To be sure, this is never an easy task, and few (if any) of us were ever trained to do it. And, it must be said, to gain even this minimal level of knowledge about our sister American cultures means that we

must commit to doing a lot of reading and research, to educating ourselves about the histories, traditions, and cultures of hemispheric neighbors we have hitherto known little or nothing about but whom we should know much better. In short, we must show our students (and ourselves!) that, for all their very real differences and for all the ways they can be compartmentalized into separate, isolated classes and programs (this being the typical model in most universities), the Americas share a common historical background, one that, to paraphrase Bolton's famous argument,<sup>8</sup> continues to dramatize the interconnectedness of our often fractious but ongoing epic experience.

But while it is one thing to stretch one's intellectual horizons and organize a course that involves texts from the other Americas, it is quite another thing to try and teach these texts (which, per force, will often be in translation), or, at least, to do so in a way that connects them, in meaningful ways, with their often very different social and cultural contexts. The obstacle here that must be overcome is, once again, the nature of the graduate training that most of us received, linguistic and otherwise. Since most of us were not taught to think about our disciplines in broad, Inter-American terms (indeed, many of us were taught to think only in terms of narrow specializations), we must rethink and retrain ourselves as Inter-Americanists, and this is not easy to do, even if we are inclined to do so.

One very effective way to do it, however, is simply to commit large amounts of time reading in the areas in which we find ourselves insufficiently prepared. For me, this was chiefly the literature of Anglophone and Francophone Canada, and I spent the better part of twenty years putting myself on a rather rigorous reading program in Canadian literature. This was great fun and I gained immensely from the experience (my reading skills in French grew exponentially, for example), but it was time consuming in the extreme. And it was often difficult to maintain in the face of the many other demands made upon our time. Still, to be able to read deeply and systematically in another of our New World literatures was an invaluable experience, and I recommend it to everyone.

A second possibility is to establish funding for some sort of "release time" program that would enable faculty to study, to take classes, or to travel to places where more specialized training could be gotten. Although more dependent on institutional largess and foresight, the "release time" method has the advantage of structure, control, and, above all, focus, all these being critical for a time-pressed faculty member seeking if not thoroughgoing expertise then at least basic competence in

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8 See Herbert E. Bolton, "The Epic of Greater America," *The American Historical Review* 38: 3 (1933): 448-474.

some important and hitherto missing aspect of the Inter-American course that is being envisioned.

Finally, faculty wishing to begin participating in an Inter-American studies program might well wish to organize team-taught courses, or courses organized by a single person but built around a series of carefully integrated and coordinated guest speakers. The team-teaching approach is becoming increasingly popular, at least at universities in the United States, as faculty realize that no single person has the full expertise needed to develop an Inter-American course with both the breadth and depth it should have. The flaw to be avoided here, however, is, once again, the binary approach, the urge we seem to have to seek only two professors to constitute the “team” rather than the three, or even the four, that are really needed. To go beyond four to five, however, is to begin to risk the loss of control, focus, and integration that are nearly always the hallmarks of a successful course. Thinking, again, of the need always to engage at least three of the New World’s languages and cultures, it is easy to see how a team-taught course involving faculty from three interlocking areas, programs, or departments could be very successful, however, especially if it were able to take advantage of the new technologies, such as video conferencing, that are available.

The development of an entire Inter-American program is always greatly aided by an administration open to the suggestion that, in order to avoid the problem of having to ask people to take on overloads, all participating faculty be given credit for teaching a full course. If such an agreement could be worked out, and if the faculty member charged with actually writing the syllabus and organizing each day’s session could rely on the cooperation and flexibility of the other participants, perhaps this triadic approach (with occasional forays into the other New World cultures) will eventually emerge as the most efficacious model, the one that best serves the needs of successful the Inter-American seminar, its students, and its faculty.

#### **IV. Courses, New and Revised**

As Inter-American Studies evolves into an organic and definable field of study, new courses will have to be developed while many existing courses will have to be modified to fit the demands of a changing curriculum. In order for Inter-American Studies to develop into a full-fledged discipline, however, it seems likely that the creation of new courses will prove to be the more crucial undertaking, the one that will have the greatest impact in the years to come. While courses that are currently on the books can often be modified at least somewhat in order to cultivate their Inter-American connections and relevancies, it is not easy to do

this without sacrificing much of the course's original intended purpose. Still, with careful planning, it can be done successfully, and when it is, it adds a great deal to the intellectual scope of the course.

As an example, I offer my own course on Brazilian literature from its origins through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Traditionally, I have taught this course by focusing only on Brazilian authors and texts. These days, however, I have sought to expand the cultural context of the course to include references to and, on occasions, brief discussions of literary issues pertinent not only to Brazil but to Brazil's hemispheric neighbors as well. In short, I now teach this course by focusing, clearly and consistently, on Brazil's literary development but also by calling attention to the many parallels and differences that link it to its New World neighbors. Because many of them are already familiar with the literatures and cultures of both Spanish America and the United States, I consistently find that my students greatly appreciate this comparative and Inter-American perspective and find it exciting. As many of them have said, it helps them see the uniqueness of Brazil, its literature and culture, and at the same time to see it in a larger international perspective, as part of the world's community of nations.

Some examples of topics that have lent themselves to this type of comparative discussion include the following: the famous and very different "cartas" written by Christopher Columbus, Pêro Vaz de Caminha, and John Smith; the Jesuit Catholicism of New Spain, New France, and Brazil (and the differences within these) versus the Protestant Puritanism of New England and the nature of the societies these founded; race relations and contrasting views of miscegenation; the oratory and political thought of such individual figures as Vieira, de Las Casas, and Mather; Romanticism in the Americas (including the Confederation Poets) and the figure of the Indian (the pairing of Alencar and Cooper make for a fascinating paradigm in this respect, particularly as this issue relates to nation building and national identity in the nineteenth century); Machado de Assis, Henry James, and the development of the novel in the New World; and the as yet unexplored question of the "new novel" in the Americas of the 1960s, a subject that, in addition to the United States and Latin America, must include both the English Canadian production of the period (Leonard Cohen's extraordinary *Beautiful Losers*, for example, Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, or Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*<sup>9</sup>) and the French Canadian tradition of the same turbulent

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9 *The Double Hook*, first published in 1959, is often referred to as the first Canadian novel to break free of the strictures of rote realism and regionalism and to create an intensely symbolic and mythically grounded new narrative.

era, which features such culturally volatile and technically iconoclastic “textes” as Hubert Aquin’s *Prochain épisode*, Réjean Ducharme’s *L’Avalée des avalés* [*The Swallower Swallowed*], Marie-Claire Blais’s *Une saison dans la vie d’Emmanuel* [*A Season in the Life of Emmanuel*], and Jacques Godbout’s *Le Couteau sur la table* [*The Knife on the Table*].

In a more contemporary context, one might also wish to argue that a new literary genre is rapidly emerging in the Americas, a form that we might well wish to term the “Inter-American Novel,” a type of extended narrative that is being practiced in very distinctive fashion by such New World masters as Carlos Fuentes (*La frontera de cristal/The Crystal Frontier*; *Gringo Viejo/The Old Gringo*; and *Los años con Laura Díaz/The Years with Laura Díaz*), Isabel Allende (*Hija de la fortuna/Daughter of Fortune* and *El plan infinito/The Infinite Plan*), Alberto Fuguet (*The Movies of My Life*), Silviano Santiago (*Stella Manhattan* and *Keith Jarrett no Blue Note*), Ann Patchett (*Bel Canto*), Margaret Atwood (*Surfacing*), Harriet Doerr (*Stones for Ibarra*), and Jacques Poulin (*Volkswagen Blues*), among many others. What we need here is something akin to what Ralph Freedman did for the “lyrical novel,”<sup>10</sup> that is, to recognize it, define it, and then to carefully discuss the texts that most prototypically manifest it, showing, in the process, how it differs from other sub-categories of this most protean of literary genres, how it developed, and why it is so endemic to the American, or New World, experience.

While I do not have enough time in a typical class session to do much more than bring these issues up with my students, this is often sufficient to at least whet their interest and allow them to see that the nations of the New World are linked together in many more ways than they had originally supposed. Indeed, these Inter-American connections often generate very interesting research papers and presentations at the end of the semester, projects that permit the students to delve much more deeply into these issues and which they seem to find quite fascinating. And for graduate students, courses structured in this fashion can become career altering experiences, involving choices about subjects and areas of interest that perhaps had never before been considered. We cannot, of course, even pretend to be authoritatively knowledgeable in everything germane to the Americas (nor should we), but, by dint of extensive reading and research, we can most certainly call certain issues to the attention of our students, to help direct their own investigations, and, in the process, to aid them in their breaking of new scholarly and disciplinary ground.

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10 See, Ralph Freedman, *The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.

The alternative to modifying long standing courses is, of course, the creation of new ones, and, as I suggested earlier, this would seem to be the undertaking that will, in the long run, most facilitate the development of Inter-American Studies as a coherent field of study, one replete with its own methodologies, its own bibliographies, its own theoretical issues and traditions, and its own identifiable areas of specialization. To this end, I have created, for Vanderbilt University's Program in Comparative Literature, a series of three interlocking new courses which, if taken in sequence or in their totality, will provide the student with a complete overview of Inter-American literature. The first course discusses the nature of pre-Columbian Native American literature (as well as its force as a constant factor in New World literature up to the present moment), the literature of the Conquest, and the development of colonial literature in the Americas; the second course, more chronologically limited, examines nineteenth century literature in the Americas and begins to follow some of the lines of influence and reception that are already developing; the third deals with New World literature in the twentieth century, when Inter-American literary studies really comes into its own as a viable academic discipline. Additional courses are envisioned on such topics as the New World novel, Modernism in North, Central, and South America, a history of drama in the Americas, and Inter-American film, poetry, and music. Methodologically, the constant for all these courses is breadth of coverage; the reading list for each one carries at least one work from each of the New World's major linguistic and cultural groups,<sup>11</sup> and they are to be selected because at least some of them deal with the same topic or engage each other in different ways.<sup>12</sup> The creation of new, distinctly Inter-American courses will, I am sure, become

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- 11 This means, normally, that each course features at least one text from each of the following groups: English and French speaking Canada, the United States, Spanish America, and Brazil. In certain cases, the Caribbean, arguably the epitome of the Inter-American experience, may be considered an additional group and therefore merit a text on its own. These numbers are often somewhat adjusted in accordance with a particular theme or issue that the professor in charge might wish to feature in the course. Thus, there might be more than one text from a single country, though, again, balance is what we are seeking in these courses.
- 12 For example, a recent Honors Seminar that I gave at Vanderbilt (Spring, 2002) featured Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, Faulkner's *The Bear*, and Alejo Carpentier's *The Lost Steps* (*Los pasos perdidos*), along with four other novels, because these three works all deal, in different ways, with the symbolism of the land in the New World and with the conflict between the wilderness and what we normally think of as civilization. The entire course could have been developed around this theme, though I wanted to pursue other issues with the other texts.



the key element as Inter-American Studies continues to evolve and develop as an academic field. Whatever the discipline, the need for new courses that, through their content and structuring, tie the Americas together will only grow.

As we have seen, more traditional courses can, to some extent, be altered in order to at least recognize their relevance to the Inter-American enterprise, but care should be taken that they not be changed so much that they lose their originally intended focus. Inter-American Studies cannot succeed unless, at the same time that it sees its new and intrinsically comparative courses becoming available, it can also rely on the student's ability to take courses that focus intensely on issues germane to particular countries. To be well-grounded (and therefore well-trained) Inter-Americanists, our students will need a mix of courses, some exclusively (or primarily) national in nature, others more deliberately Inter-American in design and coverage. And, by requiring our students to be registered in a traditional department or program and that they develop specialties and sub-specialties within these traditional academic units, we help ensure that they will be well prepared not only for the current job market but for its future permutations as well. We must not allow our programs in Inter-American Studies to be synonymous with superficiality or vagueness, for to do so would be disastrous, and we are best able to obviate this potentially ruinous problem by insisting that our students ground themselves in a standing discipline.

## **V. The Inter-American Dissertation**

The culmination of a carefully constructed Inter-American doctoral program, the dissertation must, like the program that engenders it and the committee that oversees it, involve at least three New World language groups and must advance an argument, or thesis, that is truly Inter-American in terms of its argumentation, structuring, and cultural grounding. That these requirements are met must, ultimately, be the responsibility of the thesis director and/or the chair of the thesis committee. Inherently comparative in nature, the Inter-American dissertation must establish the salient similarities between its constituent parts while also undertaking a detailed explication and analysis of the many differences that distinguish them and that make them unique. In order to avoid the problem of "homogenization" that plagues so many studies of this type (that is, of seeming to regard very different texts or issues as exactly the same thing and to be too quick to reach exactly the same conclusions about them), this step is absolutely critical, whatever the discipline involved. It cannot be successfully taken, however, unless the student is prepared linguistically to read her texts in their original language and to discuss them in the full range of the historical, social, and cultural differences that pertain



to the issue being focused upon. As in any good comparative study, these essential and distinctive differences must be carefully and accurately accounted for while also maintaining the more comprehensive and international perspectives that tie our texts together and that manifest and validate the larger critical contexts in which we are able to compare and contrast them. In Inter-American work, then, as in Comparative Literature scholarship generally, the differences between texts are often more important, more revealing of a particular text's uniqueness, than the similarities that connect them, and we must be careful to give these essential differences their full critical due.

The goal of the Inter-American dissertation, again following the model of the Inter-American doctoral program, should also provide clear evidence of expertise in a subject that is of direct value to a traditional academic program while also demonstrating that the candidate in question truly has a larger, Inter-American perspective, one that would allow her to create new courses for a program or department that wished to develop Inter-American Studies as part of its regular curriculum or as part of its regular degree tracks. The potential to do this should be clearly apparent in the dissertation, which should also reflect the student's primary and, perhaps, secondary areas of specialization and interest.

The properly done Inter-American dissertation should therefore also provide the student with a sense of direction for the writing of the publications that are so crucial to success in the academic world. Reflecting the nature of the dissertation itself, the student will be prepared to publish in at least two complimentary fields, the traditional area of expertise and the newer area of Inter-American studies, however this latter field comes to be defined in the context of the student's particular discipline. This, too, is an area in which the student's doctoral committee can be of special importance and utility, providing advice and counsel that is invaluable to the young scholar who is preparing to enter the not infrequently arcane academic world. Thus, even at this late date in her graduate school training, the fledgling Inter-Americanist can be alerted to the need to publish both as a traditional scholar in a particular discipline and as a pioneer in a new field, someone anxious to help an established discipline connect with a fast evolving and multi-disciplinary new enterprise. Such advice, especially if framed in the context of the standard demands of academic tenure and promotion procedures, could be invaluable to our Inter-American students.

We who seek to investigate it recognize that for however much Inter-American Studies is a compelling and fascinating new field, it is also one that, for a number of reasons, will not reach its full potential without overcoming some formidable obstacles and without our remaining vigilant with respect to the basic requirements we deem necessary. At the same time, I have every confidence that it will. Indeed,

it is already doing so. Our task, then, as teachers, researchers, and mentors is to facilitate this process, to consider both the exciting possibilities and the daunting problems inherent in Inter-American scholarship and, by coming to grips with these in a logical, coherent way, to help shape its growth and development as a vital, new academic discipline.

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## **Theorizing the Hemisphere: Inter-Americas Work at the Intersection of American, Canadian, and Latin American Studies<sup>1</sup>**

Much recent work has promoted the internationalization of American studies as a means of overcoming the deeply problematic nationalist assumptions underlying the discipline. Calls for “comparative American studies” that reside at the heart of the publication in which this article appears, however, attest to the sheer theoretical complexity involved in attempts to rethink the field outside and beyond national boundaries. While some US-based Americanists have understood internationalization to mean more comparative work on US ethnic and racial groups (Patell, 1999), others have equated it with a hemispheric perspective (Sandoval, 2002), while still others have employed it in reference to the global study of the United States as an area, emphasizing foreign-based scholarly perspectives on US culture and thereby resituating the field’s traditional institutional sites of power (Desmond and Domínguez, 1998).

These divergent understandings of internationalization point to un-resolved tensions between attempts to be more inclusive of international perspectives on the United States on the one hand and new Americanist concerns with domestic issues of race and ethnicity and their trans-national expansion through emergent geographical models, such as the Americas, the trans-Pacific, the black Atlantic, and the circum-Atlantic on the other.<sup>2</sup> In this article, we explore one such geographic

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2 The hemispheric perspective within American studies has been shaped by Chicana/o-Latina/o and border studies (e.g. Kaplan, 1993; Porter, 1994; Wald, 1998), though these have, however, rarely entered into dialogue with Mexico-based border studies or with social science-oriented forms of border cultural studies. (See Irwin, 2001 for a critique of US-based border studies.) Other transnational models, such as the trans-Pacific

configuration in depth, the hemispheric perspective. Under the rubrics of literature of the Americas, New World, or North American studies, several models of hemispheric inquiry have already brought into focus new topics and research questions, attracted specialists in all periods, and become visible in the US academy in curriculum reform, hiring practices, conferences, publications, and the establishment of research centers.<sup>3</sup> Hemispheric perspectives are mainly understood to facilitate a certain rapprochement between English and foreign language departments in the US academy.<sup>4</sup> This project, with its somewhat limited focus on literary and cultural

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(Lowe, 1996; Ong, 1999), the trans-Atlantic (Gilroy, 1993), and the circum-Atlantic (Roach, 1996), are linked to Asian American and black studies.

- 3 The term “literature of the Americas” emerged within American studies. In Paul Jay’s usage (1998), it replaces the field’s national focus with an emphasis on sub-regions or transnational cultural zones of the Americas. Comparativist Roland Greene (1998) has used the phrase “new world studies” more broadly than Joseph Roach (1996) has as a label for scholarship that encompasses Latin America, the Caribbean and, at least on a programmatic level, Canada. John Carlos Rowe (2000) has mapped a geographically limited “North American studies,” focusing on the United States, Mexico and, programmatically, Canada. The term “North American studies” also draws on the comparative emphasis on Canada–US relations that has emerged in Canadian studies and Canadian universities, and it has been used to describe the joint focus on the United States and Canada in several institutions of higher learning in Europe. Although we note a preponderance of research focusing on the pre-Columbian, colonial, and contemporary periods, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have also inspired promising inter-American scholarship, such as the innovative cultural and historical studies of Kazanjian (2003), Dunkerley (2000), and Gruesz (2002). Jay (1998) and Greene (1998) have theorized inter-American perspectives that span periods from the colonial to the contemporary. At the institutional level, inter-American studies are becoming more visible in terms of hiring, and hemispheric research centers have been established at universities like Duke, SUNY Buffalo, SUNY Stony Brook, New York University, and Michigan State. The English department at Arizona State University recently reorganized its undergraduate major into a Literatures and Cultures of the Americas section and a World Literatures in English section. Rowe (2000), Jay (1998), and Greene (1998) also consider curricular questions posed by inter-American research. The University of Virginia Press, University of Minnesota Press, and Peter Lang have created special series dedicated to inter-American issues.
- 4 The Modern Language Association conference on “English and the Foreign Languages” held in New York in April 2002, for example, featured distinguished scholars of Chicana/o and Latina/o literatures such as Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé of Fordham University and Tey Diana Rebolledo of the University of New Mexico to represent the field of literature of the Americas. The conference’s focus on the bilingualism and biculturalism that informs Latina/o and Chicana/o expressive culture in the United States suggests that organizers

studies, draws on the wave of 1990s inter-American scholarship that emerged within Chicana/o studies, comparative literature, Latin American studies, and to a much smaller extent, American studies in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

In the following, we propose a more synthetic “inter-Americas studies” that would enable the collaboration of a larger number of institutionalized (including non US-based) fields which have traditionally studied the hemisphere, including Latin American and American studies, comparative literature, Canadian studies, Caribbean studies, history, Latina/o and other ethnic studies, each with its own specific historical and theoretical entry points into the subject. Given the impossibility of surveying all of these disciplines, we will limit our scope to the subject of our particular training and interests, namely the potential contributions of Latin American and Canadian studies to an inter-Americas framework.<sup>6</sup> While Canadian studies, as they have emerged in Canada, have been largely excluded from hemispheric studies, Latin America is often represented, even though neither US- nor Latin America-based studies scholarship is adequately considered. Given its focus on Canadian and Latin American studies, this article should not, therefore, be understood as a definitive account of inter-Americas studies, but rather as an invitation for dialogue about a field that we conceive as a complement to other emergent national, regional, and global perspectives in American, Canadian, and Latin American studies.<sup>7</sup> We realize that a project like this cannot be exhaustive and hope that others will take our examination further.

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envisioned literature of the Americas as a bridge field between English and the foreign languages.

- 5 For earlier examples of inter-American research, see Pérez-Firmat (1990), Fitz (1991), Saldívar (1991), and Spillers (1991). For overviews of the intersections between comparative literature and Latin American studies, see Fitz (2002), McClennen (2002), and McClennen and Fitz (2002). For other studies by Latin Americanists and comparatists, see Valdés (1985), Chevigny and Laguardia (1986), Zamora (1993, 1997), Cohn (1999), and Sommer (1999).
- 6 The authors are US-trained scholars in the fields of comparative literature and English, respectively. We work in the contemporary period, and our research cuts across American, Latin American, and Canadian studies.
- 7 In Latin American studies, inter-American work is one of several emerging approaches, including trans-Atlantic, inter-Latin American, or comparative postcolonial perspectives. While the trans-Atlantic theorizes connections between Latin America and the Iberian peninsula as well as the European and African continents more generally, the inter-Latin American model enables comparative work specifically on Latin America, including Brazil. Canadian studies are either becoming part of a social science-oriented North American studies paradigm, or they are developing toward a more comparative

Latin American studies, Canadian studies, and American studies are currently undergoing their own respective crises. So, rather than reify traditional area studies models, we advocate a long overdue dialogue among the inter-disciplines that could transform each field.<sup>8</sup> In the face of the hemisphere's vast inequalities and different disciplinary configurations, any call for transnational scholarly dialogue or assumptions of inter-American unity threatens to replicate the long history of US imperialism in the hemisphere which date back to the Monroe Doctrine and the territorial expansion of the United States in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> We therefore advocate close collaboration among the three inter-disciplines and a "critical internationalist" awareness of our own institutional locations so as to position the United States' neighboring geographies and the fields that study them as protagonists rather than mere recipient sites of US policies and of US-based theoretical perspectives and comparative paradigms.<sup>10</sup>

Since their inception, Latin American and Canadian studies have encompassed comparative "inter-American" or "North American" orientations without being themselves scholarship on the United States. The two fields are thus well situated to challenge many of the exceptionalist premises that, despite New Americanist

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discipline that includes international scholarship on Canada. There have also been attempts to combine several of the fields we examine into more global perspectives. Examples include the Ford Foundation's program "Crossing Borders" (Volkman, 1998), and the "Transculturalisms Canada" project supported by the International Council for Canadian studies.

- 8 We realize, of course, that only Latin American studies fit the traditional description of area studies, which is charged with providing knowledge to the state about foreign policy (Bové, 2002). We employ the term in a broader sense to designate a particular discipline's assumed geographical boundaries, be they national or transnational.
- 9 Desmond and Domínguez (1998) have, however, challenged the idea that American studies work from abroad will offer radically different approaches from US-based scholarship solely by virtue of its location. Similarities in the two perspectives stem from long-standing connections between many American studies programs abroad and US institutions as well as the uncritical promotion of US-based theoretical approaches abroad (see also Horwitz, 1993).
- 10 For a discussion of "critical internationalism," see B. Lee (1995). Mariscal (1990) notes that the 1814 appointment of the first chair in Hispanic literature at Harvard University marks a shift toward the United States' emerging orientalist fascination with Spain and its South American colonies. In his study of John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood's archaeological expeditions in southern Mexico during the 1840s, Gollnick likewise finds a rhetoric of conquest underwriting their enterprise, in which they claimed the artifacts of an indigenous past as part of an elitist "American" history (Gollnick, 1998).

efforts, continue to inform post-national American studies work on the hemisphere.<sup>11</sup> These assumptions include tendencies to privilege the United States as primary interlocutor vis-à-vis other countries in the hemisphere, to focus on Anglophone material, to marginalize other fields' perspectives, and to extend US-based research paradigms to the hemispheric level. In particular, we find that post-national American studies have stressed the internationalization of US models of race and ethnicity at the expense of adequately addressing the roles of contemporary US foreign policy and transnational capitalist expansion.

Our discussion of Canadian and Latin American studies in this respect highlights several key and problematic critical terms, such as ethnicity, post-nationality, globalization, and postcoloniality in order to demonstrate how these concepts circulate differently in each field. We advocate multilingual models of hemispheric inquiry that include European, indigenous, and New World languages and that do not necessarily privilege the United States' relation to other countries or areas. In so doing, we hope to place race and ethnicity among a host of new objects of study relevant to historical and contemporary political, economic, and social developments in the Americas. More importantly, we argue that the different usage and degree of importance ascribed to the critical terms within each field must be recognized in order to arrive at more nuanced theories of inter-American dynamics.

Hemispheric work within American studies, a field with a strong tradition in the humanities, is largely rooted in postcolonial theory. Characterizing globalization as a continuation of colonialism and imperialism, its assumptions enable comparative studies of US race and ethnicity within transnationally expanded models (Gikandi, 2001: 635). In contrast, Latin American studies are deeply engaged with social scientific theories of globalization and the legacy of dependency theories that rose to prominence in the 1950s and 1960s in opposition to US-based developmentalism. The current interest in hemispheric perspectives within both Latin American and Canadian studies is often linked to examinations of continental integration under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), other regional trade agreements, and the proposed integration of the hemisphere under the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The focus of Canadian postcolonial models on local forms of ethnicity and on Canada's settler-colony status complicates the transnationalization of US racial and ethnic categories, and could form the basis for comparative studies of US settler colonialism and imperialism. Likewise, efforts within Latin American and Canadian

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11 For a cogent critique of the US Americanist use of the term "Americas," see Kadir (2003).

studies to understand ongoing US cultural, economic, and military domination in the hemisphere according to postcolonial or dependency models question the American studies tendency to characterize the nation-state mainly as consolidator of colonial, repressive, and assimilationist ideologies and to expand US-based left intellectual critiques of nationalism to other geographies. These assumptions are challenged by existing perspectives within Latin American and Canadian studies that view the nation-state more positively as a potential vehicle for the protection of its citizenry against neoliberal forms of corporate globalism and as a guarantor of sovereignty from the United States.

We hope that attention to historically divergent forms of nation-state formation and intellectual analyses of nationalism in the Americas will enable scholars to examine the impact of neoliberalism on hemispheric cultures and on the academy, and to become active in policy debates concerning hemispheric citizenship, immigration law, language rights, foreign policy, educational reform, and territorial rights, among other issues. In its emphasis on such questions, an inter-Americas perspective can also interface with other emerging global or regionally organized models of study.

## Post-Nationalism and Latin Americanism

For Latin Americanists today, the task of producing alternative narratives about a region over which the United States exerts overwhelming dominance makes embracing a hemispheric perspective a complicated undertaking.<sup>12</sup> In many Latin American countries, globalization is often considered to be synonymous with Americanization (Brunner, 1993: 41, 51; Hale, 2000: 131), and Latin Americanists are likely to greet calls to “post-nationalism” with ironic questions about when exactly the “national” transpired. The use of the term in the essays of Mexican

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12 The different visions of the Americas promoted by Cuban independence leader José Martí and US historian Herbert Eugene Bolton in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, respectively, exert contradictory pressures on contemporary inter-American scholarship that bear especially upon Latin American studies’ orientation toward inter-Americas studies. For Martí’s relevance to studies of race and ethnicity in the United States, see Saldívar (1991) and Spillers (1991). For other contemporary studies of Martí’s US writings, see Ramos (1989), Avelar (1997), Belknap and Fernández (1998), and Rotker (2000). Bolton articulates his synthetic, hemispheric perspective toward American history in his 1932 American Historical Association presidential keynote address (Bolton, 1964) and in his widely used syllabus for a history of the Americas (Bolton, 1935). For contemporary work on Bolton, see Hanke (1964), Hurtado (1993, 1995), Magnaghi (1998), and Truett (in press).



critic Roger Bartra, for example, signifies neither after nor beyond the national, but rather the potential for popular democratic renewal that might emerge from Mexico's profound political crisis. In contrast to the New Americanist emphasis on transnational communities, Bartra explicitly cautions his international readers, "[W]hen I point out the need to overcome cultural unease, I am not proposing as a cure an integration of the Anglo-American world parallel to the economic agreements on free trade with the United States and Canada" (Bartra, 2002: 63). Like Bartra, many Latin American intellectuals regard the nation-state (rather than nationalism or the national-popular) as a yet unfulfilled project through which it may be possible to articulate public interests and protect natural resources in the face of transnational corporate expansion, massive external debt, and US foreign policy.

The continued salience of the national is also evident in Latin American academies, where most humanistic scholarship is conducted within a national framework, and where the humanities have, in recent decades, suffered devastating losses due to neoliberal downsizing of Latin American universities. When Latin American scholars have articulated regional, inter-regional, or continental approaches to humanistic study, they have tended to be aligned with anti-colonialist agendas (e.g. Cornejo Polar, 1994; Rama, 1982). These factors, among others, make some Latin Americanists suspicious of transnational theoretical models identified with the US academy, especially those that have arisen in seeming ignorance of the long history and diverse traditions of Latin American scholarship. For Latin Americanists working in the United States, the contradictions between opportunistic area studies and the substance of teaching and research sometimes produce a sort of self-deprecating irony about one's work, as Santiago Colás explains:

In the tight job market of the humanist academy in the United States, my future prospects as a young Latin Americanist may best be secured by the significant interest in things Latin American sure to follow the imperialism and internal colonization that is announced with each new privatization, free-trade zone, or foreign investment. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has already brought to the Spanish 101 classrooms of my department a kind of baby boom of future students for my Latin American literature courses. (Colás, 1995: 392)

Colás does not assume that a hemispheric perspective is inherently pluralist with respect to other geographical models; rather, he suggests that the emergence of new spatial categories may presage the disappearance of others even as it endows them with a certain market-driven cultural cachet.

In spite of these pitfalls, we propose that an inter-Americas perspective is a useful complement to existing research frameworks, through which it is possible

to historicize and strategize Latin America's relation to the United States and Canada. Brazil-based Americanist Sonia Torres has observed that research about the United States produced in Latin America tends to be implicitly comparative, "privileging issues such as dependency and neocolonialism ... [as a] means of reading the dominant nation but also a means of reading ourselves" (2003: 12). Likewise, Latin Americanists who have adopted an inter-American perspective utilize comparative approaches in order to understand and respond critically to historical phenomena of a hemispheric nature or to propose alternative networks to those imagined by neoliberalism and free trade. The Inter-American Cultural Studies Network (IACSN), founded in 1993, was one effort to unite scholars working on the Americas through an internet-based community. Supported by cultural studies programs at universities in Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, New York, and Mexico City, the Network's founders envisioned the promotion of "collaborative and comparative work" about the Americas to be one of its main purposes (IACSN, 1993: 1). By encouraging dialogue about the different histories and practices of cultural studies in the United States and Latin America, the Network also challenged the notion that cultural studies was an exclusively US or British phenomenon.<sup>13</sup>

The scholarly profile of Néstor García Canclini, a Mexico City-based sociologist who participated in the IACSN, serves as another example of how Latin Americanists have engaged in hemispheric study. García Canclini has advocated the establishment of a regional federalist government in Latin America that would protect its constituent states from the effects of neoliberal restructuring. He arrived at this position, not at all coincidentally, through his pioneering research on the cultural implications of North American free trade and in Mexico-US border studies. In his book *La globalización imaginada*, he proposes that there is enough of a shared historical tradition among Latin American countries to justify speaking of a "Latin American cultural space in which many identities exist," but he insists that such a space cannot be "ethnically predetermined" (García Canclini,

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13 The Network's founding documents were drafted by George Yúdice, Stanley Aronowitz, Juan Flores, and Néstor García Canclini at a conference held in Mexico City in May 1993. Among the results of the IACSN's activities is the Biblioteca Virtual, housed at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (<http://acd.ufrj.br/pacc/>) and a series of books on "studies and other intellectual practices in culture and power" published by Daniel Mato, former chair of the CLASCO working group on culture. As the IACSN is now defunct, many of its functions have been incorporated into George Yúdice's Cultural Policy Center at NYU. We thank George Yúdice for providing information about the IACSN.

1999: 103). He finds, on the other hand, that the recent trade agreements linking Latin American economies to those of Europe and the United States, respectively, also make it possible to speak in a qualified manner of “Euro-American space” and “inter-American space” (García Canclini, 1999: 104).<sup>14</sup> García Canclini’s proposals to regulate Latin American cultural expression in order to ensure Latin American countries’ greater self-representation on the domestic and global levels form part of a promising new wave of cultural policy studies in the Americas.<sup>15</sup>

Although we have cited the relative absence of social scientific globalization theory in New Americanist positions, Latin American studies are deeply engaged with the issue and are currently in a position to help Americanists consider the political and economic implications of the transnational turn. The establishment of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) under the directorship of Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch in the late 1940s challenged many assumptions about international trade and paved the way for a host of dependency theories that continue to be elaborated by Latin Americanists and other scholars working from peripheral perspectives (Larrain, 1989: 14). The history of trade and colonization in the hemisphere has also been fundamental to the development of world systems theory (Quijano and Wallerstein, 1992). At present Latin Americanists working on the cultural dimensions of globalization have bridged the humanities and social sciences by employing a variety of post-dependency theoretical frameworks (González Stephan, 1996).

Before we discuss some of the other ways in which Latin American studies may interconnect with inter-Americas research, we must first underscore the vastness of this field. It incorporates disciplines ranging from law to cultural anthropology, each of which possesses diverse national and institutional manifestations. The field’s configuration differs from American and Canadian studies in three significant respects: first, it undertakes the study of more than one country; second, its traditional bases of power have been situated outside the area under investigation;

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14 In García Canclini’s view, Mexico’s membership in NAFTA and the European trade agreements with Mercosur countries make those two Latin American regions the ones primarily affected by the inter-American and Euro-American categories. As for the “real” impact of globalization on Latin America, David Felix argues that its effects have been most evident in the financial sector and in policy-making, rather than in “the actual volume of internationally traded goods” (Felix, 1998: 193). At the time of our writing, Argentina, Venezuela, and Brazil are among the Latin American countries witnessing a rise in economic nationalism in response to financial and political crises. These movements, in turn, may cloud the future of free trade initiatives.

15 See Miller and Yúdice for a useful overview of this scholarship.

and third, English is not the area's primary language. These factors have led to different and sometimes opposing practices of Latin American studies from within and outside of Latin America. Rather than presume to map the field in its entirety, we will highlight some recent debates that consider the United States' role as a broker of knowledge about Latin America.

One of these debates concerns the constitution of the field's very object of study. Latin America's claims to coherence as an area have been problematized from numerous perspectives.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the appeal to Latin American identity has been a recurrent motif in arts, letters, and civic discourse over the past two centuries, and has been especially pronounced in the face of looming external threats. The dream of a Spanish American federation is most often associated with the independence leader Simón Bolívar, and, for subsequent generations of intellectuals, invoking the *patria grande* over the *patria chica* often connotes anti-imperialism, as in the writings of Cuban independence leader José Martí. In recent years, critics have begun to scrutinize the identitarian rhetoric of "Latin Americanism" utilized by Martí and others (Moreiras and Embry, 1997–8). Just as the presumed unities of Whitman's "I" have been challenged by New Americanists, Latin Americanism's "nosotros" has been subjected to critiques that expose the silences and representational violence implied by the condensation of complex social systems into a national or continental essence.<sup>17</sup> This wave of scholarship is part of an ongoing inquiry regarding the socio-historical underpinnings of Latin American intellectual authority and the project of forging alternative, non-elite accounts of Latin American "modernity from below."<sup>18</sup>

Another current of Latin Americanism that is presently undergoing similar allegations of false unities and cultural essentialism is that which is principally associated with US-based area studies. According to this usage, Latin Americanism refers to the transnational networks of intellectuals – most of whom are situated in the US academy – who are dedicated to the circulation and critical appraisal of

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16 The term "Latin America" was coined in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century by Louis Napoleon in order to justify French rule in Mexico. For critiques of Latin America as a concept and as an area designation, see O'Gorman (1961), Berger (1995), Larsen (1995), and Mignolo (2000).

17 See Avelar (1997), Richard (1997, "Intersectando" and 1997, "Mediaciones"), de la Campa (1999), and Moreiras (2001). For comparative studies of Whitman and Martí, see Molloy (1996) and Sommer (1998).

18 For critiques of intellectual authority, see Rama (1984), Avelar (1997), and Miller (1999). For theories of "modernity from below," see Rowe and Schelling (1991). See also Latin American Subaltern Studies Group (1994) and Rodríguez (2001).

ideas about Latin America. In this view, Latin America is merely a realm of raw materials and experience to be processed or plundered by Latin Americanism (de la Campa, 1999; Richard, 1997 “Intersectando” and 1997, “Mediaciones”). This Latin Americanism has its roots in the US academic area studies models that gathered institutional force during the Cold War (Berger, 1995; Hershberg, 1998). Among these, Latin American studies distinguished themselves by developing in seeming opposition to the Cold War agendas they were supposed to uphold. The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) was founded in 1965 in opposition to US foreign policy in Latin America, and is now the major US-based organization of Latin Americanists (Berger, 1995: 173). The anti-Vietnam War movement in the United States and the rise of dependency paradigms in Latin America galvanized the field and marked its divergence from US political agendas.<sup>19</sup> Differing political interests between state and academy and the wave of institutional downsizing that took place in the 1970s and 1980s have precipitated a financial and epistemological crisis in US Latin American studies (Hershberg, 1998: 121). While globalization and competitiveness serve as new justifications for the field at the level of funding and policy-making (Hershberg, 1998: 123), the professional literature is currently marked by critical doubts regarding the field’s historical strengths and weaknesses as well as its future. Some scholars in the field note that “armchair” methodologies, especially those associated with cultural studies, threaten Latin American studies’ tradition of intensive fieldwork, links with local scholars, and linguistic competence, while calling for more comparative research as an antidote to “national (or regional) myths of exceptionalism” (Smith, 2002: 7–8) and orientalism on the part of US-based academics (Hershberg, 1998: 125; Skidmore, 1998: 116–17; Smith, 2002: 8). Thus, while the field has moved toward greater hemispheric integration at the professional and theoretical levels, the most pressing agenda for inter-American research within the field is developing along inter-Latin American lines.

Nonetheless, hemispheric dynamics are quite palpable in contemporary scholarly debates about the ubiquity and relative value of US-identified critical methodologies and analytical categories for the study of Latin American phenomena, such as those pertaining to race and gender (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1999). Postcolonial theory has been particularly controversial in this regard. Whereas

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19 LASA’s membership continued to grow significantly even through the lean decades of the 1970s and 1980s (Mesa-Lago, 1980: 3). Today, LASA is a broadly interdisciplinary organization, with a tradition of concentration in the social sciences. Its membership totals approximately 5,500, 30% of whom reside outside the United States (<http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/>).

it became linked to American studies through research on ethnicity and race, as in some currents of Mexico–US border studies, postcolonial theory entered Latin American studies in response to the failures of traditional left nationalist movements in Latin America, notably the Sandinista electoral defeat in 1990. The predominantly US-based Latin American Subaltern Studies Group (LASSG) was founded in 1992 in order that scholars could explore issues such as peasant and indigenous movements, gender and sexuality, and urban popular cultures in Latin America while explicitly challenging literary and intellectual authority. Modeled on the South Asian Subaltern Studies Collective, the LASSG has continually stressed a critical self-awareness of the “elite space of the North American academy” (Kokotovic, 2000: 295).<sup>20</sup>

Debates about Latin American postcolonial studies are often characterized by “US” versus “Latin American” rhetorical positions even though these often do not correspond to the participants’ geographical or institutional locations. According to LASSG member Alberto Moreiras (2001: 240):

A number of Latin American intellectuals have sharpened their critical knives on what they regard as a major Latin Americanist sellout of Latin America into the global market taking place primarily, if not exclusively, through the US academy, and in particular through Latin Americanist subaltern and postcolonial studies, sometimes – not always – simply identified with metropolitan-led “cultural studies” *tout court*.

Moreiras examines such accusations in light of the diminished coherence of Latin American nationalist and national-populist intellectual positions in the era of globalization. His call for oppositional cultural studies in the present juncture has been challenged forcefully by other prominent critics. Beatriz Sarlo, for example, defends the continued viability of literary study in Latin America and Latin Americans’ right to produce cultural objects worthy of aesthetic criticism rather than anthropological analysis,<sup>21</sup> while Mabel Moraña views postcolonial theory as

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20 Kokotovic notes that Latin Americanist historians who work with postcolonial theory do so differently than the literary critics who form the membership of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group. He likens these orientations to diverging foci in the South Asian Group, from the Gramscian influence manifest in Ranajit Guha’s writing to the deconstructionist approach evident in Gayatri Spivak’s work. For postcolonial work in Latin American history, see Mallon (1994), *Hispanic American Historical Review* (1999), Berger (2000), Delpar (2000), and Knight (2002).

21 The debate between Moreiras and Sarlo appeared in the *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 8.1 (1999). A revised version of Moreiras’s contribution, “On the Order of Order,” was subsequently published as a chapter of his book, *The Exhaustion of Difference* (2001).

another metropolitan project intended to mark “the space of the periphery with the perspective of a critical neo-exoticism that keeps Latin America in the place of the other, a pre-theoretical, calibanesque, and marginal place, with respect to metropolitan discourses” (Moraña, 1998: 216–17).

The debates surrounding postcolonial studies form an arena in which an inter-Americas perspective that is attentive to sites of intellectual production within a hemispheric framework might move the arguments beyond facile homologies between academic positions and entire nations or regions. Scenarios from the 1960s and 1970s describing a unilateral brainwashing of Latin Americans through US media have been significantly complicated by factors that make pre-lapsarian categories of North and South seemingly untenable. At the academic level, the impact of neoliberalism on Latin American universities has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of Latin Americans who receive post-graduate training in the United States or who are employed in the US academy.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, a select number of Latin America-based intellectuals regularly participate in US academic forums and see their work translated into English.<sup>23</sup> These developments in the configuration of Latin American studies make universities, museums, and other professional arenas in the hemisphere points of debate concerning who has the right to represent Latin America.<sup>24</sup> The current debates about methodologies and their origins require closer attention to scholarly affinity groups and their ideological orientations, as well as the social and institutional locations of intellectual work.

An inter-Americas perspective might additionally provide an opportunity for Latin Americanists to respond to the overtures of scholars in US ethnic studies to forge connections among issues such as migration, transnational markets, and media studies.<sup>25</sup> While some universities have sponsored innovative joint ventures

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22 For debates about cultural imperialism, see Mattelart and Dorfman (1975) and Tomlinson (1991).

23 Such scholars include Jorge Castañeda, Beatriz Sarlo, Néstor García Canclini, Jesús Martín Barbero, Roger Bartra, Enrique Dussel, Martín Hopenhayn, Roberto Schwartz, and Silviano Santiago.

24 The orientalist legacy of Latin American area studies in the US academy takes a peculiar form in the humanities – especially outside of Spanish and Portuguese departments – where magical realism and the “Boom” novels are commonly considered paradigmatic of all Latin American literature (see Fuguet and Gómez, 1996, and Reati and Ocampo, 1998).

25 For studies about the growth of transnational Latina/o consumers, see García Canclini (1995) and Dávila (2001); on transnational migration, see Rouse (1991, 1992, 1995), Sassen (1998), and Martínez (2001).



between Latina/o studies and Latin American studies (Cabán and Aparicio, 2003; Fox, 2003), Román de la Campa notes that, in general, the Latin American literary establishment has been reluctant to embrace such projects, for reasons that appear to have as much to do with fear of diminished cultural capital as they do with anti-imperialism (de la Campa, 2002).<sup>26</sup> An inter-Americas perspective opens up another area of comparative research that could bypass the United States to focus on commonalities with Canada.<sup>27</sup> Not only has Canada pursued independent trade agreements with Latin American countries, but it has maintained relatively open relations with Cuba and has been more accepting of Central American and other Latin American refugees than the United States. The contemporary profiles of both Canadian studies and Latin American studies emerged in the context of anti-Americanism during the Vietnam War and are linked to leftist intellectual traditions of nationalism rooted in efforts to understand the relationship to the United States via dependency, cultural imperialism, or postcolonial models. And, in both Canada and Latin America the association between the United States and cultural imperialism rose to renewed prominence as free trade initiatives were negotiated in the 1990s. John Tomlinson's assertion that "various critiques of cultural imperialism could be thought of as (in some cases inchoate) protests against the spread of (capitalist) modernity" (Tomlinson, 1991: 173) needs to be further explored for its specific relevance to Canada and Latin America in an era of hemispheric trade liberalization.

## Post-Nationalism North of the Border

The anti-imperialist underpinnings of Latin American studies have found somewhat parallel manifestations in the academic study of the northern part of the hemisphere as it has emerged in Canada. From its early origins in the 1940s, the Canadian studies project has been shaped by attempts to articulate the specificity of Canadian nation- and statehood in relation to the United States. A constant theme in debates about Canadian nationhood has been its relationship to various forms of colonialism, most recently US cultural imperialism. Originally rooted, like American studies, in nationalist attempts to link literary production to the

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26 De la Campa insightfully observes that "[Most US Latino cultural forms] are rejected or resisted in Latin America, particularly in literary circles. For many scholars there, and some here, the inclusion of Latino mapping constitutes a distortion, if not a threat, to Latin Americanism, both in terms of literary history and disciplinary markets" (de la Campa, 2002: 3). For a promising effort to bridge the gap, see Poblete (2003).

27 Valdés (1985) and Spillers (1991) stress such connections.



nation-state, Canadian studies have therefore always been a comparative, North American undertaking that focuses on both the United States and Canada.<sup>28</sup> Canada's specific form of nationalism, its welfare state, the 1960s emergence of notions of cultural nationalism and cultural imperialism, Canada's various postcolonial and ethnic racialized identities, as well as ongoing attempts to forge a distinctly Canadian form of postnationalism are among the subjects that could constitute areas of intersection with inter-Americas studies.

Whereas US-based Americanists who advocate hemispheric work have begun to respond to scholarship in Latin American studies, they have almost completely ignored North American perspectives emerging outside the United States. The exclusion of Canada from hemispheric frameworks is often grounded in assumptions about the country's internal homogeneity and similarity to the United States.<sup>29</sup> Satirized in *Canadian Bacon* (1994) in which one of the characters declares that Canada is "even whiter than the United States," this view overlooks the country's development of a pluralist national identity, manifested in official (if flawed) policies of multiculturalism and in the admission of a proportionately larger number of immigrants and refugees.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the treatment of Canadian diversity as an extension of US theoretical paradigms assumes processes of racialization in Canada to be similar to those in the United States.

Both approaches fail to consider Canada's tradition of weak nationalism and the association of state-sponsored nationalism after the Second World War with politically left-leaning intellectual traditions, which differ from the more patriotic

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- 28 American studies have a slightly more complex history, which includes radical roots in the 1930s and 1940s (Denning, 1996). The field grew under the conditions of Second World War nationalism and patriotism, and was eventually institutionalized during the Cold War. The New Americanists largely reacted against the prevailing "myth and symbol school" of the 1960s, which aimed to define the distinctiveness of the US national character against what were believed to be its exclusively European origins.
- 29 John Carlos Rowe, for example, theorizes a "North American studies" model that would demand "investigations of how the many different Americas and Canada have historically influenced and interpreted each other" (Rowe, 2000: 13). In referring to Canada in the singular but to the United States in the plural, Rowe reiterates the common view of Canada as an internally homogeneous nation. We are indebted to Traister (2002) for making this same point.
- 30 Compared to 9.3% of the US population that was foreign-born in 1997, 14% of Canada's population was made up of recent immigrants and refugees at the time of the 1996 census (Statistics Canada, 1999; US Census Bureau, 2002). Canada's official policy of multiculturalism has been widely critiqued as a means to undercut Québec's demands for special recognition by bestowing recognition on other cultural groups.

US versions that post-nationalist American studies has been trying to overcome. Canada has been described as a “nation without nationality” (Spicer, 1991), a “state-nation” where state, business, and elite interventions were needed to create a sense of national identity (Gwyn, 1995). Canada’s historically weak sense of nationalism can be linked to the country’s relatively short history as an independent nation-state (as formalized in the 1931 Statute of Westminster), its historical, cultural, and economic similarities with the United States, and its internal diversity, including its French- and English-speaking divide. Québec has described itself as a separate nation in a way that resembles Canadian rhetoric about the country’s difference from the United States. Thus, nationalism in its supposed pan-Canadian form has almost exclusively been an English-Canadian notion. Whereas Québécois studies are common in French-language universities, Canadian studies have mainly become institutionalized in English-speaking institutions of higher learning.

As is the case with many Third World countries or regions, the Canadian search for a stronger form of nationalism since its transition from colony to independent nationhood has been affiliated with leftist positions, while anti-nationalists have been situated on the right of the political spectrum (Heninghan, 2002: 174). After the Second World War, state intervention in economic, social, political and cultural life increased to the extent that it became one of the chief characteristics of the Canadian nation (Mackey, 1999: 53). A growing spirit of nationalism among Canadian elites, which turned any economic, social, or cultural challenge into an assertion of autonomy and which was linked to ideas of US cultural imperialism, supported the creation of a strong social-democratic welfare state and the expansion of public enterprise and public service economies (Clarkson, 2002: 415).

Even though attempts at establishing a sense of progressive state-sponsored nationalism originated in the period after the Second World War, Canadian studies programs and Canadian specializations in traditional departments only emerged in the 1960s and 1970s amid intensified fears of Americanization and in the general context of rising anti-Americanism fuelled by the Vietnam War.<sup>31</sup> The most important benchmark in the formalization of Canadian studies was a 1973 report by the Commission on Canadian studies. Entitled *To Know Ourselves*, the report declared that Canada’s post-secondary institutions had not sufficiently assisted Canadians in understanding and appreciating their country’s heritage, contemporary

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31 Efforts to protect Canadian culture after World War II were manifested in the establishment of four major commissions. The Massey Commission (1949) focused on the arts, letters, and science; the Fowler Commission (1955) on radio and television broadcasting; the O’Leary Commission (1961) on magazine publishing, and the Laurendeau Commission (1963) on bilingualism and biculturalism (Mackey, 1999: 54).

character, problems, and potential (Cameron, 1996: 21). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, scholars of history, literature, sociology, and political science set out to define “Canadianness” by offering narratives of national development, accounts of Canada’s emergence as a world player, and theories of national identity. Although Canadian studies have been better integrated across the humanities and social sciences than American studies, the nationalist movement was especially influential in the field of literature and culture. A number of literary critics and other prominent literary figures such as Northrop Frye, Margaret Atwood, and W.H. New became involved in attempts to establish Canadian literature as a separate field of study and to forge a sense of a literary nationalism where not much of one had previously existed.<sup>32</sup> These efforts were also supported by the Canadian state and often framed in terms of cultural protectionism directed at the regulation of US cultural presence in Canada. In its attempt to differentiate between two national North American identities, the cultural nationalist movement constructed a white (mostly British) Canadian settler identity that largely excluded considerations of internal Canadian ethnic and racial differences.

By the 1980s, however, the nationalist movement in Canadian studies along with popular and elite support for the country’s welfare state and its various policies of cultural protectionism came to an end. In the 1970s, the Canadian state established an official policy of multiculturalism to recognize and manage issues of internal cultural diversity without endangering its project of nation building. As Canada’s national identity became de-linked from the welfare state, it became associated with the image of the “multicultural mosaic.” With the implementation of various Canada–US trade agreements starting in the early 1990s, the Canadian state increasingly weakened through integration into an unevenly liberalized hemispheric economy dominated by the United States, and the search for stronger forms of Canadian nationhood diminished. In Canadian studies, a unified national perspective was replaced by a variety of approaches including environmental studies, regional studies, and work on race and ethnicity. The latter framework and its tenuous connection to state-sponsored multiculturalism in particular has encouraged efforts to rethink Canada as a model “post-national” state by adding Canada’s growing internal diversity to the acknowledgement of the country’s historically weak sense of national integration (Davey, 1993; Gwyn, 1995). Rather

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32 For a concise characterization of the Canadian literary tradition and its relationship to cultural nationalism, see Davey (1993). The process of canon formation included an increase in Canadian literature courses in public schools and universities, growing government support for writers and for library purchases of Canadian literature, and the re-publication of out-of-print 19<sup>th</sup>-century Canadian texts (Lecker, 1993: 40–42).

than attempting to move beyond the nationalist roots of the field as in American studies, Canadian post-nationalism, then, also aims to recast the country's weak sense of nationhood in terms of its increasing internal heterogeneity.

Throughout the 1980s, the postcolonial focus on Canada's status as a settler-colony expanded to include theories of ongoing domination by the United States and to describe the identities of Québécois, indigenous peoples, and some of Canada's other racialized groups.<sup>33</sup> Especially indigenous Canadians as well as South Asian and Caribbean communities that grew after the elimination of racist immigration legislation in the late 1960s have become associated with postcolonial theory.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, Canada's longstanding black and East Asian communities – and their association with slavery, 19<sup>th</sup>-century exploitation, and exclusionary immigration law – have been primarily imagined through US ethnic studies frameworks.

In fact, the connection of Asian and African Canadian communities with US ethnic studies theories has actually delayed their status as independent objects of study.<sup>35</sup> East Asian literary productions, such as the work of the Eaton sisters and of Joy Kogawa, were incorporated into the US Asian American literary tradition to construct a sense of Asian American pan-ethnic literature. Within African American studies, on the other hand, Canada was invoked as a means to challenge the US history of slavery (Lo, 2001). Scholars like George Elliott Clarke (1996) and Rinaldo Walcott (1997) have shown that, except for acknowledging the role of Canada as a haven for runaway slaves, African American and black diaspora studies have either considered black Canadians an extension of African American culture or continued to exclude African Canadians from their increasingly more transnational theoretical paradigms (as has Paul Gilroy's influential model of the black Atlantic). This simple extension of US-based paradigms has thus failed to recognize the distinctiveness of Canada's ethnic and racial communities.

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33 For examples of work on Canada as a “newly postcolonial country,” see Bennett (1993–4). For criticism of this approach's tendency to overlook significant distinctions between a Commonwealth settler colony and Third World postcolonial nations, see Hutcheon (1989) and Chanady (1994). The application of postcolonial theory to Québec is, however, widely resisted (Heninghan, 2002: 81).

34 See, for example, Fee's argument that indigenous Canadians, unlike other ethnic groups in Canada, have been primarily interested in constructing a sense of pan-nationalism and protecting their status as sovereign nations (Fee, 1994: 684).

35 On the belated, mid-1990s development of Asian Canadian studies, despite similar exploitation of Chinese labor in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the exclusion of Chinese immigrants during most of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the internment and repatriation of Japanese Canadians during World War II, and the exclusion of immigrants from India between 1908 and 1951, see Miki (1995), Beauregard (1999), and Goellnicht (2000, “Long Labor”).

Except for Native or First Nations studies, which now exist at universities in almost every Canadian province, the analysis of racialized cultures has not become widely institutionalized in the form of separate programs or departments.<sup>36</sup> Canada's weak nationalism, in addition to a variety of other factors, has discouraged the emergence of oppositional models of ethnic identity and consequently of radical movements centered on identity and race (with the exception of Québécois separatism) that would have urged the creation of such programs. As Donald Goellnicht asks, "is Canada itself so devoid of a national identity, the collective psyche so divided and splintered, the nation so geographically regionalized, that it is virtually impossible for a national ethnic minority identity to assemble itself in a Canadian context?" (Goellnicht, 2000, "Long Labor": 19).

Because of its fragile nationalist mission and its much shorter institutional history compared to American and Latin American studies, Canadian studies today are not firmly entrenched at Canadian universities in the form of separate academic departments or programs. Compared to literary studies, history and the social sciences have been able to maintain greater public interest in their disciplinary focus on Canadian historical and political development (Maclulich, 1984–5: 33). For example, while the demand for Canadian foreign policy classes increased throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Nossal, 2000: 103), Canadian studies courses have generally disappeared from university curricula and entire programs have folded (Symons, 2000: 29).

Manifesting the decline of cultural nationalist orientations in Canadian studies, then, the turn toward post-nationalism in Canada represents a move beyond simplistic notions of US cultural imperialism that originally neglected Canada's internal heterogeneity and promoted ideas about the country's supposed superiority vis-à-vis its neighbor. In some of its less progressive forms, however, Canadian post-nationalism also signals the acceptance of an increasingly weakened Canadian welfare state and of continuing US economic, political, and cultural domination.

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36 The examination of Native peoples has largely been separated from the analysis of other Canadian "visible minorities." To this day indigenous peoples constitute a much higher proportion of Canada's total population than they do of the United States, largely because British colonial policies recognized aboriginal land rights in North America and afforded Canada's First Nations greater integrity and cultural persistence than many US tribes (J. Miller, 1993: 373). The first full-time, degree-granting Native Studies program was created at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario in 1969 (Price, 1978: 9), and others soon followed. In contrast, there exist few other ethnic studies programs, such as an Asia-Canada studies minor program at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia and a Centre for the Study of Black Culture at York University, Ontario.

The acquiescence to what is, as in the Latin American context, described as “Americanization” even allows for the celebration of Canada’s eventual “dissolution” and its potential economic and political incorporation into the United States through adoption of the US dollar and/or abolition of the Canada–US border.

This understanding of post-nationalism overlooks the potential for the emergence of alternatives to neoliberalism from a specifically Canadian standpoint. Such alternatives could be rooted in the country’s experiences of a strong and progressive welfare state with a comparatively weak sense of nationalism, its attempts at the official recognition of ethnic and racial diversity, its relatively marginal status on a global scale, and its continued oppositional stance vis-à-vis the United States. As Imre Szeman has argued, any form of Canadian post-nationalism will need to continually return to the idea of the nation because of the country’s peripheral status (Szeman, 1998: 32). Or, as Richard Cavell has put it, Canadian post-nationalism will always find itself in the paradoxical situation of having to “celebrate the nation as a function of dismissing it” (Cavell, 2000: 10).

In writer Stephen Heninghan’s words, the Canadian experience of globalization has entailed “the traumatic demolition of our national sense of being by Free Trade and NAFTA-based “harmonization,” to the point where our particular individual experiences of society have become intangible and inexpressible” (Heninghan, 2002: 178). Canadians have experienced globalization primarily as an intensified assault on national policies and identity in favor of US institutions, norms and values (Cameron, 1996: 9), especially on the country’s social welfare policies and its more liberal immigration legislation. Exhibiting a degree of direct foreign (US) ownership unparalleled anywhere on the globe, Canada has also reaped far fewer benefits from economic integration under 1990s trade agreements than the United States has, in terms of increased market share and job creation (Panitch, 1996: 82).

The examination of such questions appears to have moved into the realm of popular culture, where much of the declining field’s cultural nationalistic rhetoric is being recycled. As of late, the most popular items of Canadian mass culture have been a series of Molson beer commercials articulating the particularity (and often the superiority) of Canadian culture as opposed to that of the United States. In the most famous commercial “I am Canadian,” for example, Canadians are extolled for believing in “peace keeping not policing” and for supporting concepts of “diversity, not assimilation.”<sup>37</sup> While it may appear a return to 1960s nationalism and

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37 While work in Canadian communication or media studies was greatly influential in 1960s cultural nationalist debates, little scholarship on Canadian popular culture or cultural studies exists today. The Canadian Association of Cultural Studies was founded

to ideas of cultural imperialism, the commercial manifests a sense of Canadian opposition to globalization, expressed in the awareness that North American integration has obliterated too much of Canada's cultural and political particularity.

Drawing on the left-leaning traditions of Canadian nationalism, political scientist Stephen Clarkson has recently argued for a "post-globalist" Canadian state rooted in the specificities of the country's political culture. Clarkson does not recommend that Canada return to its 1960s welfare state or to its policies of cultural and economic nationalism. Instead he proposes that the Canadian state recuperate its unused powers by establishing a more equitable society and by rebuilding a degenerated public infrastructure, his plans including increasing support for public schools and universities, universal health care, and Canadian cultural expression (Clarkson, 2002: 427). Clarkson also highlights the positive effects of protectionist cultural policies that would ensure Canada greater representation on a global and regional level. He concedes that such changes will require the cooperation of hemispheric and global systems of governance with similar post-globalist values. Similar to Latin American thinkers like Roger Bartra, Clarkson emphasizes the nation-state's unfulfilled potential to represent public interests vis-à-vis neo-liberal forms of globalization. Because they are rooted in specific manifestations of nationalism in regions of the Americas outside the United States, these counter-narratives to neoliberal forms of globalization could become a useful starting point for more sophisticated theories of corporate transnational expansion and US domination in a hemispheric context.

Because of its complex relationship to questions of state-sponsored nationalism and the nation-state as well as its long history of US domination, Canada constitutes an important location from which inter-Americas scholars in Canada, the United States, and other locations could rethink the role of the nation within theories of globalization. Unlike Latin American studies, however, Canadian studies have not yet been considered a potential component of US-based hemispheric models of study. And despite a longstanding tendency to question the motivations behind US scholarship on Canada and to lament the presence of US scholars in Canadian academia, Canada-based Canadianists currently do not seem to view hemispheric paradigms as a threat.<sup>38</sup> The case may be different for US-based Canadianists, some

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as recently as 2002, and a Canadian journal of cultural studies called *TOPIA* was inaugurated the same year.

38 Canadianists often construe US scholars' motivations for their work on Canada as a prelude to takeover (Winks, 1993: 3). At the highpoint of cultural nationalism, these attitudes hardened to the point that US Canadianists were largely ignored for committee positions in professional organizations (Winks, 1993: 7).



of whom are affiliated with the few Canadian studies programs that have existed at US institutions since the 1960s.<sup>39</sup> In contrast to most US area studies programs including Latin American studies, Canadian studies originally developed without significant federal or foundational support and have remained relatively small (Alper and Monahan, 1997: 173). Scholarship in history, literature, and political science produced in these institutional sites has not significantly influenced the inter-American framework that has emerged in the US academy, possibly because, as Donald K. Alper and Robert L. Monahan have argued, it has not been sufficiently comparative (Alper and Monahan, 1997: 176).<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, Canadian studies programs, especially those situated in US institutions near the border or in universities with a long history of Canadian inquiry, are still active today, some having expanded into more social science-oriented North American studies programs that sometimes also encompass Mexico or Latin America.<sup>41</sup> These recent developments promise the reinvigoration of Canadian studies from within the United States at the same time that they also support the emergence of comparative and internationalist work which includes perspectives from abroad.

## Future Directions for Inter-Americas Studies

The preceding analysis shows that Latin American and Canadian area studies models have encountered markedly different theoretical issues than American studies when entering into a hemispheric perspective. While American studies have yet to engage deeply with the social sciences' theories of globalization, the social sciences figure more prominently in Latin American studies and have also been strong in Canadian studies. In these two fields, the current push for hemispheric

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39 US-based scholarship on Canada emerged in the 1940s and 1950s and was centered in history departments. Throughout the 1980s, interest shifted to economics, business, political science, economic geography, law, and on occasion, anthropology or sociology (Winks, 1993: 7–8). Today US-based Canadian studies are represented by the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States (ASCUS), which produces the *American Review of Canadian Studies* and has a national secretariat in Washington, DC.

40 The extensive work on Canada–US borderlands, produced with the support of the Canadian-American Center at the University of Maine, constitutes a notable exception. In general, there exists more comparative scholarship in economics and business than in history or literature (Lipset, 1993: 407).

41 In 1998, for example, Duke's Center for North American Studies broadened its original focus from Canadian studies to include comparative and international relations research about the United States, Canada, and Mexico.



frameworks is often linked to developments toward continental integration under NAFTA and other regional trade agreements. Postcolonial theory has also entered the three disciplines in different ways. Postcolonial rethinking of US ethnicity within Chicana/o-Latina/o and border studies frameworks have become central to the emergence of New Americanist positions and, more recently, to the hemispheric perspective within American studies. The postcolonial inquiry into the cultures of Latin America within Latin American studies, in contrast, has been modeled after the South Asian Subaltern Studies Group and has yet to fully explore that the US–Mexico border cuts both ways (Romero, 1995: 796) – that is, that issues of trans-national ethnicity may also be of interest to area studies. And in Canadian studies, postcolonial theory has foregrounded Canada's status as a settler-invader colony, described the country's subordinate relationship to the United States, and facilitated the study of some of its linguistic and racialized communities.

In addition, individual disciplines have been shaped by differing valuations of nationalism and conflicting attitudes toward the role of the nation in cultural production. American and Canadian studies both originated in nationalist projects that set out to link literary production to the nation-state. In Canadian studies (as in Latin American studies), however, the nation-state is often theorized as a guarantor of sovereignty from the United States and as a potential means of advancing alternative forms of globalization. While Latin American studies have been characterized by perennial tensions among national, regional, and continental perspectives, national studies remain strong, especially in Latin American countries. Despite the field's general rejection of reductive area studies models dating from the 1920s, Latin America still tends to be represented in many US academic disciplines as though it were a single country. We hope that the recognition of the singular and distinctive in the disciplines we have addressed will provide inter-Americas scholars with strategies for theorizing the role of the United States in the hemisphere and for guarding against possible US domination of the emerging field.

We only have space to mention a few examples of recent work on the Americas that make us optimistic about the possibilities of this incipient research area. Spanning the fields of American studies, comparative literature, and Latina/o studies, Kirsten Silva Gruesz's *Ambassadors of Culture* (2002) develops an alternative version of the American Renaissance that broadens its purview beyond US events like the Civil War and Reconstruction to include an analysis of the development of US expansionism. While Gruesz primarily emphasizes the Latin American-US relationship, her book also addresses the importance of Niagara Falls, a Canada-US border region, for 19<sup>th</sup>-century Latin American poets. In addition to this literary historical perspective, comparative approaches to historical

and contemporary issues in North America have emerged that revolve around intra-ethnic or diasporic questions. Such work focuses comparatively on indigenous American peoples, explores Asian immigration and settlement in the Americas, and advances research on histories of slavery and more generally on the black presence in the hemisphere.<sup>42</sup> Other scholarship has answered longstanding calls to examine similarities between various ethnic and diasporic communities. For example, in her work on early 20<sup>th</sup>-century undocumented Chinese immigration across the Canada–US and Mexico–US borders, historian Erika Lee (2002) has reconceived these movements as precursors of Mexican immigration and as indicators of future border enforcements. A third trajectory for hemispheric Americas scholarship has been the focus on contemporary developments in the hemisphere and their relationship to cultural production. Pamela Maria Smorkaloff (1994), for example, has placed hemispheric literary production, publishing, and distribution in the context of developments associated with NAFTA, discussing Latin American, US Latina/o, and Canadian artists and writers, as well as inter-sections between Latin American and Canadian border narratives.<sup>43</sup> In addition, scholarship in communication studies spearheaded by José Manuel Valenzuela Arce (1994) and Emile McAnany and Kenton Wilkinson (1996), among others, has traced the impact of economic trade agreements on national and crossborder media industries in Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

While adopting a hemispheric perspective asks scholars to rethink the meaning of disciplinary scholarship in general, the work of these scholars also suggests some additional future trajectories for inter-Americas studies. Among other topics well-suited to the hemispheric perspective are the interrelationship among social, political, cultural, and economic developments in the Americas; migration, cultural production, and change in border areas; transnational cultural exchange within and among specific ethnic and racial groups; and comparative historical accounts of nation-state formation and national, regional, and ethnic identities. Additionally, inter-Americas studies may foster scholarship on contemporary

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42 For examples of comparative work on indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States, see Price (1978) and Nichols (1998). For comparative scholarship on Asian Canadians and Asian Americans, see Goellnicht (2000, “Bones”). For work on Asians in Latin America, see Ong (1999), Hu-DeHart (1999), and Rachel C. Lee (1999). For work on hemispheric histories of slavery, see Handley (2000) and Cox (2001). For work on the Latina/o presence in Canada, see Basok’s research (2002) on Mexican migrant workers.

43 For work that comparatively addresses cultural productions about the Mexico–US and Canada–US borders, see Brégent-Heald (2003).

issues such as the evolution of radical politics on the continent, environmentalism, workers' rights, feminism, and movements challenging NAFTA and its planned extension into the FTAA.<sup>44</sup> Still other perspectives may draw on comparative urban studies in the hemisphere, incorporating architecture and concepts of public space (e.g. Herzog, 1999). Material culture studies that focus on products of the Americas, from cocaine to bananas, would also stand to gain from an expanded geographical framework capable of tracing the entire circuit of commodity production and consumption.<sup>45</sup>

Scattered throughout the United States, Latin America, Canada, and other international sites, inter-Americas scholars need to establish closer contact with one another across disciplinary, regional, and national borders and to urge the reconfiguration of existing interdisciplinary fields in the United States and elsewhere. We put our faith in interdisciplinarity, for, as Linda Kerber has put it, while the marginal position of interdisciplinary programs always implies great risks, it also promises great potential (Kerber, 1989: 425). As inter-Americas studies become a more formalized area of research, however, they will also need to maintain their current openness vis-à-vis other emerging models of transnational and global studies.

By way of conclusion, we call for a collaborative and dialogic model of inter-Americas studies that moves across the various geographies of the Americas or that allows for more comparative views on the hemisphere to emerge. We envision inter-Americas studies to be a framework that will enable scholars to explore hemispheric phenomena in depth, rather than a new paradigm that seeks to displace national (and other) geographic categories of analysis. Given our own disciplinary locations, we are interested in the United States' role in the hemisphere; however, we do not imagine that all inter-Americas scholarship will necessarily contain a US component. In our view, inter-Americas studies could also draw on comparative analyses developed by Canadianists on Latin America or by Latin Americanists on Canada, not to mention other potential projects developed by specialists in fields not covered in this article.<sup>46</sup> The new transnational geographical models emerging

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44 For comparative social sciences approaches to economic and immigration issues involving Mexico, Canada, and the United States, see Drache (1993) and Driscoll (1995).

45 Virginia Scott Jenkins' *Bananas: An American History* (2000) and Steven Soderbergh's movie *Traffic* (2000), for example, would have been enriched by focusing more on the sites that produce the commodities they study. For examples that do utilize an expanded frame of analysis, see Barrientos et al. (1999) and Brandt (1999).

46 Although the topic lies outside the scope of this article, inter-Americas research also needs to interface with work on the hemisphere and its trans-Atlantic European

in the US academy are to a degree consistent with US economic policies promoting globalization, and they have been supported by large-scale initiatives on the part of traditional area studies funding institutions (Bérubé, 2003; Cumings, 2002). US Americanists are in a position to respond either critically or complacently to these developments; it seems that manifesting a greater interest in the political and economic implications of globalization would be a positive first step. If Americanists are to internationalize their field without becoming unwitting ambassadors of a US-inspired “world without boundaries” (Cumings, 2002: 286), they need to travel abroad, engage in scholarly dialogue in languages other than English, and interest themselves in scholarship produced outside the United States and outside their own field. Until they do so, we fear that an Americanist-led hemispherism will only promote a vision of the Americas in which all academic disciplinary configurations are subordinate to those of the United States and in which every region outside of the United States is collapsed into a monolithic other.<sup>47</sup>

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connections. Such projects are under way at the University of Central Lancashire's Department of Cultural Studies, at the Center for Advanced Study on the Internationality of National Literatures at the University of Göttingen, Germany, and at the Maastricht Center for Transatlantic Studies, launched in 1995 by a consortium of universities from the United States, Mexico, and Europe (Buchenau and Messmer, 2001). In Mexico, the National Autonomous University (UNAM) has a Center for US Studies, while throughout Latin America individual scholars in literary and cultural studies have dedicated themselves to US-oriented American studies. Thank you to Virginia Domínguez for this last piece of information.

47 We thank Robert McKee Irwin for his insightful comments on this section.

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## **American Studies Without Tears, or What Does America Want?<sup>1</sup>**

I want to start with a simple proposition: America does not make Americanists happy. As Americanists, we commonly approach “America” with suspicion, fear, even anger; we view it as a powerful, duplicitous force to be denounced or demystified.<sup>2</sup> I want to speculate on why this might be so and in particular to consider what I see as the troubled relationships at the heart of this dilemma—relations between pleasure and knowledge, and between sentiment and critique. This trouble is evident in the difficulties we experience in working through this relationship in our critical approaches, the difficulties in balancing intellectual comprehension and emotional apprehension of America. I will be reflecting on aspects of our intellectual relationships to America as an object of knowledge, to American studies as the field formation that frames that object, and to the field imaginary that shapes American studies. I will posit the field imaginary as a sphere of collective knowledge that is regulated by disciplinary practices but also as a field of less-regulated desires. And so I also want to consider what the construction of a field imaginary leaves out, what it represses or disavows, in producing America as an object of knowledge. In an attempt to illustrate some of these rather abstract considerations in relation to critical practice, I will conclude by looking at a photographic image.

To propose that America does not make Americanists happy is not to suggest we do not take pleasure in selected aspects of American culture—indeed, that pleasure is often defining of the topics we choose to write about—but this pleasure, I suggest, is itself a sublimation of the troubled relationship we have to our primary object of knowledge, “America,” which for all our theoretical acumen and critical demystifications remains a stubborn, defining totality. Of course, part of the problem here is that our object of knowledge is not innocent; it is a geopolitical

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1 This essay was first published in the *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 1.1 (2009): 1–13. Reprinted here with permission.

2 The references to “Americanists” and the use of third-person identifications with this category are intended to designate my own emplacement and identification as a European Americanist.

entity, and so, critical perspectives in American Studies are always caught up in mirroring the mutations of this entity, while the field imaginary remains tethered to formations of state power, haunted by and compulsively reiterating the cold war origins of the field.

For many Americanists, critical distance is a mirror of intellectual and emotional distance—we are wary of sentiment, we are wary of nationalism—and antipathy toward or suspicion of America can function as an ethical stance. But I want to suggest that this is a pathological stance, a positionality conditioned by our troubled sense of the relationship between pleasure and knowledge and characterized by the hermeneutics of suspicion that underlies much of our critical practice. All too often, we treat our object of knowledge as a problem to be solved or, what amounts to the same thing, we project its meaning in the frame of our interpretations. The urge, often, is to demystify, to reveal the truth, the horror of American power. This can be a productive and enlightening approach, but there are other ways to engage the object, ways that are less involved in acts of interpretive mastery and that make the relationality of critic and object a key component of the field of investigation.<sup>3</sup>

The idea is to turn analysis of America toward questions of process and affect and to put in question the critic's position: what demand, desire, or need is expressed by America? Who or what is the target of that demand, desire, or need? What demand, desire, or need do we express in return? In following this idea, somewhat speculatively, I will posit America as a phantasm—an imaginary projection of our disciplinary knowledge and of our less-disciplined desires—to argue that America often functions to condition our sense of the Real (including our “passion for the real”) and so also functions as a vanishing mediator of our identities, ethical, political, and critical.<sup>4</sup>

## The Trouble with American Studies

We are not surprised at the allure of America in the real and imaginary worlds of others (indeed, some of us analyze this allure, often via the study of popular

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3 This is hardly an original suggestion. By suggesting we shift our critical encounters with America from a model of interpretation to a model of recognition, I am building on distinct theoretical models, including psychoanalytical and feminist forms of cultural analysis. See, for example, Jessica Benjamin, *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

4 On the concept of a “passion for the real,” see Alain Badiou, *Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Polity, 2007).

culture), but what happens to that allure, that fascination, in our own worlds as American studies scholars and students? Were we not once hailed by America (interpellated by America); was this not some part of the reason why we chose to study America? What happens to that allure and fascination? One answer, of course, is that it becomes tempered, perhaps curtailed, certainly disciplined, through our academic studies of America. It becomes an object of knowledge; we learn different ways to frame it, to write about it, to talk about it. Different paradigms emerge to reframe that object, and these are constantly shifting under pressure of new knowledge formations. American studies has arguably been more prone to “paradigm dramas” than most disciplines, a state of perpetual conceptual transformation that characterizes the field imaginary.

The allure of America within the formation of American studies is of course differently conditioned and rooted in different parts of the world. It can pose a reflexive relationship to the disciplinary field that is much less commonly invoked in Europe than it is in the United States. U.S. Americanists have a more self-conscious relationship to the history and boundaries of the field; we might even say an obsessive relationship. The cold war origins of the discipline and the contingent associations with nationalism and exceptionalism have been widely perceived as an intellectual burden by U.S. Americanists. The so-called New Americanist movement of the 1980s and 1990s took much of its intellectual energy from formulating and deconstructing this narrative of burden. The result is that the field imaginary in the U.S. is marked by a powerful sense of agonism, which for the U.S. Americanist is both strategic and libidinal—strategic in that it allows them to continuously renew their field operations and libidinal in that this is often an obsessional or spectacular activity with its own rites and rituals. One such ritual is the presidential address of the annual American Studies Association conference, a genre in which the expectation is that the new president will revisit the origins and history of the field to discuss the blindnesses and insights of its development and to provide a corrective vision on current paradigm dramas. Such ritual returns to origins as a means to envision a better future have suggestive symmetries with the genre of the jeremiad. One of the most absorbing articulations was Janice Radway’s famous presidential address in 1998, “What’s in a Name?”—rhetorical evidence, if it were needed, that U.S. Americanists wear America on their chests like a scarlet letter.<sup>5</sup>

In Europe, on the other hand, it is relatively rare to find Americanists obsessing about the history of the field. This is not to suggest that European American studies

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5 Janice A. Radway, “What’s in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 20 November 1998,” *American Quarterly* 51.1 (1999): 1–32.

does not have its own complex histories of intellectual affiliation and disavowal, but it has only barely begun to acknowledge its origins as a “Euro- American” paradigm of knowledge formation shaped by the cultural wakes of the Second World War and the geopolitical emergence of the cold war.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, the field of American studies in Europe has become more questioning of American exceptionalism in recent years, engaging some of the academic discourses that seek to dislocate the nation as axis of focus—the transnational, the postnational, the transatlantic, the Black Atlantic, the circumatlantic—which all offer frames that European Americanists are becoming keen to discuss, and I believe these more comparative frames offer promising grounds for the critical inquiries about American empire that are needed to make European American studies critically commensurate to the current international crises.

However, the legacies of “Euro-American” studies still linger and require comment. For much of the last fifty years, European Americanists have tended to write as though part of a transatlantic intellectual class and in so doing have not questioned but lent support to the authority of U.S.-centered knowledge based in American institutions and publishers. Until recent years they have been generally disinclined to engage homegrown theoretical movements until after those movements had been digested by U.S. American studies and fed back to Europe. The German Americanist Heinz Ickstadt makes the point that “although European theories (structuralism and poststructuralism, or the sophisticated socialism of the Frankfurt School) had a considerable impact in the United States, they influenced American studies in Europe only after they had been absorbed and recycled as deconstructionism, or new historicism, or feminist theory.”<sup>7</sup> The relation of American studies in Europe to American and European circuits of knowledge production are of course much more complex than Ickstadt summarizes, but his point has force in reminding us of the spell of intellectual authority cast by American academia.

European Americanists find themselves in a peculiar bind; after all, “America” is our purported object of study, the *raison d’être* of our professionalization, and the privileged medium for our passions for the Real. By this last comment I do not mean to suggest that European Americanists are bound to false consciousness; rather, there is a tendency within European-based American studies (differentially located and articulated) to study the sign of America as a locus of otherness or

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6 See Liam Kennedy, “Spectres of Comparison: American Studies and the United States of the West,” *Comparative American Studies* 4.2 (2006): 135–50.

7 Heinz Ickstadt, “Teaching American Studies Abroad: The European Experience,” *U.S. Society and Values* 1.15 (1996), <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/1096/ijse/icks.htm>.

difference, without pursuing what I think is the necessary concomitant of such study: asking how this passion for the Real structures our intellectual frames of inquiry (not to mention our cultural fantasies)—here I am thinking, for example, of the romance or fetishization of the trope of race in European studies of American culture. What might we learn about the investment in race (most commonly translated as “blackness”) by European Americanists as they constructed various national syllabi of American studies in the 1950s and 1960s, say? Why has there been such overdetermined attention to African American history and culture in the canons of European American studies? Why is it that, in Europe, the “problem” of race is so often identified as the problem of America? In part, I suggest, it is because race offers an opportunity to productively disidentify with America—that is, to identify with, to take pleasure in, exploring what America has seemingly disavowed in its own identity.

I intend no summary judgment; rather I want to draw attention to this aspect of European American studies as evidence of the troubled relationships between pleasure and knowledge, between sentiment and critique, which I referred to earlier. For many years American studies has functioned as a marginal or alternative academic space throughout Europe, attracting scholars, teachers, and students who wanted to work beyond the boundaries of what had come to seem traditional disciplines. This sense of a marginal or alternative academic perspective that American studies can lend in many institutional settings outside the U.S. should not be underestimated as a very valuable impetus for (critical) study of the U.S., but it can also function as a prison-house of representation, reproducing an American exceptionalism through the valorization of American culture as sites of marginality, of dissent, of the new and subversive. In short, the field imaginary of American studies in Europe has all too often coalesced with the marginalized self-image of faculty and displaced more local, nonacademic concerns onto the phantasm called “America.”

For Europeans who purport to write as Americanists, a more careful attention to our frames and grounds of interpretation is required. This means that European Americanists should be wary of the Atlantic divide as a device of disengagement. Writing in *American Quarterly*, Heinz Ickstadt suggests that European scholars “can look at the United States as an object of political, social, and cultural analysis without running the risk of being considered chauvinistic or parochial,” a privileged “outside- position”—but this is the privilege of a view from nowhere, and I do not think European Americanists should endorse it as a way to frame “America.”<sup>8</sup> Rather,

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8 Heinz Ickstadt, “American Studies in an Age of Globalization,” *American Quarterly* 54.4 (2002): 543–62.

we should look to understand the dialectics and dynamics of our investments in our object of knowledge as they shape and are shaped by the field imaginary.

This privileged “outside-position” assumed by European Americanists is an illusion that facilitates certain ways of thinking about and writing about America, and is further sustained by a fallacy of critical distance that misrecognizes the relationship between the subject and the object of knowledge. This fallacy has begun to show signs of strain in recent years, in part due to the emergence of transnational paradigms of American studies and more recently due to the imperial extensions of American power under conditions of national security as the state pursues a war on terror. This advent of the American empire has made it more difficult to maintain the illusion of a view from nowhere. The U.S. government’s stated commitment to a “war of ideas” as a crucial component of the “war on terror” has deeply politicized the production and dissemination of knowledge. This includes the production and dissemination of the meanings of “America,” a matter of some importance for those associated with the field of American studies. This “war of ideas” is a sublimated political warfare, a cultural front of America’s hegemonic ambitions. It is a war that American studies should not ignore as “we” are already caught up in it. It is a war that (ex)poses the question of American studies’ relation to the state.

## Beware of the Chickens

The U.S. Americanist Paul Bové has written a troubled reflection on the complicity of “‘progressive’ American studies” with “the business of the state.” Bové poses the question, “Can American studies be area studies?” to answer “No,” because it does not “exist to provide authoritative knowledge to the state” and because “American studies best serves the interests of the nation-state in terms of hegemony and culture rather than policy.” While he stresses the impossibility of American studies becoming area studies, he uses this question to underline his view that American studies intellectuals misrecognize the workings of the state: “American studies scholars have principally focused on matters of culture and history, the areas of ‘civil society’ or ‘the public sphere,’ acting as if, in this way, they were accessing the U.S. state through its extensions.... nor do they take the fact of the U.S. state as itself an agent that must be confronted, in itself, by means of detailed, concrete, material and theoretical analyses.”<sup>9</sup>

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9 Paul A. Bové, “Can American Studies Be Area Studies?” in *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 222, 206.

I believe Bové is right to argue that American studies scholarship has not tended to recognize the specificity of the state in formations of “American” power and knowledge, but I question his need to bracket off “the theory of the extended state” as the terrain of civil society and redundant cultural theorizing. His realist model of state power is limiting and suggestive of a parochial vision. To some degree, Bové’s pained skepticism is symptomatic of a very American American studies perception of the global immanence of an empire that has no externality. Bové summons the unipolar specter of the American imperium to ask: “If America has had this structural intent to be identical to the world—for what else can it mean to be the world’s only remaining superpower—then where can American studies people stand to get a view of all this?” (232). The spatial logic of Bové’s question—that there is nowhere for American studies scholars to stand, given their epistemological blindness—verifies the unipolarity of U.S. global power.

This is bleak and I think ultimately unhelpful, though Bové’s essay is a brave and challenging intervention—its title, “Can American Studies Be Area Studies?” is one of the two most important rhetorical questions posed of American studies in the last ten years; the other is Janice Radway’s “What’s in a Name?” It is fitting to mention them together because they both exist in a curious dyadic relation to their object of knowledge—they share a conceptual bind, a corner into which many U.S. Americanists paint themselves once they interrogate the aporia of America as the locus and focus of American studies. A similar point may be made of the New Americanists more generally—as Donald Pease has recently remarked, they worked to imagine new ways of “becoming Americanist otherwise,” a postnational project that worked to dislocate the nation from its geopolitical and intellectual axes while remaining in a complex supplementary relationship with the national narratives of American studies.<sup>10</sup> (This double bind is the inverse to the fallacy of critical distance enjoyed by European Americanists—the Americans see themselves as trapped within the signage of the nation, and the Europeans see themselves observing it from afar—both are deluded.)

Need this double bind be debilitating in producing critical knowledge about the U.S.? I think not. Because the state abjures critical knowledge—it is turning increasingly to advocacy-oriented think tanks for legitimations of its own policies—this does not mean we should abdicate “anthropological study of civil society,” as Bové suggests.<sup>11</sup> Rather we should work to understand and acknowledge our own

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10 Donald E. Pease, “After 9/11, or, Whither the New Americanists?” *Comparative American Studies* 4.4 (2006): 421–45.

11 Bové, “Can American Studies,” 222.

positions in the circuits of power and knowledge—this should include questioning the idea that critical distance is a precondition of critical analysis and insight.<sup>12</sup> And so we should open ourselves to what we disavow in order to create the illusion of distance—we should know what binds us to America—and we need to recognize our critical and libidinal investments in the object of knowledge and know that at certain points these may be one and the same thing.

This is no simple matter of stating belief or disbelief. The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek alerts us to what is at issue in his discussions of the limits of freedom of thought. In one such discussion Žižek relays a classic joke:

A man who believes himself to be a grain of seed is taken to the mental institution where the doctors do their best to finally convince him that he is not a grain of seed but a man; however, when he is cured (convinced that he is not a grain of seed but a man) and allowed to leave the hospital, he immediately comes back trembling—there is a chicken outside the door and he is afraid that it will eat him. “Dear fellow,” says his doctor, “you know very well that you are not a grain of seed but a man.” “Of course I know that,” replies the patient, “but does the chicken know it?”<sup>13</sup>

For Žižek, the joke illustrates the true stake of psychoanalytic treatment and confronts us with the externality of belief. To put this in more parochial (Americanist) terms: even if we don’t believe in God, patriotism, or America, we cannot differentiate our identities from these symbolic systems. What Žižek’s joke also underlines is our stake in the fantasy that is America. The situation it describes is suggestive of that of the analysand in the grip of fantasy. Fantasy, in the Lacanian schema, does not name our desire for the Other but rather posits the question of what the Other wants, and our identities and actions are shaped by the response to this question.<sup>14</sup> I have already suggested that America has long functioned as a phantasm of Americanists’ disciplinary desires and knowledge formations in Europe. To critically understand America as fantasy is to begin to respond to the question of what the Other wants and to compose our Americanist identities in terms of this response.

While we cannot simply differentiate our identities from our symbolic systems—this is the point of Žižek’s joke—we can work to strategically acknowledge the fantasy that structures our sense of the Real. To ask the question “What does

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12 See Eva Cherniavsky, “Project for a New American Studies: State Narratives after Bourgeois Nationalism,” unpublished paper, especially 7–9.

13 Slavoj Žižek, “Notes Towards a Politics of Bartleby: The Ignorance of Chicken,” *Comparative American Studies* 4.4 (2006): 385.

14 See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978), 214.



America want?” is to foreground the field imaginary and shift the axis and focus of American studies critique. It is to not ask “What is the meaning of America?” an originating question of American studies as a field. The question “What does America want?” is a question of desire rather than meaning. It is also a strategic question that moves us away from the hermeneutics of suspicion and demystification toward forms of cultural and political critique that impel recognition of the limits of critique.

So, with this question in mind, I return to Bové’s challenging question: “If America has had this structural intent to be identical to the world—for what else can it mean to be the world’s only remaining superpower—then where can American studies people stand to get a view of all this?” The question presents suggestive visual metaphors, suggesting that the potential for critique is an issue of perspective. Another way of formulating Bové’s question is “How and from where can we see American empire?” By way of conclusion I want to suggest one possible answer by commenting on a photographic image that might be said to represent a primal scene of American empire.

## Between Care and Domination

I turn to a photographic image for several reasons. Firstly, the image world of contemporary globalization is the sphere in which fantasies of America are most powerfully projected and consumed today. Secondly, photographs as a medium foreground what I have described as the troubled relations in the field imaginary of American studies between pleasure and knowledge, sentiment and critique. Photographs do not explain the world to us but offer us an emotional apprehension of the world represented, and so the viewer has the task of working out the relation between emotion and knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

This image is a photograph by Jean-Marc Bouju, a French photographer working for the Associated Press, who was embedded with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in Iraq.<sup>16</sup> It depicts a man and child in a POW camp in Najaf. This photograph won the World Press Photo of the Year Award in 2003. Bouju has said the boy was crying when his father was arrested, so the American soldiers allowed the two to stay

15 See Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977).

16 “WorldPressPhotooftheYear:2003,” WorldPressPhoto, [http://www.worldpressphoto.org/index.php?option=com\\_photogallery&task=view&id=202&Itemid=115&bandwidth=high](http://www.worldpressphoto.org/index.php?option=com_photogallery&task=view&id=202&Itemid=115&bandwidth=high). This image is widely reproduced on the Web. See, for example, “World Press Photo 2004: Jean-Marc Bouju, France,” *Guardian*, <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/pictures/image/0,8543,-10104910720,00.html>.

together and then cut off the father's plastic handcuffs so he could hold his child. We can read the photograph as a symbol of compassion (of the soldiers toward the prisoner, of the father toward the son) but we could also read it as evidence of a lack of compassion.<sup>17</sup> The admixture of cruelty and kindness signified by the image is disconcerting. The dissonance is indicative of the ambiguities inherent in using photography as a documentary witness. We traffic back and forward between the particular and the universal, between the humanistic and the imperial, between care and domination, between sentiment and critique—where does our gaze rest?

The dissonance is in part due to the complex interplay of formal conventions and ethical considerations that characterize the production, display, and perception of photojournalistic images of subjugated bodies. Photojournalism has long assumed an ethical function to bear witness to the suffering or degradation of others, and often photographers have directed this function to arouse concern and perhaps even action. This ethical function, though, is complexly embedded within ideas of the human and of humanitarianism that shadow the ideologies of imperial governance and expansion by European and American powers since the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> Today, this function needs to be understood in the contexts of shifting conditions of relationality, which shape the looking relations (of recognition and identification) that configure our affective responses to images of suffering. Today, these conditions of relationality are significantly shaped by the effects of new media technologies on global communications and by the geopolitics of liberal capitalist expansionism, and in particular by the emergent frames of humanitarianism in the wake of the endings of the cold war. Accordingly, some theorists of globalization now argue that the spaces of our emotional imagination have been expanded in a transnational sense as we are connected (virtually) to new spaces of empathy and aggression.<sup>19</sup> Certainly, the image world of globalization is also our shared world of affective human attachments. As this image world becomes more and more saturated by images of corporeal violence and vulnerability, it becomes imperative to consider the aesthetics and ethics of the claims the suffering bodies of others make upon us.

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17 See Susie Linfield, "The Treacherous Medium: Why Photography Critics Hate Photographs," *Boston Review*, September–October 2006, <http://bostonreview.net/BR31.5/linfield.html>.

18 See Susan D. Moeller, *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

19 See Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 5–6.

And so, back to the Bouju photograph. What can we say about the image? That it depicts the dialectics of freedom and oppression in the activity of empire? Perhaps, but that only begs further questions. Where does “freedom” reside in this photograph? Does it reside in the motivations of the captors? Does it reside in the transcendent humanism of the parent and child’s embrace? Does it reside in the very act of looking? This last question entails a whole history of looking relations surrounding imagery of subjugated bodies and bodies in pain, particularly those framed by colonial or postcolonial conditions of power and conflict. In such instances the subjugated body is the focus of mute testimony. As Allen Feldman observes, “geographies of alterity [are] intimately linked to [their] authentication in material violence”; a “buried truth is located in the body” sited in the “postcolonial peripheries” and must be brought up to the surface in modes of exposure and display.<sup>20</sup> Documentary photography is one such mode of creating this display, which is to say that this photograph works off a long history of photojournalistic imagery of violent conflict, using a frame and conventions common to the genre. The pieta posture, for example, is a commonplace in such imagery.

However, there is considerable ambiguity about the truth being displayed by the subjugated body in this image. What is being more complexly displayed here is an overdetermined *performance* of compassion. This includes the compassion of the father in relation to the son, the compassion of the American soldiers in relation to the father and the son, and the compassion of viewers in relation to the scene. It is also a performance of the power of the American military to humanize and dehumanize, a performance of an unlimited power that “promises to liberate the other from his non-existence.”<sup>21</sup> What this visual performance of compassion enacts is the ethical knot in viewing relations conditioned by American imperialism. Is this a scene of care or a scene of domination? Part of the difficulty in making a judgment about this is that the postures of care and domination draw on the same foundation, the primal scene of human vulnerability.<sup>22</sup> This nexus of care and domination has become a prominent and disturbing feature of the image world of globalization and of the geopolitical world of war, conflict, and human rights abuses that this image world often, if unevenly, represents. In mass media, images of domination and vulnerability meld into one another. Think, for example, of the image banks of famine, sustainable development, and ethnic warfare that

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20 Allen Feldman, “Memory Theaters, Virtual Witnessing, and the Trauma-Aesthetic,” *Biography* 27. 1 (2004): 182.

21 Alain Badiou, *Polemics*, trans. Steve Corcoran (London: Verso, 2006), 29.

22 See Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006).

overflow one another. In international relations, the discourse of humanitarianism inflates the demand for care as an issue of liberal governance of failing states and as a legitimate rationale for intervention. In this discourse, the meanings of care and domination are carefully parsed to meet dominant politico-economic interests. Wherever we look, we find that the political structures of domination intersect with ethical structures of care.<sup>23</sup> This is what the photograph re-presents, the performance of that intersectionality—as such, it exceeds interpretation.

The photograph fails to provide us with an interpretive frame that might allay or organize our confused thoughts and feelings as we look at it. The ambiguities of the image and its very failure to provide answers make it valuable as an indicator of the limits of our knowledge formations and ethical imaginations.<sup>24</sup> This is where photographic images can be a useful pointer for Americanists, for they are suggestive of how we might understand the role of affective relationality, of how we might integrate it into analysis and not simply subdue it through analysis. As already observed, the image world that is the surface of globalization is also our shared world of affective human attachments. The critical task is not to get behind this surface but to give it definition through our critical work. This is to say that the error of Bové's question is to assume that there is a position in which we can see American empire in some revelatory way, that the truth of American power can be revealed. I don't think this is how we apprehend American empire. Our critical task is not iconoclastic, tearing away the veil of empire to reveal the truth of its horrors; rather it is to stretch the image surface and understand our own investments in its workings.<sup>25</sup> It is to acknowledge the limits of our capacity to make sense of our object of study, even as we interrogate the emergence and the vanishing of America as a mediator of identities, including our own as critical

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23 See Rochelle M. Green, Bonnie Mann, and Amy E. Storey, "Care, Domination, and Representation," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 21.2–3 (2006): 177–95.

24 Such photographs trouble the more conventional evocations of human empathy to produce a more challenging perspective, one in line with Judith Butler's conception of regard for "precarious life" amidst "conditions of heightened vulnerability and aggression" following 9/11. Addressing photographic representation in the last few pages of her book, Butler argues that representation only succeeds when it fails, when "the ethical claim of the other is not pinned down, exhausted and therefore silenced by the ... image." Butler, *Precarious Life*, 126.

25 See Susan Buck-Morss, "Visual Studies and Global Imagination," *Papers of Surrealism 2* (2004), [http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/publications/papers/journal2/acrobat\\_files/buck\\_morss\\_a\\_rtile.pdf](http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/publications/papers/journal2/acrobat_files/buck_morss_a_rtile.pdf).

intellectuals and as sensate citizens. It is to reinvigorate Americanist projects of critique by asking not what America means but what does America want.

## Note

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