

WILFRIED RAUSSERT, *The Routledge Companion to Inter-American Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), xv, 444 pp.

Inter-American or Hemispheric (American) Studies is one of the fields in the wider context of Cultural Studies, Area Studies, or Transnational (American) Studies that has rapidly evolved in recent decades to encompass and combine a wide variety of (sub-)disciplines like history, literary history, cultural history, social science, political studies, economy, religion studies, history of art, film- and media studies, and so forth, as long as they are focused on the Americas. Given the geological and biological past of the two continents, Inter-American Studies (henceforth: IAS) as the study of relations and interaction between some or many of the nations, cultures, regions and societies in the Western hemisphere should even have its foundation in geology, geography and biology. IAS is a vast field that shares the fuzziness of its borders with the disciplines and macro-disciplines mentioned above. Since the first major outline of its scope and disciplinary history in Ralph Bauer's seminal "Hemispheric Studies,"¹ it has expanded even further, witness the foundation of the International Association of Inter-American Studies (IAS) and the establishment of study and research centers like the Centers for Inter-American Studies at the Universities of Bielefeld and Graz and similar ventures in Europe, the United States and Latin America. In this situation, the time has certainly come for overviews and handbooks that define the field and its disciplinary history and problems more comprehensively than even such admirable collections of essays like Levander and Levine's *Hemispheric American Studies* can do.² Raussert's *Routledge Companion* is therefore a most welcome publication, all the more since Routledge's stated policy that their "Handbooks and Companions address new developments in the Social Sciences and Humanities, while at the same time providing an authoritative guide to theory and method, the key sub-disciplines and the primary debates of today"³ makes one expect a foundational publication. What the volume is intended to

achieve and does achieve, then, is a laudable and, indeed, formidable contribution to the field. At the same time, it shows the utopian side of such a project.

A review of limited length cannot do justice to the scope of this book. The volume is divided into three parts: "Key ideas, methods, and developments," "Theory put into practice: Comparative, relational, and processual case studies," and "Power, politics, and asymmetries." The vagueness of these titles indicates the editor's difficulties in grouping the enormous number of 37 papers contributed to the volume, especially since there are numerous categorical overlaps. I will put my emphasis on the first part because it is here that the groundwork is laid. As to the other two sections, I will not proceed sequentially but name or discuss selected papers according to my own grouping.

The first paper of the volume, Earl E. Fitz's "Then and now: The current state of inter-American literary studies," opens part I with a spirited argument against U.S. American hegemony in the field of IAS. After a short and somewhat incomplete sketch of the historical development of the discipline, Fitz takes up the question formerly asked by Djelal Kadir in the context of the foundation of the International American Studies Association: can we dissociate ourselves from the tradition of seeing the United States at the center of inter-American research, can we even pursue the field without dealing with the U.S.? The answer is "yes," but in what Fitz describes as the American Studies approach to Hemispheric Studies, U.S. scholars and U.S. topics still dominate, both because of the academic tradition in the United States and the widespread lack of linguistic and cultural competency concerning the other parts of the Americas. Therefore, he favors the approach by Latin Americanists for the reason that, as he claims perhaps a little too sweepingly, they, just like Canadianists and Caribbeanists, "[b]ecause of their diverse linguistic and cultural training, [...] are, arguably, proto-comparatists" (21). Thus, for Fitz a revised, hemispherically oriented Comparative Literature approach is what IAS requires. It promises the best results, especially if it also transcends the binary model of English-speaking and Spanish-speaking America and also includes Brazil as the source of a literary and cultural wealth comparable to that of the United States.

The chances and problems Fitz describes do not refer to literary studies alone but to all

¹ *PMLA* 124 (2009): 234-50.

² Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine, eds. *Hemispheric American Studies*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2008.

³ <https://www.routledge.com/handbooks>

fields converging in the Hemispheric Studies enterprise. In this sense, he establishes a program for the book which, as it turns out, the volume fulfils to a certain extent but also and inevitably cannot fulfil in others. Take the example of language. The volume is in English, which, without further comment, seems to have been accepted by the editor and publisher as an inevitable choice, English having become the *lingua franca* even in the humanities. Yet in tune with the demands made by Fitz, the very representativeness of this book would have required the use of at least Spanish, Portuguese, and French besides English, which would have averted the charge of hegemonic epistemics but would also have created problems of understanding for parts of the readership. Abstracts in several languages might have helped, but given the fact that many of the contributions are summaries of previous publications by the respective author, this would have been a difficult task. In addition, the volume's great length of 444 small print and large format pages would have forbidden any further additions. Apart from the problem of linguistic hegemonialism, there is that of competency. Although most authors write decent scholarly English, in some cases linguistic problems are in the way of comprehension, for instance in Gerardo Gutiérrez Cham's "The other side of the iron: Parrhesia of slaves in the Indias [sic]." (On the other hand, the fact that the author cites the titles of Foucault's books in Spanish may be taken as a sign of resistance against the dominant Anglophonism.)

Naturally, in his useful introduction (obviously written before Trump's policy began to threaten the hemispheric order), the editor focuses not on the problems but on the achievements to be reached in this volume: "The proposed Companion not only intends to chart the field but, by doing so, also to implement a theoretical matrix to think the Americas as complex and interconnected. [...] Inter-American Studies [...] explores the ways in which places, regions, communities, and nations in the Americas are embedded in a larger picture of global [...] processes of trade, exchange, and politics through an inter-American lens that highlights itineraries, flows, practices, productions, and hierarchies as they emerge within the Americas" (4). In view of the global perspective, the "theoretical matrix" can only mean the aim to cast the net as widely as possible while realizing that all factors, elements, and agents in this web are in constant change.

Therefore, "flow" and "entanglement" are keywords used in this text.

The papers collected in this volume are called "chapters," thus suggesting an argumentative systematics and coherence that must remain utopian, since the emphasis has been put on variety, diversity, breadth. Breadth and variety are indeed astonishing and begin with the institutional background. The 38 contributors come from universities in 10 countries, with the 15 papers from the U.S. and the 10 from Germany forming the bulk, but four other European countries are also represented. There are two papers from Canada and Mexico each, one from Chile, and one from St. Augustine—a transnational assembly, but with great imbalances, even when one takes into account that a number of Latin American scholars represented in this book now work in the United States or Europe. One should like to know why many of the Latin American and Canadian scholars mentioned by Fitz are not among the contributors. The picture gets more complex in a positive sense when we look at the disciplines represented by the contributors. Here, Latin American and US-American Literatures and Cultures are about evenly represented and form the two major blocks, but there are also contributors from Comparative, Caribbean, and Canadian Literatures, IAS proper, Media Studies, History, Social Science, Linguistics, Anthropology, Art, and Music. What makes this picture even more appealing is the fact that many of the authors have long transcended disciplinary borders and are at home in several areas of Cultural Studies in the most comprehensive sense.

Part I is devoted to exploring concepts of IAS and to situating it in the context of related terms. After Fitz's paper mentioned above, Winfried Siemerling's "Transnational perspectives on the Americas: Canada, the United States, and the case of Mary Ann Shadd" convincingly demonstrates the validity of a transnational, "contrapuntal approach that keeps national paradigms in full view while also reading across and beyond borders" (33) by discussing the case of black writer and educator Mary Ann Shadd. Shadd is a historic figure whose role has to be seen not only in a Canadian, but also a North American context, which involves the inclusion of aspects of post-colonialism and black diaspora culture. Thus, this essay establishes a pattern, since many of the papers in this book are not only inter-

American but also intersectional, with race and ethnicity figuring far more prominently than gender. In his paper on “The empire of liberty” Djelal Kadir, whose role for the establishment of IAS is pointed out by Fitz, enters the discussion not so much by defining the field but by excoriating the continuing power of imperialism. Walter D. Mignolo, another heavyweight in inter-American and Latin American studies, in his “Decolonial reflections on hemispheric partitions: From the ‘Western Hemisphere’ to the ‘Eastern Hemisphere’” reminds us that just like nations hemispheres are also social constructions associated with power interests. They are liable to massive changes in this decolonial period when, for instance, Latin American countries may form political and economic ties with East Asia and therefore belong to the Eastern Hemisphere while simultaneously being part of the Global South. “No doubt that the implications of the shift are enormous [...]: now the East is both in the West and in the South. And the South is both in the East and the North. [...] The cycle that started with the invention of America, and later on the Western Hemisphere, is closing. Theorizing Hemispheric Studies of the Americas means to start from this closing while, at the same time, knowing well the conditions under which America and the Western Hemisphere were created and under which the illusion is maintained” (62, 66). While one may wonder to what extent this shift applies also to culture in the widest sense, or when cultural production will be massively affected by it, this is a timely warning that the new discipline of IAS may be less long-lived than we may currently assume. Other critics add further aspects not to any definitive demarcation of IAS but to an encircling of the field, a highlighting of relevant facets. Robert McKee Irwin gives a critical survey of the progress the new American studies has made towards internationalization; Luz Angélica Kirschner discusses the meanings of the term *latinidad* in the United States and Latin America in a plurality of contexts, notably those of the relationship to other ethnicities; Stephen M. Park points out the need to know and reflect upon the place from which concepts of pan-America are formulated, for instance in the case of anti-imperialist José Martí who developed his ideas in a U.S. context; Claudia Sadowski-Smith compares the policies regarding the Canada-U.S. and Mexico-U.S. borders from their creation to the present day, with par-

ticular emphasis on the needs of indigenous peoples on either side; George A. Yúdice describes the changes in his own concept of IAS under the impact of digitalization and globalization, that is, he, too, like Mignolo points out the limits of the concept in view of what he calls “global commons”; and, finally, John Carlos Rowe muses on Melville’s and Ishmael’s implication in Western imperialism and focuses on Queequeg who “is thus the central character in *Moby-Dick* to represent the consequences of 19th-century globalization, for better and for worse” (135), thus demonstrating that IAS in its historical dimension is tied up with US-American and European imperialism. On the whole, this section of the book is the most valuable one because its contributions demarcate central aspects of what pursuing IAS might imply. At the same time, this is not an attempt at a systematic and coherent definition or even delineation of the field. Interestingly, the majority of the contributors to part I are not scholars from academic American Studies, which seems to confirm Fitz’s point that Latin Americanists, Caribbeanists and Canadianists have more to offer in developing a non-hegemonic concept of the field.

The papers by Siemerling and Rowe are also case studies and thus might have found their place in part II (whose title “Theory put into practice” is somewhat misleading, there being not overmuch theory in the strict sense), or else in part III on power and politics. At the same time, quite a few of the papers in these sections also contain pertinent comments on what IAS as a discipline is or should be. Such is the case with Josef Raab’s “Hemispheric Intersections in Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy*,” which provides a good introduction into IAS and then proceeds to put Morrison’s novel into an inter-American context. Raab’s comments on what he calls “Interconnections” are particularly relevant, for instance his observation that *A Mercy* might be studied in the context of other settings and practices of slavery or other inter-ethnic relations in the colonial Americas. It is here that the new vistas opened by IAS can be truly enriching for the disciplines converging at a specific point of investigation. Isabel Caldera, on the other hand, in her “Toni Morrison and Edwidge Danticat” sees the two writers as exponents of literature as an instrument of liberation and de-colonization. While her observations on Morrison’s *A Mercy* and Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory* are pertinent, she simply sets the two writers and

their works side by side without thematizing IAS. Is the fact that the writers come from the U.S. and Haiti sufficient to merit the inclusion of this essay in a *Companion to Inter-American Studies*? A similar question can be asked with respect to Alberto Moreiras' "Hispanism and the border," one of the intellectually most profound essays in the book. Hispanism is defined as "the history and practice of reflection on territories, people, languages, and worlds marked by the Castilian language, all too often through gestures of war, of domination, conquest, and oppression" (197). The concept of Hispanism is currently in a border situation that requires self-reflection, notably with regard to the role of violence and ethics. These questions are here discussed taking Cormack McCarthy's border novel *Blood Meridian* and Javier Marías's *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí* as examples, texts by a US-American and a Spanish writer, only the first of which could be called inter-American. Moreiras's paper raises questions of universal relevance and might perhaps have found a better venue elsewhere. The same applies to Aníbal Quijano's reflections on "Good Living" as "an alternative social existence, as a De/Coloniality of Power" (363). The question of relevancy for a companion on IAS has to be asked more often in this book, for instance in the case of Claire F. Fox's paper on Peruvian artist Fernando de Szyszlo, that by Gutierrez Cham mentioned above, Deborah Dorotinsky's on the México Indígena archive of ethnographic photographs, and others, no matter how significant their findings may be in their respective disciplinary context.

On the other hand, there are papers that exemplify Kadir's and Fitz's claim that there might be IAS without thematically involving the United States. Alejandra Bottinelli Wolleter's discussion of the role played by intellectuals in the debates about national identity in Mexico and Peru would be sufficient in itself without her brief glance at Octavio Paz's negative view of the Pachuco in Los Angeles. Paula Prescod's study of the fate of the indigenous Garinagu of St. Vincent is a more radical case. Does the colonial relocation of the "Black Caribs" by the British to what is now Honduras make the case sufficiently inter-American? I think it does. Also, I find Prescod's observation that that part of the Caribs who were allowed to stay on the island retained fewer elements of their tribal culture than the others who were forced into a diaspora existence

might present a model worth debating in diaspora studies. Thus, the question of what to include in a volume of this kind might be answered in different ways.

Not a small part of the work hitherto done in Hemispheric Studies from its beginning is comparative or comparatist in nature. However, only when such comparisons render new insights into the texts or subject matters under discussion are they useful. This is the case more often in social science and anthropology than in literary studies. Thus, Karla Slocum's study of black towns in St. Lucia and Oklahoma provides interesting material of forms of migration, diaspora, and community formation by post-slavery blacks. Raab's promoting comparison as a suitable approach to literary analysis in Hemispheric Studies strikes me as less convincing, for instance when he suggests that Morrison's "A Mercy [...] lends itself to a comparison to *Cien años de soledad* [...]" because both novels function as a "historically founded fictional construction of dynamics that shaped parts of the Americas" (223)—thousands of other novels would serve just as well. The question of comparison as a central method of IAS deserves further attention.

Given the length of the book, this reviewer would have favored a reduction of the number of contributions, all the more so since in some cases it would have offered the opportunity of expanding the argument somewhat further and adding some further interdisciplinary touches. Hence, not all the papers in this volume can be mentioned here. Not all of them are of equal quality, nor are they equally daring in transcending the boundaries of the disciplines they come from. This reader has benefitted particularly from some of the essays that provide solid information on the subject they cover, for instance Birgit Däwes's survey of "transnational indigenous performance in the U.S. and Canada," the editor's own paper on the Chicano pop singer El Vez and his use of culture-transcending citations, Sérgio Costa's refutation of French scholars Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant's claim that US-American academic and political dominance shaped the discussion of race relations in Brazil (here, John Updike's novel *Brazil* could have served as an example for the persistence of stereotypes), Stefan Rinke and Karina Kriegesmann's historiographic essay on the way World War I affected the attitudes and policies of the United States and a variety of Latin American countries (a study in which

I missed a discussion of a prequel, the Venezuela Crises around the turn of the century), and Deborah Cohn's discussion of the efforts by U.S. academics and officials during the Cold War to bring Latin American literature and literati to the United States, partially in the hope to shape their opinion on the superiority of the West.

Three of the thematic papers are real eye-openers—at least for those who missed the publication of their previous versions (in the case of Pratt and Buchenau). In her “Language and the afterlives of empire,” Mary Louise Pratt describes the function of imperial languages to control and communicate as well as the way they interact with the languages of conquered empires. This interaction is exemplified by the inter-imperial entanglement of Spanish and Quechua or Nahuatl, the latter two remaining elements of “a sustained practice of resistance” (310) to hegemonial Spanish to the present day, and by the similar entanglement of English and Spanish in what is now the United States. Rüdiger Kunow's “The biology of geography: Disease and disease ecologies in the Americas” studies the precariousness of human life in the Americas, using the epidemics of yellow fever that hit countries from Brazil to the U.S. as examples, Philadelphia being the most famous US-American case (I would have loved to see Charles Brockden Brown's *Arthur Mervyn* discussed in this context). The disease contributed to the formation of a “bio-cultural imaginary” (304), especially after disease

control had become an element of national identity definition and an instrument of U.S. hegemonialism. In “Cain's land, or troping indigenous agriculture,” Barbara Buchenau discusses “the striking hermeneutics that have helped to incorporate—and thus swallow—indigenous farming in colonial descriptions of unfamiliar lands” (283) and compares the diverging views and tropes used by the early French explorers Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain. Each of these essays demonstrates the chances offered by transcending the borders of accustomed disciplinary topics, of extending the time spans covered and the territorial reach. They also confirm the validity of the editor's decision to include previously published material if it helps to demonstrate the range and potential of the field this volume is intended to represent.

The Routledge Companion to Inter-American Studies is a big and costly book. Given its price and the diversity of its content, it is a book for university libraries rather than for traditional American Studies collections—but shouldn't these take the step toward transnational and, indeed, hemispheric approaches? It isn't a companion in the sense of a guide, but a “compilation” (2f.) of a great variety of approaches and disciplines to a vast topic, and it makes a great effort to expand this vastness even further. In other words, it does not so much define IAS as stimulate its further development.

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