the changing profession

Hemispheric Studies

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Historical Overview

WHEN, IN 1990, GUSTAVO PÉREZ FIRMAT ASKED, "DO THE AMERICAS HAVE A COMMON LITERATURE?" HE WAS RESPONDING TO A FLEDGLING critical endeavor that had been pioneered during the previous decade in only a handful of studies, by such Latin Americanists and literary comparatists as M. J. Valdés, José Ballón, Bell Gale Chevigny, Gari Laguardia, Vera Kutzinski, Alfred Owen Aldridge, and Lois Parkinson Zamora ("Cheek" 2).[1] Although "inter-American literary studies"—the comparative investigation of the "literatures and cultures of this hemisphere" as one unit of study—seemed to Pérez Firmat "something of a terra incognita" in 1990 ("Cheek" 1–2), the hemispheric conception of American studies had originated in the United States some sixty years earlier with the Berkeley historian Herbert Eugene Bolton (1870–1953), who argued, in his seminal 1932 presidential address to the American Historical Association, for an "essential unity" in the history of the Western hemisphere (472). Although the contributing historians in Lewis Hanke's 1964 collection of essays *Do the Americas Have a Common History?* gave this "Bolton Thesis" a decidedly mixed review, the thesis provided the inspiration for Pérez Firmat's landmark collection and a starting point for much subsequent hemispheric scholarship. Meanwhile, inter-American studies has had a strong tradition in Europe that is, in fact, older than Pérez Firmat's or Hanke's collection. As early as the 1950s, the eminent Italian Americanist Antonello Gerbi was publishing his groundbreaking works in comparative hemispheric and Atlantic history, which studied the early modern polemic about the degenerative influences the New World environments had on plants, animals, and humans.[2] Also, Hans Galinsky, at the University of Mainz, was exploring the literature of the European discovery and aesthetic forms such as the baroque in the early Americas from a comparative perspective in the 1960s.[3]

In the United States, comparative inter-American scholarship saw a steady increase during the 1990s, with the publication of important works in literary criticism by Earl Fitz (*Rediscovering*), Djelal Kadir

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(*Columbus*), Antonio Benítez Rojo (*Isla*),[4] Renata Mautner-Wasserman (*Exotic Nations*), Lois Parkinson Zamora (*Usable Past*), Gordon Sayre (*Sauvages*), Doris Sommer (*Proceed*), and others.[5] That decade also saw the publication of important comparative cultural and sociopolitical histories by such historians as Claudio Véliz (*New World*), Tom Sullivan (*Cowboys*), and Lester Langley (*Americas*), as well as works on inter-American relations like *Close Encounters of Empire*, edited by Ricardo Donato Salvatore, Gilbert M. Joseph, and Catherine C. LeGrand. The decisive development in hemispheric studies in the United States, however, was the "discovery" of the hemisphere by American studies in the wake of that discipline's turn from a United States–centered multiculturalism toward a trans- and postnationalism during the 1990s.[6] In 1991, José David Saldívar published his seminal *The Dialectics of Our America*,[7] in which he invoked José Martí's notion of "nuestra América" ("our America") to connect such United States minority writers as the African American Ntozake Shange and the Chicano Arturo Islas with Latin American writers like the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez and the Cuban Alejo Carpentier. In the same year, Hortense Spillers published her edited collection *Comparative American Identities*, which gathered essays, by scholars from multiple disciplines, on marginal racial and gender identities in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, and Central America. Programmatic calls in prominent American studies venues echoed these publications, culminating with Janice Radway's 1998 presidential address to the American Studies Association (ASA), in which Radway urged scholars to cease using *America* as a default term for the United States and, remarkably, considered the possibility of renaming the association the Inter-American Studies Association (19).[8]

Since 2000, we have witnessed a veritable explosion of scholarly activities in hemispheric studies, including the launch of new journals and the publication of special issues devoted to hemispheric studies in established journals,[9] book series,[10] literary anthologies,[11] digital archives,[12] university-based study programs,[13] transinstitutional studies networks,[14] congresses,[15] seminars,[16] and the formation of new professional organizations championing a hemispheric approach to American studies.[17] This explosion of hemispheric scholarly activity has even led some commentators to speak of a "hemispheric turn" in American studies—a variation on Shelley Fisher Fishkin's call for a "trans-national turn" in her 2005 presidential address to the ASA.[18] This hemispheric turn has manifested itself in virtually all the subdisciplines of American literary and cultural studies, such as colonial, nineteenth-century, and twentieth-century American literature,[19] as well as regional[20] and ethnic studies.[21] However, it has also raised difficult disciplinary, institutional, political, and methodological questions, especially since the new research agendas in American studies have begun to intersect and overlap with those in other disciplines, such as Latin American studies, comparative literature, and especially inter-American studies as traditionally conducted both in Latin America and in the United States. For example, most literary scholarship in inter-American studies had typically been comparative in methodology and based in comparative literature or Latin American studies programs. By contrast, the "new" hemispheric American studies was largely based in English or American studies departments; was methodologically rooted in (multi)cultural studies and postcolonial theory, with their emphasis on questions of race and ethnicity; and was focused primarily on the United States in a hemispheric context, especially the relation of its borders to ethnic minorities in the United States (mainly Latinas and Latinos). Since it would be impossible to consider all the unwieldy facets of this recent hemispheric turn in this essay, I would like to focus on a few

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questions in detail and then briefly consider some of the recent directions in hemispheric studies.[22] I will emphasize literary scholarship rather than sociological and historical studies with a hemispheric orientation.

The "Hemispheric Turn" in American Studies

Earl Fitz has recently noted that "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" ("Inter-American Studies" 13). The various reasons for this sudden energy in hemispheric studies reflect different disciplinary perspectives. Generally, however, it seems safe to say that the recent hemispheric turn in American studies manifests the larger move toward trans- or postnational perspectives across the humanities, commencing during the 1980s with the postcolonial critiques of the modern nation-state as an ideological or "imagined" construct of Western capitalist culture based on imperial or neocolonial forms of economic exploitation.[23] As a variant of the recent transnational turn in American studies, though, the hemispheric approach, in its assertions (or assumptions) of affinities or parallelisms among the histories and cultures of the New World, has occasioned more than one uneasy reflection on political grounds. Some observers have been quick to discern a United States imperialist or neocolonialist agenda for the Americas behind this critical impulse, connecting it with the North American Free Trade Agreement, the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas, and economic domination of Latin America by the United States in the name of globalization. The hemispheric approach has been suspected of complicity with a mystification of the important differences between historical experiences, especially between those of Latin America and of the United States—a mystification that would undermine the national integrity and sovereignty of Latin American nation-states in the face of United States economic imperialism. While some suspicions toward United States–based hemispheric scholarship are particular to the recent hemispheric turn in American studies since the 1990s, others have troubled the field of inter-American studies virtually since its inception.

To appreciate the complexity of this issue, we must remember that, as Claudia Sadowski-Smith and Claire Fox have pointed out, the general idea of the nation-state has traditionally had connotations in Latin American studies that are different from those that it had in American studies, especially in neoliberal trans- or postnational American studies. Whereas American studies scholars often view the nation-state as the agent of hemispheric or global hegemony and its borders as artificially constructed or "imagined," Latin American studies scholars more typically view the nation-state as a protection against United States cultural, economic, and military expansion. This difference is in part due to the fact that, unlike American studies, which is attempting to cast off a nationalist slough, Latin American studies (at least in the United States) has never had the perceived "problem" of a narrowly nationalist orientation. Indeed, the idea of Latin America was invented, as Walter Mignolo has reminded us, in the nineteenth century by French and American intellectuals to undermine the newly independent nations' claims to sovereignty in the region and, thus, to rationalize continued European and North American economic exploitation.[24]

To the extent that Latin American intellectuals have embraced the notion of one Latin American cultural identity, they have typically attempted to theorize this cultural identity in opposition to, rather than in hemispheric unity with, the United States in the face of that country's aggressive hemispheric imperialism since the nineteenth century. The Uruguayan philosopher José Enrique Rodó (1872–1917), for

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example, in his important essay *Ariel* (1900), spoke of North American modernity as a culture of a brutish "Calibán"—epitomized by Benjamin Franklin's pragmatist utilitarianism, materialism, and liberal democratism—that stood at the gates of the Latin American civitas, still inhabited by the "Arielesque" cultural spirit of Romance aristocratic idealism (22, 83). On the other end of the political spectrum, the Cuban Roberto Fernández Retamar (1930–) appropriated Shakespeare's Caliban as a symbol of Latin America's cultural heritage of colonialism, racial otherness, and mixture in his seminal essay *Calibán* (1970), opposing him to the imperialist culture of the North American Prospero. Despite their important disagreements, Rodó and Fernández Retamar shared the rhetorical strategy of defining a Latin American culture against that of the United States.

From the perspective of Latin American intellectual history, then, the notion of a hemispheric history or literature is inescapably implicated in the legacy of United States imperialism. Indeed, this profound suspicion of an imperialist political agenda motivated the Mexican historian Edmundo O'Gorman's attack on the Bolton thesis in Hanke's collection ("Do the Americas"). Although O'Gorman had himself provided a seminal contribution to hemispheric studies in his inquiry into the history of the idea of America (the continent) going back to the sixteenth century (*Invention*), he strongly objected to the terms of Bolton's hemisphericism, especially to his idea of "culture progress," which, O'Gorman feared, compared the United States and Latin America in a way that assumed United States cultural development as normative and resulted in assessments of Latin America as "lagging behind"—in need of external assistance to become more like the United States ("Do the Americas" 109).[25]

Inter-American or Latin American studies scholars in the United States have voiced a similar discomfort about the recent hemispheric turn in American studies. They are suspicious less of the idea of hemispheric studies per se than of a tendency, manifest in some recent hemispheric forays launched from within the American studies academy, to regard the hemispheric archive as a critical tabula rasa.[26] In a recent article, "Inter-American Studies or Imperial American Studies?" Sophia McClennen, a scholar with comparative training and a distinguished record in inter-American and Latin American scholarship, asks whether "inter-American studies represent the latest variation on the Monroe Doctrine of patronizing Latin America" (394). She cautions that "Latin Americanists might see such a move [the hemispheric turn in American studies] as signaling a transition from covert to overt invasion of the rich Latin American canon." In particular, she takes aim at Radway's presidential address, charging that

> Radway's proposition assumes that inter-American studies does not already exist, that it is a field available for exploration and development and that the members of the American Studies Association could simply rename themselves inter-Americanists. . . . What would an inter-American studies housed in English and History departments in the United States and taught by monolingual faculty be, if not an example of US intellectual expansionism? (402)

McClennen's critique signals the ambivalence toward a hemispheric turn in American studies among some scholars who have been engaged in inter-American literary studies all along; who have received the linguistic, archival, and methodological training necessary for comparative and inter-American scholarship; and whose institutional affiliation is often outside English or American studies departments. In other words, their suspicions concern less the idea of inter-American studies than the terms on which American studies is turning hemispheric.

The trans- or postnationalist critique of the idea of the nation-state prevalent in

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hemispheric American studies holds, then, political implications that are likely to give pause to Latin Americanists, whether based in Latin America or the United States. However, some United States scholars of minority cultures that have traditionally had a complicated relation with the United States nation-state and its proclaimed identity as a "nation of immigrants" have also expressed ambivalence. For example, it may seem surprising, even paradoxical, that the study of Native American literatures in the New World remains by and large one of the fields that is most segregated along disciplinary lines defined by Eurocentric borders dividing nation-states and languages, if recent tables of contents of major publishing venues in Native American studies such as *American Indian Quarterly* and *Latin American Indian Literatures*, as well as conferences sponsored by these journals, are an indication. Hemispheric perspectives on Native verbal traditions in the Americas are taking shape slowly, despite the comparative historical work by Roger Nichols, John Price, and others; notable exceptions in literary scholarship like the work of Gordon Brotherston (*Book*); calls by such theorists of Native American literatures as Jack Forbes to "regard the Americas as a single unit for literary study" and to envision a Native American studies that is "hemispheric in dimension" (18, 23); and the emphatically hemispheric orientation of some powerful cultural institutions, including the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC.[27] Besides the usual institutional and linguistic challenges inherent in all comparative or transnational scholarly endeavors, some Native American studies scholars have registered political concerns. Jennifer Andrews and Priscilla Walton have pointed out that "to move toward a hemispheric model that subordinates the idea of nation to hemispheric geopolitical affiliations at a time when many aboriginals are attempting to make land claims and assert their sovereignty is to discount the need, however contradictory, for stable notions of the nation-state, which would allow such negotiations to take place" (600–01).

Similarly, some have expressed concerns about the relation between African American studies in the United States, a discipline that grew out of the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, and hemispheric studies. Ifeoma Nwankwo has wondered whether the "fact that the most vocal proponents of the 'new' hemispherist American Studies have been primarily Latino/Latina studies and Latin American studies scholars" has not "left the place of U.S. African American studies in the hemispheric Americanist movement unclear" ("Promises" 188). Indeed, much of the hemisphericist critical vocabulary appears to be at odds with the terms of both traditional (United States) African American literary criticism and the more recent transnational critical discourse of diaspora and a "black Atlantic."[28] In transnational American studies, the comparative hemispheric (North-South) approach has often stood in opposition to the transatlantic (East-West) or "diasporic" models more familiar in recent African American critical discourse. Although the "Atlantic" or "circum-Atlantic" studies model has recently subsumed the hemispheric and the transatlantic models,[29] some methodological tension remains between these two smaller models. The hemispheric approach has traditionally emphasized the relations of each New World culture to its Old World counterpart—affinities of language, cultural heritage, or racial ancestry, for example—whereas the transatlantic approach has emphasized the relations (comparative, genealogical, etc.) among the literatures and cultures of the New World. In other words, whereas the transatlantic approach has focused on the first part of hyphened cultural self-identifications (*African* American, *British* American, *Spanish* American, etc.), the hemispheric approach has highlighted the second part of these identities, *American* standing, of course, for the hemisphere. As a consequence, the hemispheric model has often depended

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on assumptions of cultural creolization or acculturation due to historical experience in the frontiers or "contact zones" of the New World,[30] while the transatlantic has typically grounded transnational analyses on assertions of cultural retentions from the Old World to the New. In African American historiography, especially, the tension between acculturationist and retentionist approaches has been bound up with difficult questions of minority cultural identity reaching back to the early-twentieth-century debates between E. Franklin Frazier and Melville Herskovits.[31]

Despite some of these sensitive geopolitical and disciplinary issues surrounding hemispheric studies, however, scholars in most areas of American studies have widely come to accept a point made by inter-Americanists for a long time—that the name *America* has rightfully belonged to the entire hemisphere since its invention by the German map maker Martin Waldseemüller at the dawn of the sixteenth century and that its equation with the United States is a relatively recent act of "rhetorical malpractice" (Chevigny and Laguardia viii). In the following section, I will turn, briefly, to questions of methodology by considering a few exemplary recent works in subfields of literary hemispheric scholarship.

Recent Approaches to Hemispheric Studies

In the introduction to his collection, Pérez Firmat outlines four basic methodologies that seem to him to characterize most of the inter-American literary scholarship of the 1980s: the "*generic*" approach comparatively juxtaposes two or more texts not so much by genre as on the basis of their engagement with some common historical experience in the New World (racial and cultural mixture, for example); the "*genetic*" approach traces textual genealogies and intertextual dialogues across the Americas (Sarmiento's "re-writing" of Cooper, for example); the "*appositional*" approach involves the comparative juxtaposition of formal or poetological (and mostly European) traditions or continuities in the literatures of the New World (the poetics of the baroque, for example); and the "*meditative*" approach focuses on texts that have an inter-American or comparative dimension already embedded in them (the writings of José Martí, for example [3]).

While Pérez Firmat's taxonomy remains a useful starting point for considering recent hemispheric methodologies, the methodological choices available to scholars are somewhat circumscribed by their historical or cultural archives. For example, in early American studies genetic or meditative approaches offer little promise, since there were few direct inter-American literary relations during the colonial period.[32] While a number of themes are common to the colonial literatures of the New World, few people would speak of "a common literature" of the colonial Americas, and hemispheric scholarship in early American literary studies has therefore tended to adopt comparative generic or appositional approaches that are triangulated through a reference point in Europe.[33] For example, although the colonial savants Cotton Mather, a New Englander, and Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, a New Spaniard, were both known at the Royal Society of London, Alicia Mayer González, when studying the "dos Americanos" together, had to rely on a comparative triangulated Atlantic model that juxtaposed the two colonials' (somewhat divergent) receptions of European scientific thought emanating from the larger transnational ideological context that she called the "Reforma-Contrarreforma," which cut across national and imperial boundaries (53). Similarly, a triangulated Atlantic model was adopted by the Latin Americanist Stephanie Merrim, who compared how early American women writers like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Anne Bradstreet appropriated the European formal tradition of the spiritual biography (esp. ch. 3); by Jorge Cañizares-

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Esguerra, who (though a historian by training) studied what he called the "satanic epic" in New England and Spanish America (*Puritan Conquistadors*); and by David Boruchoff, who juxtaposed New English and New Spanish missionary writings in terms of their uses of the *translatio* trope. Even the hemispheric scholarship on the early modern literature of discovery, travel, ethnography, and captivity, much of which was widely translated and published across national boundaries, has tended to be comparative and triangulated.[34] An exciting and promising avenue for comparative early American studies that tests not only Pérez Firmat's notion of a hemispheric "literature" but also the traditional concept of literary history more generally has recently emerged in the study of what Mignolo has called "colonial semiosis" (*Darker Side*)—the encounter and interaction between European (alphabetical) and indigenous (nonalphabetical) sign systems, such as Iroquois wampum belts, Andean quipu, or Mexica pictographs. While scholars have explored these semiotic encounters in their distinct disciplines and national archives for some time, their work is now coming together in collaborations and at conferences, as well as in comparative articles and books (e.g., Rasmussen).[35]

The general dearth of inter-American literary relations across imperial boundaries during much of the colonial period rapidly changed in the late eighteenth century, especially as the European empires in the New World began to crumble in the fifty-some years between the 1760s and the 1810s.[36] The interest American nations—particularly the United States—have in each other's literary cultures assumes a more intense (and sinister) tone with the rise of American imperialism and westward expansionism in the aftermath of the Monroe Doctrine (1823) and especially in the context of the annexation of Texas (1845) and the Mexican-American War (1846–48), through the Spanish-American War (1898), and into the twentieth century. Not surprisingly, much recent hemispheric scholarship in nineteenth-century American studies has taken a postcolonial studies approach to a primarily Anglo-American archive in order to offer ideological critiques of the connections between United States nationalism and United States imperialism in the hemisphere during this period.[37] However, several studies also engage with the interactions between United States and non–United States (and non–English language) American texts, tracing inter-American literary genealogies even while their primary geographic focus remains largely on the United States. Kirsten Gruesz's pioneering *Ambassadors of Culture* (2002) excavates the (long-neglected) literary presence of Latinos and of Spanish-language texts in the United States during the nineteenth century, comparatively tracing their movement across political and linguistic boundaries, in literary anthologies, English translations, and critical receptions, as well as in journalism. Similarly, Anna Brickhouse, in *Transamerican Literary Relations* (2004), recovers the hemispheric genealogies of the literary flowerings in the United States during the American Renaissance, demonstrating canonical Renaissance writers' intimate engagement with Spanish America and the circum-Caribbean. Finally, Rodrigo Lazo, in *Writing to Cuba* (2005), studies Cuban-exile newspapers published in New York and New Orleans between the Mexican-American War and the United States Civil War, demonstrating an intense, ambivalent engagement with the question of an intervention by the United States in Cuba led by such important exiles as Cirilo Villaverde and José Martí .

Martí (1853–95), a Cuban-exile revolutionary, has figured prominently in other recent works of hemispheric studies, mainly those on twentieth-century literature. Fernández Retamar was the first to revive Martí's writings, in his attempt to theorize a Latin American cultural identity. José Ballón considered them in a hemispheric context in

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Autonomía cultural americana (1986), though merely in comparison with the literary nationalist Ralph Waldo Emerson's writings. Since the publication of Saldívar's *The Dialectics of Our America* (1991), however, Martí has also been frequently invoked as a theorist of hemispheric studies. Like Rodó's idea of the "Arielesque" spirit or Fernández Retamar's concept of the "Calibanesque" cultural identity of (Latin) America, Martí's notion of "our America" had mapped an "American" cultural identity along geographic boundaries—"our" America standing for (culturally and racially mixed) Latin America and the "other" America referring to the imperialist (predominantly white) United States. But because Martí lived in exile in the United States and wrote sympathetically of its oppressed racial and ethnic minorities, later commentators have interpreted Martí's "our America" to include the non-Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of the United States and, thus, have regarded him as an "architect of the hemispheric pannationalism" (Gillman 328).

Yet it is debatable whether Martí warrants such a title.[38] Martí's recent prominence as a progenitor of hemispheric studies may in part be explained by the fact that his notion of *nuestra* (vs. *otra* ["other"]) *América* resonated with American studies scholars who had been reared on the conceptual binaries of postcolonial and race theories during the 1980s and 1990s (self/other, colonizer/colonized, West/rest, etc.), thus facilitating the use of conceptual tools from United States cultural studies in hemispheric studies once American studies scholars looked beyond the borders of the United States nation-state. As envisioned by Saldívar, for example, this hemispheric literary history was based less on direct inter-American genealogies of literary influence and more on a "negative" genealogy derived from a "dialectical" or antithetical posture opposing the dominant Eurocentric understanding of literary history. The dialectic of our America "redirects," he wrote, "the Euro-centric focus of earlier scholarship in American Studies and identifies a distinctively postcolonial, pan-American consciousness" (xi).

If Martí's (and Saldívar's) idea of *nuestra América* depended heavily on racial categories and notions of racial otherness, much recent hemispheric literary scholarship has exploited racial mixture (*mestizaje*) and cultural creolization as topoi that cut across national boundaries in the hemisphere. Critics of twentieth-century literature, and some others,[39] have drawn also on such Caribbean theorists of creolization as Édouard Glissant, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant. But especially since the (English) publication of Benítez Rojo's *The Repeating Island* (1992), hemispheric Americanists have theorized the Caribbean as a nodal point for the hybrid cultures of the hemisphere at large. Michael Dash, in *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (1998), saw the Caribbean as a microcosm of the hemisphere, as paradigmatically syncretic and transculturated (3–5). Also, Monika Kaup and Debrah Rosenthal's *Mixing Race, Mixing Culture: Inter-American Literary Dialogues* (2002), though not specifically concerned with the Caribbean, aimed to "remap . . . the Americas as a multicultural and multiracial hemisphere, constituted through hybrid narrative geographies" and to "chart . . . a transracial Other America, in José Martí's sense, from between the cracks of the dominant cultural map of the Americas" (3). Finally, in *Reworlding America* (2006), John Muthyala aims to synthesize the ideas of hemispheric thinkers such as José Martí (but also Bolton and O'Gorman) and of postcolonial theorists of subalternity and creolization (mainly Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Glissant). Muthyala argues that the history of narrative in this hemisphere can be understood as a dialectic between "worlding" (originally Spivak's phrase) and "reworlding" America—between the European imperial inscription of a hemispheric terra incognita

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and a critical (or literary) practice that would unsettle this Eurocentric inscription by interrogating the "cultural, political, economic, and social processes that bring the world into America and America into the world" (2).

Many of the recent confluences in the United States between hemispheric studies and cultural and postcolonial studies thus fall into Pérez Firmat's category of the generic approach. While generic approaches to hemispheric studies have largely derived their critical terminology from Anglo-American literary criticism, there has been a hot debate in Latin American studies about the applicability of Anglo-American theoretical concepts, such as those originating with postcolonial or critical race theory, to Latin America.[40] By contrast, the effectiveness of Latin Americanist critical currencies in the Anglo-American context has recently been tested on theories of the baroque, neobaroque, and New World baroque. The concept of the baroque was first applied in the historiography of Counter-Reformation art by nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century art historians and has become a critical staple in Spanish and Spanish American (literary) history. (The baroque is a golden age in Spanish literary history, as the Renaissance is in English literary history). During the second part of the twentieth century, the term *baroque* was appropriated by such influential Latin American cultural historians, theorists, and writers as José Lezama Lima, Severo Sarduy, and Alejo Carpentier, who began to theorize the baroque as a quintessential and transhistorical (Latin) American form of cultural "expression" (regardless of period in literary history)—often in a self-consciously postcolonialist contradistinction to the "gothic" culture of Anglo-America.[41] As Lois Parkinson Zamora applies it in her recent *The Inordinate Eye*, the concept of a "New World baroque" leans on this Latin American critical tradition to describe a particularly Latin American formal and cultural aesthetics originating with sixteenth-century Catholic syncretism and still at work in the fiction of Carpentier and Borges. Although she asserts there that the baroque is "foreign to US cultural history" (xvi), the concept of the neobaroque has recently been tested as a comparative category also in the Anglo-American realm by such inter-Americanist critics as Monika Kaup and Antonio Barrenechea.[42]

While much recent work in transnational and especially hemispheric American studies begins with a critique of the legacy of American exceptionalism that has burdened American studies since its beginnings, one potential pitfall of hemispheric American studies is, as Paul Giles has recently noted, "the prospect of simply replacing nationalist essentialism predicated upon state autonomy with a geographical essentialism predicated on physical contiguity" and to assume an "organic relationship between culture and geography" (649–50). Indeed, as Sophia McClennen observes, every category of analysis that is grounded in ontological arguments is ultimately subject to deconstruction, and she therefore proposes foregrounding ethical, not ontological, motivations in the hemispheric study of the Americas ("Area Studies" 182). The potential pitfalls of hemispheric American studies lurk, then, in any attempt to transpose the age-old epistemological binaries that have burdened American studies (culture/nature, ideology/experience, Europe/America, Self/Other, *otra*/*nuestra*) to a hemispheric scale. The field's promise resides in a better understanding of these binaries, as part of a larger history that reaches back to the sixteenth-century European search for the terrestrial paradise and the fountain of youth in the Western terra incognita—the modern version of the alchemist's quest for the quintessence and self-transformation. Setting out to "discover" the cultural or literary essence of "our" hemispheric America, like that of "our" United States, wrongly ascribes an ontology to an idea that has always, Edmundo

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O'Gorman reminds us, been an invention (*Invention*). If hemispheric American studies cannot "discover" the cultural essence of a hemispheric America in the tabula rasa of unfamiliar textual terrains, it can study the rich and diverse history of this idea. But to do this, it must engage not only with historical documents but also with their critical and philosophical tradition in the present, even though they may be published in languages and venues different from those that American studies scholars are accustomed to reading.

Notes

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1. Pérez Firmat cites Valdés; Ballón; Chevigny and Laguardia; Kutzinski, *Against the American Grain*; MacAdam; and Zamora, *Writing*. To this list, we could add Fitz, "Old World Roots"; Aldridge; Jehlen; and Benítez Rojo, a compressed version of whose *La isla que se repite* (1989) also appeared in Pérez Firmat's collection. While this essay focuses on literary scholarship, historians and social scientists contributed important studies to comparative hemispheric American scholarship in the 1980s, including Morse, *Espejo* and *New World*, and Langley, *America*.

2. Gerbi's *La disputa* was published in 1955 but not translated into Spanish until 1960 and into English until 1973.

3. Galinsky, "Kolonialer Literaturbarock" and "Exploring"; more recent examples include Breinig, *Interamerikanische Beziehungen* and *Power*; also Breinig and Lösch; Müller-Vollmer and Frank; and Heide.

4. Benítez Rojo's *La isla que se repite* was published in 1989 and was translated into English as *The Repeating Island* in 1992.

5. See also Jackson; Payne; Sedycias; and Cohn.

6. Landmark works of transnational or postnational scholarship in American studies published during the 1990s and 2000s include Kaplan; Pease; Kaplan and Pease; Rowe; and Streeby. Studies from outside American studies proper that had an impact on the field include Roach; Mignolo, *Local Histories*.

7. A compressed version of this book had already appeared in Pérez Firmat's collection.

8. See Porter for a similar call. Other seminal 1990s publications in this vein include Belnap and Fernández; Wertheimer.

9. E.g., the *Review of International American Studies* was launched in 2006 and the journal *Comparative American Studies* in 2002; in both journals, hemispheric studies figures prominently, though not exclusively. For examples of special issues devoted to hemispheric studies, see Fox, *Critical Perspectives*; Kadir, *America*; Moya and Saldívar; Shukla and Tinsman; and Levander and Levine, *Hemispheric American Literary History*.

10. See, e.g., the new Oxford series Imagining the Americas, coedited by Caroline Levander and Anthony Pinn.

11. For examples of literary anthologies with a hemispheric orientation, see S. Castillo and Schweitzer; Bauer and Parini.

12. E.g., the *Rice Americas Digital Archive* (www.ruf.rice.edu/~americas/archive) and the *Early Americas Digital Archive* (www.mith2.umd.edu/eada/).

13. Examples include Vanderbilt's Center for the Americas, directed by Vera Kutzinski (www.vanderbilt.edu/americas/English/index.php); SUNY Buffalo's Center for the Americas and Duke's Center for North American Studies, which broadened its original focus from Canadian studies to include comparative and international-relations research about the United States, Canada, and Mexico; Wesleyan University's American studies department, which offers "Comparative Americas" courses alongside classes focused solely on the United States; the program in inter-American studies in Penn State's comparative literature department; the Comparative American Studies Program at Oberlin (www.oberlin.edu/CAS/); the Hemispheric Institute on the Americas at UC Davis (hia.ucdavis.edu); Duke's Center for North American Studies, which in 1998 broadened its original focus on the United States to include Canada and Mexico; and NYU's Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics (hemi.nyu.edu). Outside the United States, many programs in "North American studies" have long adopted a transnational perspective by focusing on the United States and Canada. Examples include the Renvall Institute for North American Studies at the University of Helsinki; the Swedish Institute for North American Studies at the University of Upsala; the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, in Berlin; and the North American Studies Program at McGill University, in Montreal. (I thank Claudia Sadowski-Smith for pointing out to me these programs abroad.)

14. E.g., the Tepoztlán Institute was formed in 2003 with the mission to "facilitate an intensive dialogue between North American and Latin American graduate students and junior and senior faculty members" (*Tepoztlán Institute*). A number of these networks, such as the Inter-American Cultural Studies Network, had already originated during the early 1990s, especially in Latin America.

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15. E.g., Reflections on the Future: Hemispheric Dialogues on the Intersections of Latina/o-Chicana/o-Latin American(s) Studies, UC Santa Cruz, 20–21 Feb. 2004 (als.ucsc.edu/hemispheric_dialogues/events/conf2004.html); In Comparable Americas: Colonial Studies after the Hemispheric Turn, Newberry Lib. (Chicago), 30 Apr. 2004 and Univ. of Chicago, 1 May 2004 (www.newberry.org/renaissance/conf-inst/challenges.html); and the Early Ibero/Anglo Americanist Summit, held in Tucson in 2002 (www.mith2.umd.edu/summit/Ibero_anglo.html), in Providence in 2004 (www.mith2.umd.edu/summit/home.html), and to be held in Saint Augustine in 2010 (www.mith2.umd.edu/fellows/bauer/summit3/index.html).

16. E.g., the 2007 National Endowment for the Humanities seminar Hemispheric American Literature (dir. Adams and Levander) set out "to explore the new possibilities for American literary study opened up when 'America' is understood not as a synonym for the isolated United States, but as a network of cultural filiations that have extended across the hemisphere from the period of colonization to the present" (*Hemispheric American Literature*).

17. Although the new International American Studies Association was founded not exclusively to promote hemispheric scholarship but rather to create a supranational institutional structure for American studies scholarship, it has explicitly emphasized the hemispheric approach since the beginning. According to its Web site, its mission is to further "the international exchange of ideas and information among scholars from all nations and various disciplines who study and teach America regionally, hemispherically, nationally, and transnationally" (*International American Studies Association*).

18. These commentators include contributors to Eric Slauter and Lisa Voigt's collection of essays on early American studies, a work in progress based on papers delivered at the conference In Comparable Americas: Colonial Studies after the Hemispheric Turn; for a review of this event, as well as of other work in hemispheric early American studies, see Parrish.

19. Examples of hemispheric scholarship on the colonial period published since 2000 include Sayre, *Indian Chief*; Bauer, *Cultural Geography*; S. Castillo; Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors*; Voigt; Brickhouse, "Hemispheric Jamestown"; and Bauer and Mazzotti. Hemispheric scholarship on the early republic and on nineteenth-century American literature includes Gruesz; Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations*; Kazanjian; Lazo, *Writing* and "Famosa Filadelfia"; Murphy; Goudie; Alemán; DeGuzman (whose scholarship reaches into the twentieth century); Dunkerley; and Levine. Scholars who write on twentieth-century American literature from a hemispheric perspective include Madureira (on Brazil and the Caribbean); Muthyala (who also has a chapter on colonial literature); and D. Castillo (who also has a chapter on the anonymous nineteenth-century novel *Jicoténcal*). Hemispheric literary-critical scholarship originating from a Latin Americanist context published during this period includes Fitz and McClennen; Taylor (on performance). Examples of important historical hemispheric scholarship include Fernández-Armesto; Elliott (for the colonial period).

20. See, e.g., Cohn; Smith and Cohn; Pratt Guterl; and Greeson.

21. Examples of hemispheric scholarship on African American literatures include Nunes; Kutzinski, "Fearful Asymmetries"; Wilks; Braziel; Handley; Cox; Delgadillo; Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism* and "Promises"; Stephens; McKee Irwin; and Kaup, "'Our America.'" On Chicana/o and Latina/o literature from a hemispheric perspective, see Gruesz; Fox, "Hemispheric Routes"; and Adams. On ethnic Asian literatures in the Americas, see Goellnicht; Ong; Hu-DeHart; Lee; and Chuh. On Arab Americans and Muslims, see Ette and Pannewick; Marr.

22. One of the notable aspects of recent hemispheric American scholarship that I will not be able to consider here concerns inter-American comparisons between Canadian and other national literary cultures in the Americas. For just some examples of the growing body of scholarship on this issue, see Price; Goellnicht; Adams; and Sadowski-Smith and Fox.

23. Of course, this larger move toward a transnational understanding of the past affected not only the scholarship on New World cultures but also that on the Old World, as Renaissance and eighteenth-century studies, e.g.—traditionally focused on the literatures and cultures of Europe—have shown an increasing interest in the archives of empire and the extra-European colonial world. On the Renaissance, see Greenblatt; Greene, *Unrequited Conquests* and "Wanted"; and Fuchs. On the eighteenth century, see, Kaul; McLeod; Festa; and Roach.

24. Louis Napoleon invented the term *Latin America* to justify French rule in Mexico; see Mignolo, *Idea*.

25. For a discussion of O'Gorman's critique of the Bolton thesis, see my "Notes"; also Fox, "Commentary," and Barrenechea, "Good Neighbor."

26. From my point of view as an early Americanist who has served on the editorial boards of several journals, such as *American Literature* and *Early American Literature*, this tendency has been especially notable with regard to Spanish-language texts that now make up the canon of early American literature. American studies scholars often submit essays on writers like Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Gaspar de Villagrá, or the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega without engaging with the voluminous scholarship on these texts produced by scholars in Latin American studies (and, often, in Spanish).

27. Luis Fernando Restrepo and Kirstin Erickson organized the panel Indigenous America in the Comparative Literature and Literary Studies Programs Curriculum at the 121st annual conference of the MLA in 2005. Also, several recent conferences organized with the support of public universities abroad and at home,

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private organizations, and professional organizations have increasingly embraced a hemispheric perspective. In July 2007, Oliver Scheiding, in collaboration with Kristina Bross and Restrepo, organized at the University of Mainz the conference Native American Studies across Time and Space, which was cosponsored by the University of Mainz and the Fritz Thyssen Foundation (www.amerikanistik.uni-mainz.de/symposium/index.html). In April 2008, Bross organized a conference called Prophetstown Revisited, which embraced a hemispheric vision of Native studies, especially evident in the keynote address, by W. Richard West, the former director of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC (matrix.msu.edu/ptown2008/toi.html). Finally, in May 2008 UC Davis hosted Discursive Practices: The Formation of a Transnational Indigenous Poetics, a Native American studies hemispheric conference (irca.ucdavis.edu/discursive-practices/en/).

28. See Gilroy for the idea of a black Atlantic. Although I wouldn't agree with Nwankwo that this has resulted in a "dearth" of hemispheric scholarship on African American literatures in the New World ("Promises" 188), she is correct in pointing out that the recent hemispheric turn in American studies has often emphasized theoretical concepts (such as the "border") that may seem somewhat at odds with the traditional critical discourse of African American studies (the importance of race as a general concept in hemispheric American studies notwithstanding).

29. For an overview of Atlantic studies, see Cañizares-Esguerra and Seeman; on the term *circum-Atlantic*, see Roach.

30. The frequently invoked term *contact zone* famously originated with Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*. Of the works to come out of the postcolonial studies movement, Pratt's book is among those that have had the most influence on the current transnational turn in American studies.

31. Whereas Frazier, a sociologist, had argued in his study of the African American family that the "acculturation" forced on African slaves in the New World formed the beginning of African American culture in the New World, Herskovits, in his celebrated critique of Frazier, *Acculturation: The Study of Culture Contact* (1938), emphasized the continuities connecting African American cultures with their African roots, giving impetus to a "retentionist" school in subsequent anthropological scholarship. However, between the 1940s and 1980s, anthropologists such as Fernando Ortiz, Kamau Brathwaite, and Sidney Mintz and Richard Price—though all acknowledging cultural continuities from the Old World to the New—reemphasized the importance of new cultural formations, proposing models that they called "transculturation" (Ortiz), "creolization" (Brathwaite), and "culturation" (Mintz and Price).

32. For the most part, literary and cultural exchanges across imperial boundaries in the early Americas were triangulated through Europe, because of the mercantilist protectionism of the major empires in the New World. Thus, information or texts could travel, like tobacco, from Brazil to Lisbon, and from there to London and Boston, but not (legally) from Brazil directly to Boston.

33. See, e.g., the forthcoming issue of *Revista Iberoamericana* on Atlantic triangulations, whose guest editors are Nina Gerassi-Navarro and Eyda Merediz. For examples of comparative studies of colonial American literatures, see n19, above.

34. Sayre, *Sauvages* and *Indian Chief*; Bauer, *Cultural Geography*; S. Castillo, *Performing*; and Voigt.

35. I am thinking here of the symposia Early American Mediascapes, organized by Matt Cohen and Jeff Glover at Duke University in February 2008, and Codes in Conflict, organized by David Lowenstein and the Center for Early Modern Studies at the University of Wisconsin in March 2008. Comparative hemispheric scholarship in print on this issue is, for the most part, still in progress (like Cohen and Glover's *Early American Mediascapes* and Birgit Rasmussen's *Queequeg's Coffin: Alternative Literacies and the Making of Early American Literature*).

36. Wertheimer; Bauer, "Colonial Discourse" and "Hemispheric Genealogies"; Gustafson; and Goudie.

37. Examples include Wertheimer; Kazanjian; DeGuzman; Kaplan; Streeby; and Murphy.

38. Examples of appeals to Martí as a theorist of hemispheric studies include Belknap and Fernández; Heide; and Kaup, "'Our America.'" For comparative scholarship on racial hybridity, see Hiraldo. Oscar R. Martí discusses the ways in which Martí has been read and misread in this century.

39. Goudie, e.g., applies Caribbean theories of creolization to the literary culture of the early United States republic.

40. The literature on these issues is vast. For a couple of examples, see Klor de Alva; also Hill.

41. See esp. Lezama Lima's *La expresión americana* (1959); Véliz discusses the "baroque" cultural heritage of Latin America in contradistinction to the "gothic" tradition in Anglo-America. During the heyday of the formalist movement in the 1960s, some prominent New Critics, such as René Wellek, Austin Warren, and Leo Spitzer, attempted to see the concept as a transnational aesthetic movement applicable also, e.g., to Restoration English literature (especially the poetry of Dryden), while Hans Galinsky coined the term "colonial literary baroque" regarding the literature of colonial Virginia ("Kolonialer Literaturbarock").

42. See Kaup, "Neobaroque"; also Barrenechea, "Salvaging." Kaup is at work on a book project entitled *Neobarroco: Transamerican Fictions of Modernity and Counterconquest*, which investigates how, in its transmission from Europe to the Americas, the baroque is transculturated and transformed into a decolonizing mode in the theory and literature of the Americas. Barrenechea is

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working on a book project entitled *Archival Templates: Monsters, Maps, and New World Chronicles in the Encyclopedic Novel Tradition in North America*, which studies the fictional and metahistorical reimagining of the early modern encounter between Europe and the Americas in nineteenth- and twentieth-century "encyclopedic" novels.

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