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**Mobilizing ‘America/América’: Toward Entangled Americas  
and a Blueprint for Inter-American ‘Area Studies’**

**Abstract:**

As the conflictive imaginaries of the Americas—of who matters and who does not—show, the *Inter-American* is more easily evoked than described. In a by now famous quote, Frederic Jameson has called globalization an “untotalizable totality”. Similarly, we may speculate that the prefix “inter” refers to an undefined relationship to America/América and between the Americas. How can the “inter” as significant marker within Inter-American Studies potentially be translated into research paradigms? The article delineates developments and debates within the field of Inter-American studies and creates and reflects a critical vocabulary in glossary form. The entries in the second part follow in alphabetical order and represent modalities of space, albeit on conceptually different levels. Their links to spatial categories help to avoid arbitrariness. Being aware of the impossibility of totality, they should be used in a kaleidoscopic way to look at area(s) from multiple angles and perspectives. The terms are loosely connected, may sometimes overlap to a small degree, and, as tropes within mobility studies, need to be continuously renegotiated with the flux of time and place.

**Keywords:** critical vocabulary, transversal, translocational, mobility studies, knowledge production

## **America**

Let us be lovers, we'll marry our fortunes together  
I've got some real estate here in my bag  
So we bought a pack of cigarettes, and Mrs. Wagner pies  
And we walked off to look for America

Cathy, I'm lost, I said, though I knew she was sleeping  
I'm empty and I'm aching and I don't know why  
Countin' the cars on the New Jersey turnpike  
They've all come to look for America, all come to look for America

(Paul Simon)

## **Buscando América**

Te estoy buscando América  
y temo no encontrarte,  
tus huellas se han perdido entre la  
oscuridad.

Te estoy llamando América  
pero no me respondes,  
te han desaparecido, los que temen la  
verdad.

Si el sueño de uno  
es sueño de todos.  
Romper la cadena  
y echarnos a andar.  
Tengamos confianza.  
Pa' lante mi raza.

Te han secuestrado América  
y han amordazado tu boca,  
y a nosotros nos toca  
ponerte en libertad  
Te estoy llamando América,  
nuestro futuro espera  
y antes que se nos muera  
te vamos a encontrar.

Te estoy buscando América.

(Rubén Blades)

## Looking for America/América

Both Paul Simon and Ruben Blades have artistically traversed the Americas many times. They also have crisscrossed the multiple musical cultures of the Americas in numerous recordings fusing jazz, salsa, rock and folk among others in their musical creations and have given voice to various Americas in their rich musical fusions of sounds, rhythms, and words. What the song lyrics quoted as preface have in common is that they express the quest for 'America/América' in spatial as well as metaphorical terms. They are different in language and content, though. Written in blank verse and English, Paul Simon's song "America" narrates a journey east in the United States. Two lovers are hitch-hiking from Saginaw, Michigan to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to look for 'America'. There they board a Greyhound bus to New York City. As they pass through the New Jersey turnpike, the initial excitement about the trip turns into anxiety, fear and sadness; a mood that is also captured by Rubén Blades' song "Buscando América," released by the composer and his band Seis del Solar & Son del Solar in 1984. But while Paul Simon's composition recorded by Simon & Garfunkel on their 1968 album *Bookends* is first of all a melancholic love song, Rubén Blades' salsa infused Spanish tune "Buscando América" is part of the more politically outspoken album of the same title. Echoing Bolivarian notions of 'América', Blades' song, politically conscious, reflects the divide between utopia and dystopia in relation to 'América'. Similar to Paul Simon's "America", the Blades's lyrics shift and negotiate between hopefulness and disillusionment. The former's references are to locations in the United States, the latter's references to history, yet, primarily refer to political systems in Latin America. Despite these different conceptualizations of 'America/América' that recast geopolitical imaginaries of a North and South America divide, both songs, on the other hand, wistfully play with the concept 'America/América' as a "dense and suggestive signifier" (Kunow 246) and set the term free for "a multiplicity of interpellations of subject positions" (Raussert/Isensee 1). Both songs also negotiate individual and collective quests for America/América—"They all come to look for America/ Nuestro futuro espera"—thus adding additional suggestiveness to the signifier that goes beyond the concept of nation-states. To further comprehend 'America/América' as signifier it, hence, seems useful to switch to a plural version: The Americas. Outside Latin America the term 'America' frequently recalls images of U.S. America only, but both the English and the Spanish term have historically functioned as signifiers in respect to notions of utopia and independence in particular. As Quijano and Wallerstein have pointed out, the differences lie within utopian conceptualizations: "North America's "utopia of social equality and liberty" and Latin America's indigenous "utopia of reciprocity, solidarity, and direct democracy" (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992, 556-57). "If Hemispheric American studies", as Ralph Bauer concludes, "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” (243). It is here that Inter-American scholarship gains new momentum and prominence. Beyond the idea of “a hemispheric America” and certainly ever since the collapse of Spanish imperial claims in 1898, concrete cultural, political and economic dynamics, tensions, and processes within the Americas have increasingly created inter-American webs and networks that manifest mutual entanglements between locations, regions, and nations beyond a North-South divide.

### **From America/América to the Americas or Re-thinking Hemispheric ‘American’ Studies**

A look at the present and the past reveals that Inter-American Studies today is a booming field with important predecessors in the twentieth century. We may think of literary comparatists and Latin Americanists as M. J. Valdés, José Ballón Gari Laguardia and Lois Parkinson to name but a few and during the 1990s comparative Inter-American scholarship in the US by critics as Djelal Kadir, Doris Sommer, Antonio Benítez Rojo and José David Saldívar. Many of these critics continue to nourish the field with new theoretical and critical insight, as Saldívar’s recent book *Trans-Americanity. Subaltern Modernities, Global Coloniality and the Cultures of Greater Mexico* (2012) illustrates. As Earl Fitz notes, “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 large and more urgent than it ever has before” (13). This is due in part to the fact that postnational and transnational turns in Latin American and American Studies have recognized the necessity to think “nation” and “area” anew and have slowly entered the critical debates about the restructuring of area studies that have been prompted by radical transformations in geopolitics and economics in times of globalization. Critics like Walter Mignolo and José David Saldívar have introduced new kinds of border thinking that question traditional knowledge and power division that have created hierarchies along the North-South axis which have become as troubling as earlier examples of a divide between East-West. Not only do they introduce mobile border concepts, they also favor dialogical approaches, as does Saldívar in *Trans-Americanity. Subaltern Modernities, Global Coloniality and the Cultures of Greater Mexico*, to comprehend the interconnectedness of cultures and cultural productions within the Americas beyond a North-South divide and introduce the necessity of optional discourses such as indigenous knowledge production, as Mignolo calls for in his recent book *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (2011).

It is safe to say that Inter-American Studies has challenged the ways of thinking about the Americas beyond South American and North American “Creole Nationalisms” (Mignolo) that have created distinct nationalities in the aftermath of conquest and colonization in particular and, thusly,

have put into question earlier conceptualizations of area studies in general. Inter-American Studies, in our understanding, conceptualize the Americas as transversally related, chronotopically entangled, and multiply interconnected. In that sense Inter-American Studies envision a post-territorial understanding of area(s). With its critical positioning at the crossroads of cultural studies and area studies the field pushes further the postcolonial, postnational and cross-border turns in studies of the Americas toward a model of horizontal dialogue beyond constructed areas, cultures as well as disciplines. As John Carlos Rowe puts it, “the U.S., Canada, Europe, and their Greco-Roman sources—are not “areas” at all, but conceptualizations ... (and) the intellectual complements” of what Mignolo calls the “modern/colonial world system” (Rowe 322-23). To investigate how, to what degree, and in which ways ‘America/América’ as geopolitical, cultural and social manifestation should be seen as ‘entangled Americas’ beyond closed national and area spaces is one of Inter-American scholars’ central goals to comprehend the Americas in their historical, social and cultural interrelatedness more fully.

Inter-American studies first of all should be seen as a collaborative project that involves many scholars from various disciplines studying the history(ies), societ(ies), culture(s), language(s) and politic(s) of the two continents forming the Americas. While we are still in the initial phase of creating horizontal dialogical patterns to overcome classical nationalist and area study concepts, a new conscience and alertness of mobilizing and revising earlier paradigms have infused American Studies, Canadian Studies, Caribbean Studies and Latin American Studies (I see these disciplines as area studies related) to different degrees. Harry Harootunian critically comments that area studies “failed to provide . . . a persuasive attempt to account for its privilege of space (and place) and its apparent exemption from an encounter with time” (29). Similarly Doreen Massey reminds us that “while ‘time is equaled with movement and progress, ‘space’/‘place’ is equaled with stasis and reaction” (n.p). David Szanton notes that area studies are frequently charged with being merely “ideographic,” primarily concerned with description, as opposed to the “nomothetic” or the theory building and generalizing character of the core social science disciplines (4). As Szanton reflections reveal, area studies in crisis and/or under attack are frequently confronted with lacking convincing theory or overall narrative. If area studies are in crisis at the same time it appears that they are in a process of reorientation. A general tendency to be observed is the way in which scholars from the mentioned area study related fields have redefined the relationships between center and periphery, often multiplied and diversified these concepts, and have moved away from container visions of locality, region and nation to embrace translocal, transregional, and transnational categories as paradigms for current investigation. What we can deduct from this development is that “area” gets infused by the idea of a mobile sense of place and hence becomes thinkable as framed but open, historically grown but changing, specific yet interconnected.

Arguably Caribbean Studies have always been translocally oriented. The particular history and development of the area is full of translocal, transregional and transnational entanglements. Accordingly the Caribbean as area construct in the words of Karla Slocum and Deborah A. Thomas “problematizes assumptions about moving in a linear fashion from a locally rooted area studies approach to a global transnational one” (553-34). From an anthropological position the authors point toward the “theoretical lens of creolization,” “migration as hallmark of Caribbean anthropology” and “synergies between global and local frames” (556, 558,560) to delineate a rethinking of ‘area’ as mobile and multiply related. Their thinking is highly relevant for a further conceptualization of Inter-American studies, as both share the conviction that local area analysis is important for the understanding of global processes. Slocum and Thomas conclude their reflection on Caribbean area studies as follows:

Clearly, an analysis of processes in, through, and around the Caribbean has not been exclusively local. Because of the historical particularities of the region, it requires constant boundary crossing—disciplinarily, analytically, conceptually and categorically. Even when looking at the Caribbean as an “area,” Caribbeanists analyses rarely have been strictly bounded. Examination of the Caribbean’s connections with other areas—particular through the movements and relations of Caribbean people, places, and state structures—has been a significant way that Caribbeanists have made this clear. (560)

As concerns a conceptualization of area studies it is important to remember that Immanuel Wallerstein enhanced a vision of the Caribbean as expanded and truly inter-American showcase already in the 1970s. In what he calls “the extended Caribbean” we encounter a cultural and historical formation that stretches from Brazil to the East coast of the United States (47). Emphasizing commerce, trade, plantation economy, and cultural transmission, Wallerstein gives us an early example of how to envision the Americas as space of entanglement(s) beyond European claims and postcolonial boundaries. His focus on economic, environmental, and historical affiliations along the coastlines from Brazil to the USA provides a microcosmic lens to perceive the Americas hemispherically as well as internally interconnected beyond Old World-New World dialectics.

Walter Mignolo’s recent thoughts about global futures and decolonial options in *The Darker Side of Modernity* provide further inspiration to rethink our understanding of area studies in particular with reference to the Americas. According to him, the decolonial found its first intellectual voices during the Cold War in the writings of African, African Caribbean and African American thinkers and intellectuals. Historically, as Mignolo points out, decolonization finds its predecessors in liberation movements of the early nineteenth century: “The words employed in the colonies referring to the same ends were independence and revolution, as per the American and Haitian Revolutions or the Mexican and Argentine Independence” (53). Beyond its meaning as historical referent and toward the end of the Cold War period, decolonization becomes ‘decoloniality’, signifying in the words of

Mignolo the “decolonization of knowledge” (53) and becomes “synonymous with being epistemologically disobedient” (54). What critics like Mignolo envision is a world of thought in which many parallel worlds of thinking coexist. To achieve such perhaps utopian thought system “epistemic obedience” and “epistemic delinking” are fundamental (54). For a reconceptualization of area studies, Mignolo’s assertion that “the historical presence of ‘pueblo originarios’ (ab-origines) and the massive African slave trade are two of the radical experiences that differentiate the decolonial from the postcolonial” (55) mark another point of explication why indeed the inter-American interconnectedness becomes an important voice for a new epistemic orientation towards “pluri-topic” thinking (61). A focus on inter-American connectedness indeed opens venues to see the politics, cultural productions and thought systems among, for instance, indigenous cultures and African Caribbean, African American and Latin African American cultures and diaspora cultures within the Americas as providing optional discourses to comprehend the constellation of the Americas as hemispherically related beyond and also outside of the Old World-New World axis. In that sense an inter-American lens not only provides new insights into the Americas as being defined regionally or nationally, transatlantic and transpacific studies of the Americas, but additionally, helps us tackle one of the weak spots of area studies, namely its lack of theory building. Area should first of all be envisioned in the plural version, related to a mobile “progressive sense of place” (Massey n.p) that is intrinsically connected to synchronic as well as uneven temporalities. Thus synchronicity, simultaneity, and the investigation of vertical as well as horizontal relations with respect to knowledge and power systems shape the general theoretical framework. The critical analysis should direct itself at issues of process, relation, and interaction to come to terms with areas as spaces of political, economic and cultural entanglement.

### **Studying the Americas: Fueling Dialog, Re-thinking Processes of Othering and Overcoming the Rhetoric of Exceptionalism**

Cultural critics Frances Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman seek “to contribute a polydirectional and multivocal approach to the politics of representation, seeking to avoid the pervading binarism in the field and the colonial gaze that essentializes and fetishizes subaltern cultures and privileges dominant ones” (14). As they suggest in their introduction to mode of conceptualizing asymmetrical power relations. It would be naïve to assume that the endeavors of Inter-American scholarship can easily ignore ideological as well as disciplinary battlegrounds involved in defining and redefining academic orientation. Different representatives of disciplines related to area studies in the Americas have been replicating colonial and global politics shaping relations between the U.S., Canada, Caribbean and Latin American nations on a level of academic

debate and dispute. Hence discussions of empire and empire-building have included debates about theory and knowledge production and recast scenarios of Western intellectual supremacy and dominance complicating a true exchange not only along a south/north axis.

As John Carlos Rowe reminds us, Latin American Studies scholars tend to view the postnationalist turn in American Studies critically, frequently relating it to empire-building and imperialist U.S. politics (c.f. 326). What suspicious minds refer to are the hegemonic discourse of U.S. expansionism built on concepts of U.S. American exceptionalism and, as Donald Pease succinctly traces in *The New American Exceptionalism* (2009), it is indeed a mobile and powerful trope capable of redefining itself seemingly endlessly. In *The New American Exceptionalism* (2009) Donald Pease traces the changing name of American exceptionalism from its assumed beginnings in Puritan times to the war on terror announced by the Bush administration after September 11, 2001. The way he tracks the different contextualizations and reinterpretations sheds light on Stephen Greenblatt's assumption that despite our scholarly concerns with mobility change "we need to account for the persistence, over very long time periods and in the face of radical disruption, of cultural identities for which substantial numbers of people are willing to make extreme sacrifices, including life itself" (2). Indeed the Puritan belief in being among the selected citizens of a new model city for the rest of the world has reechoed in different periods of U.S. American history. As Pease explains, "American exceptionalism is the name of a much coveted form of nationality that provided U.S. citizens with a representative form of self-recognition across the history of the cold war. As a discourse, American exceptionalism includes a complex assemblage of theological and secular assumptions out of which Americans have developed the lasting belief in America as the fulfillment of the national ideal to which other nations aspire" (7). Whereas this discourse has persevered over time, it is striking how the flux of history has brought forth decisive changes in self-representation. Concepts such as "The City upon the Hill", "Manifest Destiny", "Nation of Nations", and "Leader of the Free World" reveals the rhetorical shifts of an underlying pattern to continuously create conceptual metaphors to keep on nourishing the belief in the exceptionality of the United States of America. The adaptability reveals how intriguing and mobile the concept has been to policymakers who have managed to reconfigure its constituents to address new historical challenges and geopolitical circumstances. As becomes evident in Pease's explanation, "the semantic indeterminacy of American exceptionalism" renders this concept so adaptable to often successfully bridge contradictions and tensions in the self-recognition of U.S. citizens (9). Hence policymakers sanctioned war actions as justified in the struggle for free trade as well as the struggle for a world free of terrorism and in complacency with American exceptionalism as "World Police". While policymakers drew upon the fantasy of American exceptionalism to authorize governance as well as military action, scholars of the humanities relied on the beliefs of

American exceptionalism in order to control the selection process of events to be represented in historical discourse as well as the process of canon-making as concerns U.S. American literature (Pease 11).

Key figures of the Myth and Symbol school of American studies used tropes such as “The City upon the Hill” “the Frontier”, and “Manifest Destiny” in the early years of cold war politics to construct an exceptionalist model of the United States for the curriculum of American studies as well as a prescriptive model for political communities outside U.S. geopolitical territory (Pease 12). It is important to note that the heightened visibility of the reconfigurations of American exceptionalism in the postwar gains new momentum in the U.S. policymakers’ repositioning of governance after September 11, 2001. Hence, Pease’s critical inquiry makes it all the more desirable to call for horizontal and dialogical paradigms to study the Americas; moreover it demonstrates the urgency to further decolonize imperialist paradigms for the production and diffusion of knowledge. Likewise, as Stefan Rinke emphasizes, we need to acknowledge that the diversity of Latin America has been subsumed and simplified as homogeneous entity in U.S. American ideological discourse within a process of “othering” that positions Latin America as the U.S.’s inferior Other within a Pan-American imaginary (3). To pave the way for future dialogical thinking, John Carlos Rowe’s hint “that not all study of other societies is inevitably imperialist” seems helpful, though (326).

In a similar vein, Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine stress that, “recent tendencies to conceive of the United States in the American hemisphere solely in terms of empire and imperialism tend to overlook the complex series of encounters that collectively comprise national communities in the Americas” (7). They maintain the necessity to acknowledge and explore the entanglement of regions and nations within the Americas against binary structures of hegemony versus periphery. Quoting Rodrigo Lazo they maintain:

“the separation of America as a hemisphere promoted by the Monroe doctrine worked hand in hand with opposition to Spain in some sectors of Latin America.” From such a perspective, the U.S. nation can be understood in relation to nationalistic Latin American liberation movements of the early to mid-nineteenth century. A recognition of this intertwined history of nations in formation presses us to abandon a simple binary that pits the United States as a fully formed, homogeneous entity against the myriad peoples and nations of the rest of the hemisphere. (7)

Looking at recent developments in the Americas at large it is safe to assert that the cultural and political landscape is subject to at times contradictory dynamics of change. New global players from the South, Brazil in particular, are gaining power, whereas the geopolitical hegemony of the United States appears to be gradually declining. Different historical epochs have brought forth varying power constellations within the Americas including the interrelations between nations of

Central America, the Caribbean and Latin America. The Caribbean islands even more than the mainland have witnessed flux, change and intercultural dynamics frequently throughout their histories and numerous networks and interconnections have emerged that mark the Caribbean region as a specifically mobile and multiply connected one; within the Americas but certainly also beyond. Perhaps due to the geographically marginal position far north, Canada and Canadian Studies frequently appear absent from agendas of Inter-American Studies. As Albert Braz succinctly reminds us, "...hemispheric studies have become increasingly oriented along a United States-Hispanic America axis. Consequently Canada is seldom considered in continental dialogues, whether they originate in the United States or in Spanish America" (119). Geographical positioning and language markers such as French and English in Canada and Portuguese in Brazil may partially explain why both cultures frequently fall off of the mappings of Inter-American Studies. Another reason may be that both countries have had a tendency to look at the world from European perspectives, not positioning themselves firmly as part of the American hemispheres. In the words of Neil Bresner both nations "constantly reproduce and carry forward with them the colonial perception of inauthenticity and imitation" (26). Still, what they share with the hemispheric Americas is colonial history, hybrid processes of identity formation and transcultural productivity. With reference to Canada, Albert Braz in particular points to the intellectual force of Louis Riel who in his writings exposes métissage, racial hybridity, and continental identity as central for Canadian identity formation processes (122-26). Similar to conceptualizations of new racial crossing along the lines of "Nuestra América" by thinkers such as José Martí, Simon Bolívar, Roberto Fernández Retamar and José Vasconcelos, Riel's métissage (with reference to the Métis and Halfbreeds in Canada) provides another option to rethink difference and the emergence of continental identities also north of the United States of America, namely Canada. Similarly the heterogeneity of Brazilian culture points toward processes of creolization that link Brazil to the American project in multiple ways.

### **From the Prefix "Inter" to Research Paradigms**

As the conflictive imaginaries of the Americas—of who matters and who does not—show, the *Inter-American* is more easily evoked than described. In a by now famous quote, Frederic Jameson has called globalization an "untotalizable totality" (xii). Similarly, we may speculate that the prefix "inter" refers to an undefined relationship to America/América and between the Americas. How can the "inter" as significant marker within Inter-American Studies potentially be translated into research paradigms? "Inter" is "a prefix that means overlapping, concurrence, layers of interaction, juxtapositions, connectivity. It is not synthesizing two or more into one and it is not simply mixing

approaches or terminologies between areas studies and disciplines... [It] is to cross lines between, it is to express the lines of transition, it is to express multidimensional connectedness and multidirectional flows” (146), as Ana Luz explains. “Inter” stresses “in-betweenness” (146). Certainly the knowledge production about local, regional and national history(ies), societ(ies), literatures remains important. Only by revisiting existing paradigms and knowledge pools can Inter-American scholarship attempt to provide missing links to comprehend these local, regional, and national specifics as transnationally and hemispherically connected. While numerous disciplines with an area studies focus have fostered transatlantic and more recently transpacific approaches to studying the Americas in revisionist processes that give voice to colonial and postcolonial relations between the colonizing nations of Europe and the postcolonial repercussions until contemporary times, Inter-American Scholarship directs its focus to multi-layered connections, multidirectional flows, conflicted and overlapping imaginaries and complex entanglements within the Americas. It thus intends to rethink spatial configurations that have functioned as a basis for framing areas studies in earlier decades. Likewise it aims at new knowledge production that revises master narratives, canon-making, museolog(ies) from the vista of Inter-American relations. In a broader sense the projects inscribes themselves in a larger endeavor to decolonize concepts, perspectives on, and approaches to the Americas.

What are major general paradigms to pursue Inter-American Studies? The most obvious, and in some disciplines, such as comparative literatures, a well established one, is certainly the comparative approach: in general a juxtaposition of cultural productions in various contexts of the Americas, a comparison of historical events and conditions as well as their impact in the American hemisphere, comparative studies of political and economic decisions and their effects on different, nations, regions, localities in the Americas. While these comparative aspects open up venues to shed light upon similarities and differences within and between the two continents, they tend to fall short when it comes to the analysis of relations and processes. Hence I would like to propose more complex relational and processual strategies for a future fine tuning of Inter-American scholarship. Horizontal as well as vertical dimensions play a crucial role in exploring what types of relations exist between individuals, groups, regions, and nations within the Americas. In this relational approach to Inter-American studies the scholar aims at discovering the links, the obstacles as well as the power constellations that shape the interaction between various agents of the production of capital, culture, environment, network, and knowledge. Part of these relational strategies are border discourses, as they have emerged in particular in the context of transnational studies of the Americas, which permit the Inter-American scholar to explore the in-betweenness as well as the political, cultural, economic, and spatial overlaps in their asymmetrical constellations that characterize manifestations of entanglements in the Americas. Finally, to study movement and

process within the American hemisphere, the processual approach investigating translocation and development serves as a useful tool for capturing the channels, circulations, flows, itineraries and shifting imaginaries that have crisscrossed and transversally linked the Americas from colonial times to the global present. The processual approach both 'follows the thing' and analyzes context, progression as well as stasis at departure, transit, and arrival points.

### **Critical Terminology and Case Studies**

What are helpful tropes to tackle Hemispheric 'American' Studies in a larger understanding of all cultures as inherently mobile and translocally, if not hemispherically or even globally connected? Terminology and paradigms feed into programs and archives of knowledge that frequently and for long stretches of time remain unchallenged sources of knowledge. Hence, the most basic yet essential requirement of a critical terminology of Inter-American Studies is the acknowledgement of the multiplicity and simultaneity of knowledge production in different areas of the Americas and in various disciplines studying the Americas. Scholarship needs to record the differences, juxtapose contraries and similarities, and mobilize the existing sources of knowledge in a dialogical way. In such manner knowledge itself becomes recognizable as flow and the scholars need to pay attention to the controlling and channeling of flows to move from vertical to horizontal acknowledgement and diffusion of knowledge production. This also automatically implies that all revisions of key terms, phenomena and paradigms pursued here-and-now are subject to future changes, as history(ies) move on and forms of archiving, and the channels and distribution of knowledge modulate over time. Working toward a critical lexicography for the hemispheric study of the Americas that should underpin the theoretical redefinition of areas as mobile, transversal and progressive, I resort to a broader framework of current mobility studies. Migratory patterns, mediascapes, and citational practices—to name but a few paradigms available—give expression to the assumption that all cultures are inherently mobile. Beyond that they permit us to investigate how different forms and manifestations of movement in space and time shape and reshape geopolitical imaginaries within the Americas, how they produce and reproduce 'culture', 'environment' and 'nature'; they enable us to discover the ways knowledge travels, how it is produced and diffused, channeled, framed, controlled, and suppressed. By assuming that cultures and histories are in process one may claim flow as evidence of mobility and an object of study. One may assume flow as category to understand the shifting production of knowledge and theory and one may embrace flow as objective since the overall intention is to mobilize the existing knowledge production from a dialogically defined to a horizontal cultural studies perspective (see also Berkin/Kaltmeier 2012). Ideally then entries in a list of critical lexicography address the

transversal, multidirectional, and interconnected nature of historical processes, political developments, economic changes and cultural productions that one considers fundamental for a more comprehensive understanding of the Americas as entangled space(s).

What epistemology may serve as scholarly tools of a fast emerging field of research on the Americas? Projecting a matrix for a critical epistemology of Inter-American Studies, metaphors such as flows, itineraries, border, and entanglement move to the foreground. They may function as tropes illustrating methodological challenges and changes associated with cross-area studies. The subsequent paragraphs present key terms for the study of the Americas within a dialogically and horizontally oriented critical terminology. My point of departure is another currently booming field, that of mobility studies. Drawing on concepts developed by critics such as Arjun Appadurai, James Clifford, Stephen Greenblatt, John Urry, and Anna Tsing, I argue that 'mobilization' is fundamental to Inter-American Studies on various levels. On a meta-level of area studies, Inter-American studies require a rethinking of dialogue between disciplines such as American Studies, Canadian Studies, Caribbean Studies and Latin American Studies in the first place. On a level of spatial thinking Inter-American Studies can profit from Doreen Massey's conceptualization of places in progress. Spatial units, accordingly, keep on changing over time, and their developments help us come to terms with the interconnectivity between localities, regions, and nations within the Americas in a diachronic as well as synchronic way. The conceptualization of space as porous, fluid, mobile and as framed, controlled and channeled dialectically permits us to study the transversal flows that have shaped cultural, economic and political processes within the Americas without losing a consciousness of hierarchies and power structures involved. Linking spatial mobility with time we begin to discover new links, connections, as well as gaps and borderlines that characterize the complex, multidirectional and multirelational diffusion of cultures in the Americas. Moreover, we need critical vocabulary that permits us to study the interconnectedness, transversality and multidirectionality in concrete case studies. Based upon my own research conduct, the terms introduced in the glossary section hopefully encourages scholars as well as students to approach Inter-American Studies, despite the field's complexity, with confidence, ease, and clarity. To make this clear from the start, a glossary per se provides terminology, definition, explication, circumscription as well as paraphrase. As such a lexicography is an assemblage of knowledge, a selection of information, ideally a critical reflection and always also a site of new knowledge production. To approach the study of the Americas in a transdisciplinary perspective is recommendable since different disciplines provide optional insights and open venues for dialogue and exchange. As Matthias Oppermann rightly warns, "If, as Sophia McClennen has argued, Inter-American Studies is "dedicated to critically examining the ways that disciplinary knowledge has been used to support hegemony" (407), then practitioners in the field must be particularly sensitive

to attempts to limit their comparative, post-national inquiries into the cultures of the Americas and their global relations to just one distinctive type of textuality” (n.p). With a nod to Rüdiger Kunow’s lexicography presented in his article “American Studies as Mobility Studies: Some Terms and Constellations,” I chart a series of tropes that do not aspire to be a complete blueprint for transdisciplinary Inter-American mobility studies but may function as a basic epistemology. What the selected tropes hope to capture are points “where more than one location, tradition, or practice are coming into play” (Kunow 260). If you want “America” turns into “America(s)” and becomes “constituted and performed across different social and cultural spaces” in which the signifier is viewed from various perspectives at once (Kunow 248). As such these tropes function as tools to comprehend the Americas as spatially and temporally entangled. I want to mention here that the examples given are guided and at the same time limited by my own scholarly preference for the interdisciplinary study of music, film, literature, urban studies, and performance arts within the Americas in a larger cultural studies framework.

The entries follow in alphabetical order and represent modalities of space, albeit on conceptually different levels. Their links to spatial categories help to avoid arbitrariness. Being aware of the impossibility of totality, they should be used in a kaleidoscopic way to look at area(s) from multiple angles and perspectives. The terms are loosely connected, may sometimes overlap to a small degree, and, as tropes within mobility studies, need to be continuously renegotiated with the flux of time and place.

### **Amerindia Interfaces**

From Brazil to Canada a Transamerican phenomena to deconstruct and decolonialize “Indianness” and “Indian” as aboriginal other and unified “Indian” signifier has spread in the aftermath of multiculturalist debates in the 1970s and 80s. What emerges is a new decolonial perspective emphasizing heterogeneity, plurality, and mobility with regard to indigenous cultures in the Americas today. Recovering an “indigenismo” that is interconnected with local and global changes in the Americas and beyond, writers, artists, activists and intellectuals have challenged Eurocentric and essentialist conceptualization of First Nation, Native American, Indigenous and Amerindian identities. Referring to a split in the Bolivian government of Eva Morales between “Indianism” and “Marxismo”, Walter Mignolo emphasizes that “the positive side of the tension is that Indian intellectuals, activists, and organizations are gaining ground and confidence in building and affirming their place in an emerging plurinational state” (*The Darker Side* 42). What Mignolo sees

developing is an alliance of “The Indian nations (pueblos originarios) in Bolivia, Ecuador, Chiapas, and Guatemala ... moving in clear decolonial directions parallel to the state and ... creating a strong decolonial political society” (43). Plurilocality and heterogeneity mark the discourse that characterizes the decolonial movement toward a perception of “Amerindia” as complex, diverse and heterogeneous in terms of language, knowledge, culture and politics. With a nod to Gerald Vizenor, I would like to add “post” as preface to illustrate that indigenous cultures have undergone radical changes also as actors beyond imperial destruction and exclusion, and provide interfaces as trope to explore movements such as the twentieth century Pan-Indianism as well as contemporary local and global cultural productions of indigenous cultures as interrelated and frequently overlapping in their effort to provide optional forms of knowledge production. While these optional forms certainly cannot bring back the Amerindian archive of knowledge that got destroyed in colonial times, they may reveal complex levels of diachronic as well as synchronic interconnectivity within and beyond indigenous cultures and their networks. To study cultural productions by writers and artists from different tribal affiliations from a decolonial perspective sheds light not only on the intrinsic mobility of the cultures they refer to but also the on the discursive entanglement of new narratives of tribal knowledge production. What the writers briefly presented share here is a continued struggle against colonial semiosis and neocolonial power politics against tribal cultures in the Americas and beyond. Novels by Gerald Vizenor (USA) display a complex synergy between poststructuralist thinking and Anishinaabe storytelling practices. Resorting to trickster figures and trickster stories, he breaks through a clear divide of supposedly different and opposed systems of knowledge production. He mobilizes not only his literary figures and plots by putting them in various locations within and outside the Americas to far away locations in Europe and Asia but deconstructs the Euro-American invention of “Indian” and “Amerindia” through humor, irony, and pastiche. In his 1992 novel *The Heirs of Columbus*, Columbus is portrayed as a Mayan-Indian desperately trying to return to his home in Central America. Through mobilizing tribal cultures and tribal identities, Vizenor metaphorically creates images of Post-Amerindia that define tribal cultures as cross-culturally and trans-locally linked and propose polylocal agency in contemporary cultural production. Similar to Vizenor’s literary decolonial practices Canadian Ojibway writer, playwright and film-maker Drew Hayden Taylor places tribal cultures and identities into a larger local-global framework of postfordist commodification and neocolonial power structures. A series cultural encounters, cultural border crossings, and cross-cultural reflections infuse his travel narrative *Funny, You don’t look like one*. In this collection of vignettes, yarn, and reflective essays Drew Hayden Taylor presents observations, speculations, and ideas of a Native person traveling around

Canada. Central to the concept of the travel narrative is the Native as mobile, thoughtful, critical, and humorous observer that relives various scenarios of Native encounters with Euro-American clichés, imaginaries and biases. In his 21<sup>st</sup> century play *The Berlin Blues* he places “Amerindia” in a larger context of global capitalist economy and Disneyfication. Displaying the individual and political divisions within a local Native community as reaction to a German developing plan to turn a fictional Otter Lake Reserve into “Ojibway World,” a Native Theme Park designed to attract international tourists, he mocks European inventions and perversions of Amerindia and showcases First Nation stereotypes diffused by Native American cultures themselves. What Drew Hayden Taylor’s works reveal is an intricate net of mobile tribal cultures intertwined with cultural, political and economic processes of globalization. Similar to the political engagements of Gerald Vizenor and Drew Hayden Taylor, activism and writing are part of the Brazilian writer Eliane Potiguara’s trajectory in the defense of human and women’s rights in Brazil and beyond. Her approach to the redefinition of indigenous cultures is transnationally oriented. She is part of global movement of women to rethink and transform the representations of indigenous people. Her writing includes various stories and voices that are connected by the ancestral knowledge of heterogeneous Indigenous traditions. Performing the function of oratory, these voices aim at the mobilization and transformation of Indigenous people in their fight against colonial and neocolonial oppression. In life writings such as *Metade cara, metade máscara* (2004) Potiguara links colonial history in Brazil with the global present through a mix of history, fiction and autobiographical references. In a hybrid discourse of history and fiction dissolving clear dividing lines between the mythic and the historical, history and memory, place and nation, identity and alterity Potiguara develops story-telling based literary voices exemplifying the capacity for mobility and transformation. As Rubelise da Cunha points out, Potiguara underscores that “the construction of knowledge for Indigenous peoples can only be achieved by the storytelling practice” (65). As the work of all three writers manifest, contemporary indigenous storytelling practice is one of multiple tones, styles, and translocal voices to capture the complexity of knowledge recuperation, production, and diffusion accompanying the indigenous struggle for recognition and survivance (Vizenor) across the Americas at the intersection of grassroots activism and literary creation.

## Biocultural Intersections

In the words of W.J.T. Mitchell: “Terrorism is so routinely analogized to things like sleeper cells, viruses, cancers, and autoimmune disorders that one is tempted to say that, at the level of imagery and imagination all terrorism is bioterrorism, ... “ (20). Building upon actor network theories, critics like Bruno Latour and Ian Hodder point out similar entanglements between natural and cultural phenomena. In Latour’s by now famous study of “the pasteurization of France” the microbe is analyzed as an “essential actor” in biological as well as cultural terms (39). As Ian Hodder further explains, “microbes as things connect people and they connect people and things. Those in our guts connect us to what we eat. They also connect us through the spread of contagious diseases, and because we depend on each other to be hygienic and defeat microbes” (23). Biocultural intersections here signify a crossover trope between epidemics, plagues, diseases etc. and imaginaries of cultural radicalism and difference present in contemporary narrations of inter-American entanglements. From colonial history to most recent outbreaks of cholera in Haiti in 2010 and 2011, epidemics have not only accompanied the flows of goods and people across the Americas, they have had decisive impact on politics of colonial dominance, immigration, security and exclusion. Referring to Spanish colonization in Latin America, Susan Peterson reminds us that Francisco Pizarro defeated an Incan army of 80,000 soldiers with only 168 Spaniard soldiers because a smallpox epidemic killed large numbers of the Native American population (including the emperor and his heir) and caused civil war (55, 76). With reference to inter-American migrations, Felice Batlan recalls that the Massachusetts Bay Colony instituted a quarantine measure in 1647 to stop passengers arriving from Barbados from infecting its populace with the plague (80). Repeatedly epidemics have posed security threats to indigenous pueblos, colonies and states in a number of ways, primarily through their negative affect on economic and military power and domestic or internal security as well as foreign relations. But epidemics and plagues have also infused cultural imaginaries across the Americas with concepts of difference and resistance and have become powerful tropes to narrate cultural clash and change in the Americas. A number of more recent and contemporary literary texts have drawn on epidemics, plagues and curses to unfold stories of inter-American entanglements. Drawing on the 1793 epidemic of yellow fever in Philadelphia, John Edgar Wideman describes racial politics and the conflicted race relations in the Americas in his 1996 novel *Cattle Killing*. During the epidemic crisis in the late eighteenth-century, the outbreak of the yellow fever, as Kunow reminds us, “was almost immediately linked to the recent arrivals of thousands of French-speaking refugees from the Caribbean who had escaped the revolutionary uprising

on Haiti headed by Toussaint l'Ouverture" (254). In the satire *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972) by the African American writer Ishmael Reed, Jes Grew, a Voodoo music and dance epidemic is spreading all over the Americas. For the white hegemonic discourse the threat is tremendous: "if this Jes Grew becomes pandemic it will mean the end of Civilization As We Know It" (7). Jes Grew is defined as biocultural force expressed physically through dance and motion as well as spiritually through border-crossing thinking in the works of HooDoo detective Papa LaBas. Tongue-in-cheek Reed draws on a rich repertoire of African cultural lore in the Caribbean, in New Orleans as Creole capital of the United States and African American musical heritage to provide a blackening of history in the Americas with black Egyptian culture as the mother of all civilizations. Aids as epidemic threat to cultural norms loom large behind Brazilian writer Caio Fernando Abreu literary creations of hybrid and transnational concepts of Brazilian Queer identity in particular. Exploring transamerican countercultural utopias of the 1960s and the new biocultural threat Aids as challenge to Brazilian identitarian politics, his characters in books such as *Os dragões não conhecem o paraíso* (1988), *Onde andar Dulce Vega* (1990) and *Morangos mofados* (1982) live and function in the periphery of society, reveal politics of exclusion and relate and refer to queer characters in North American literary traditions thus joining a larger project of "queering" the Americas. In the novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) by Dominican American writer Junot Diaz, "fuk americanus, or more colloquially, fuk" (1) becomes the propelling force and omnipresent protagonist behind stories of family migrations between the Caribbean and the United States. Fuk is described as demon, curse, natural force and as political force related to colonial powers as well as recent dictatorships. "No matter what its name or provenance, it is believed that the arrival of Europeans on Hispaniola unleashed the fuk on the world" (1). Referring to the political power of Dominican dictator Rafael Lenidas Trujillo Molina, the narrator reveals: "If you even thought a bad thing about Trujillo, fu, a hurricane would sweep your family out to the sea, fu, a boulder would fall out of a clear sky and squash you ..." (3). In the imagination of the narrator even the assassination of J.F. Kennedy and the lost War in Vietnam needs to be related to fuk. "Who killed JFK? Let me, your humble Watcher reveal once and for all the God's Honest Truth: It wasn't the mob or LBJ or the ghost of Marilyn Fucking Monroe. It wasn't aliens or the KGB or a lone gunman. ...; it was fuk." (5).

Everything that happens in the brief wondrous life of Oscar Wao and in the inter-American stories told in the novel happens because of fuk. As all three examples illustrate, biocultural intersections are important markers in cultural productions to expose the

complex networks of mobile bodies, biotic mobilities, traveling cultures, and politics of inclusion and exclusion within the American hemisphere

## Camp

The camp in Giorgio Agamben's rendering is a piece of land "outside the judicial order" but within the larger public space (170). We may think of prison camps, detention camps, plantations, favelas, and ghettos. But we may also think of more mobile manifestations of 'camp' such as trains like *La Bestia negra* and deportation trains. According to Agamben, the individual turns into *homo sacer* by abandonment and displacement. In that ban, the life of the individual becomes open to everyone's intervenes. A similar loss of power and control and the impact on subject positioning Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou discuss in their recent book *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2013): "Our conversation began with the consideration of a poststructuralist position we both share, namely that the idea of the unitary subject serves a form of power that must be challenged and undone, signifying a style of masculinism that effaces sexual difference and enacts mastery over the domain of life. We recognized that both of us thought that ethical and political responsibility emerges only when a sovereign and unitary subject can effectively be challenged, and that the fissuring of the subject or its constituting "Difference," proves central for a politics that challenges both property and sovereignty in specific ways. Yet as much as we prize the forms of responsibility and resistance that emerge from a "dispossessed" subject—one that avows the differentiated bonds by which it is constituted and to which it is obligated—we are also keenly aware that dispossession constitutes a form of suffering for those displaced and colonized and so could not remain an unambivalent political ideal. We started to think together about how to formulate a theory of political performativity that could take into account the version of dispossession that we valued as well as the version we oppose" (ix). Butler's and Athanasiou's book progresses in in form of a dialogue. Together, Butler and Athanasiou set out to "think about dispossession outside the logic of possession" (7). In other words, on the one hand, they expose the multiple forces that lead to bleak sides of dispossession (displacement, colonialism, slavery, homelessness, etc.). On the other hand, they evade falling back on the neo-liberal discourse of 'you are what you own' as the primary constituents of subjectivity. Rather, they expose in the dialogical argumentation that there is a limit to self-sufficiency. Precisely at this threshold of autonomy, humans can see themselves as relational and interdependent beings. Self-displacement in a sense becomes our basic human condition. Hence humans

are always already dispossessed of themselves and bound together. Humans and histories in the Americas are thus seen as closely entangled through the lens of dispossession. The analysis of texts and cultural productions from colonial times to the present that explore the notion of dispossession along the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, and class as important constituent for subject positioning and human interconnectedness beyond local, regional and national confinement would include works by Afro Caribbean writer Teodora Gines, African American poet Phillis Wheatley, the Brazilian poet Narcisa Amalia, the first professional woman journalist and the nineteenth-century anti-slavery Brazilian poet to voices from the twentieth and twenty-first century such as the Canadians Anishnaabe/Chippewa poetkateri akiwenzie-damm, and the Saskatchewan Poet Laureate Louise Bernice Halfe; the Chilean Cecilia Vicuña; the U.S. American Sherman Alexie, and Rigoberta Menchú, from Guatemala.

## Cross-Borders

As Claudia Sadowski-Smith points out in the abstract to her article “The Centrality of the Canada-US Border for Hemispheric Studies of the Americas” in this journal edition, “Nineteenth-century US attempts to control native mobility occurred simultaneously at both borders with Canada and Mexico, and turn-of-the twentieth century US efforts to enforce the Canadian boundary against Chinese immigrants preceded and influenced later changes at Mexico’s northern border” (n.p). She sees a historical continuity in the interconnectedness of both borders, as she concludes that “[s]ince that time, developments at the two national boundaries have become more explicitly interconnected” (n.p). In her article she develops a comparative perspective that not only questions “the differential construction of the two boundaries in hemispheric studies” but moves beyond “the singular focus on contemporary Mexico-US border developments that threatens to replicate the very notion of US exceptionalism” which an interest in this border region was originally meant to challenge (Abstract n.p.). With “cross-borders” I want to suggest a trope to study borders not only as contact zones, rupture of mobility or in-between spaces, as has been done with reference to critics like Gloria Anzaldúa and José David Saldívar in particular, but as related and relational contact zones which mirror encounter, inclusion, exclusion and transitions as translocal and transnational phenomena embedded within migration and immigration politics on a global scale. While borders between nations, regions, and reserves lend themselves to comparative and relational approaches, we should extend the border concept to thresholds also within locations such as pueblos, towns, cities, metropolises,

and postmetropolises. For a comparative and relational study of the Canadian-U.S. and Mexican-U.S. border Courtney Hunt's film *Frozen River* (2008) and Tommy Lee Curtis and Guillermo Arriaga's *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (2006) permit a close look at the interconnectedness of border semiosis and border politics as an hemispheric phenomenon in the Americas in times of global migration. Films like the *City of God* (2002), *Crash* (2004) and *Falling Down* (1993) explore borders in the midst of contemporary postmetropolises such as Rio de Janeiro and Los Angeles. Reflecting the inner-city divisions along the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, and class, these films link urban structures and development to inter-American migratory patterns, neocolonial politics, barrio defense, and gated community politics. Through a 'cross-borders' lens favelas in Rio de Janeiro, barrios and ghettos in cities further north such as Los Angeles, Mexico City, Detroit and Toronto can be seen as interrelated in the changing urban semiosis and geopolitical rhetoric of land and space distribution across the Americas.

## Itineraries

Studying itineraries provides insight into territory, mapping, and geopolitical imaginaries. At the same time they permit us to crisscross and transgress any notion of solid geopolitical entities, fixed spatial units, or static cultures. As James Clifford puts it, "If we rethink culture and its science, anthropology, in terms of travel, then the organic, naturalizing bias of the term 'culture'—seen as a rooted body that grows, lives, dies, and so—is questioned" (25). He continues that "Constructed and disputed *historicities*, sites of displacement, interference, and interaction, come more sharply into view" (25). Within a closer analysis of itineraries scholarship may focus on migration patterns of individuals as well as groups within and between sites and regions of the Americas. Next to classical immigration, transmigration, and multiple back and forth migrations of workers, merchants, and scholars among others, the denial of visa or citizenship and radical politics of deportation related to specific individuals and groups characterize contemporary mobility and immobility patterns between Central America, Mexico, the US, and Canada. As site is closely related to spatial progression, return, diversion as well as blockade, the road in its topographical and textual presence sheds light on complex intersections of uneven temporalities and spatialities in the overall context of itineraries. As object of investigation related cultural production I suggest to take a closer look at road narratives in particular. The channels of media industries traverse the Americas, albeit in an asymmetrical way, and enhance cultural exchange as well as the diffusion of cultural productions, concepts as well

as ideologies. It comes as no surprise, then, that road movie as generic narrative about the ever new quest for 'America' has witnessed a tremendous explosion all across the Americas. The road movie genre with its plots centering around ideas of traveling, of embarking on a journey, of the meaning of spatial mobility and the mobilization of identities between roots and routes makes us traverse locality, region, and nation and discover heterogeneity within. But it takes us also beyond, on 'transamerica' journeys either literally or metaphorically, by connecting specific roads with larger translocal inter-American as well as global processes (cf. Raussert and Martínez-Zalce 3-4). As Christopher Morris puts it, "the road is not to be taken literally. ... The road teaches that the figural precedes the literal, that there can be no uninterpreted road" (26). Traveling protagonists encountering new territories experience and suffer from transformations; their journeys often are a response to and a mirror of an identity crisis that frequently corresponds to a personal as well as collective level, be it related to gender, ethnicity, race, age, or nationality. The road movie as genre challenges cultures of conformity. It embraces the journey as experience and the encounter with the other as form of escape, resistance as well as transformation. Bruce McDonald's *Highway 61* (1991), Carlos Bolado's *Bajo California. El límite del tiempo* (1998). André Forcier's *La Comtesse de Baton Rouge* (1998), Tommy Lee Jones' *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (2006), Chris Eyre's *Smoke Signals* (1998), Duncan Tucker's *Transamerica* (2005), Marshall Lewy's *Blue State* (2007), Walter Salles' epic road movie *Diarios de motocicleta* (2004), and Cary Fukunaga's *Sin Nombre* (2009) are but a small selection of road movies that feature multiple border crossings between local, regional and national territories and narrate identitarian quests against the backdrop of temporal and spatial entanglements within the Americas. As road movies they narrate individual as well as collective journeys, they open venues to explore processes of mobilizing self and group positionings as well as their intersections, as the films' protagonists travel on and off Panamerican highways. On a different scale road movies such as Carlos Sorin's *Historias mínimas* (2002) and *El Perro* (2004) together with David Lynch's *The Straight Story* (1999) and Alexander Payne's *Nebraska* (2013) allow us contrastive but related South-North insights into the search for individual autonomy and alternative forms of mobility against the challenges of postfordist Americas.

## Sites of Mobility

Airports, train stations, bus stops, and seaports represent crucial sites of transit where arrival and departure collide, where various journeys, memories, identities and narratives intersect, and where progression and movement frequently turn into immobility. Stephen Greenblatt, in his “A Manifesto,” indirectly points to the above sites of mobility. As point of departure for conceptualizing mobility studies he chooses an interest in literal movement and gives us a list of concrete examples such as “boarding a plane, venturing on a ship, climbing onto the back of a wagon, crowding into a coach, mounting on a horseback, or simply setting one foot in front of the other” (250). Transit points (Urry) such as airports are nodal points of global movement and, as Peter Adey reminds us, such sites are indicative of “the increasingly mobile world in which we live, and must owe its momentum to the popular fluid and mobile thought of philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze, Feliz Guattari, Ian Chambers and Paul Virillio” (501). As he concludes, “This new paradigm has moved beyond static idealizations of society towards theories that are marked by terms such as nomadism, displacement, speed and movement” (501). Critics like Castells draw our attention to the importance of airport studies e.g. and address the new social space reconfigurations of airports in contemporary times. I would add that current conceptualizations of airports as dense conglomeration of gateway, cash exchange, restaurant, foodmart, duty free shopping mall, museum space, art gallery, and bookshop turns these sites into chronotopical crossroads of future, present, and past, into intersections of forward and backward movement, of vision and memory in transit. Particularly interesting is the synthesis of art gallery and museum within airport settings, frequently related to the urban histories through which locality becomes hemispherically connected to the traveling histories of individuals and groups from other parts of the globe. The Airport History and Art project at Atlanta International Airport is my case study example here. My last visit dates back to February 2014 while traveling from Atlanta to Guadalajara. It is important to mention that Atlanta International Airport both by passenger traffic and by number of landings and take-offs has been ranked as the world’s busiest airport of recent times. As major international airport in the United States and as central link to connecting flights to Europe, Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean, Atlanta Hartfield is at the crossroads of regional, national and international mobility. Put simply, Atlanta International Airport, hence, stands as *pars pro todo* for heightened mobility in times of globalization. The airport is located approximately seven miles south of Atlanta City’s, a predominantly black city whose development is firmly embedded within the frequent waves of mobility and motilities that shaped African American history and culture throughout the centuries. African

American mayors have held office ever since Maynard Jackson took office in 1973. As a gateway to the New South after the Civil War, as influential center of African American education already in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and as commercial hub with Atlanta's Sweet Auburn Avenue being called "the most prosperous Negro street in the nation" in the early 20th century as well as in its role as one of the centers of the Civil Rights Movements in the 1960s Atlanta's history is strongly connected with the changes that have shaped African America until today. The Atlanta Airport History and Art Project also localizes, regionalizes and thus historicizes the "non-place" Atlanta airport through a reflection on African American cultural production on a local as well as translocal-global scale. The showcases on the city's and region's history redirect the passenger in transit to the past, the various exhibitions and installations record the region's cultural production of past and present and install artistic visions and reflections of migration and mobility in the Americas and beyond thus introducing levels of abstraction and self-reflection. The traveler in transit consciously taking in the encounter with the multilayered history and art project moves in and out of entangled temporalities that are emerging in form of a triad relation between history's obsession with the past, art's enthusiasm for vision and abstraction, and the traveler's interrupted and redirected motion in time and space as spectator. Studying the exhibition as both historical archive and visualized aesthetic reflection of mobility in photographs, paintings, and installations sheds new light on sites of mobility as nodal points of cultural translocation. As John Urry, in a blueprint for the mobility studies suggests, "the (mobile) turn connects the analyses of different forms of travel, transport, and communication with the multiple ways in which economic and social life is performed and organized through time and various spaces" (6). Defining the mobility turn as "post-disciplinary", Urry not only refers to the transdisciplinary potential of a focus on mobility studies but also highlights "how all social entities, from a single household to large scale corporations, presuppose many different forms of actual and potential movement" (6). The exhibition awaits the airport traveler in his actual transition from one place and to another and raises his curiosity for a place behind the so-called "no place". By transplanting the city and region into the airport one might conclude that the officials of the Atlanta History and Airportart project transcend the airport as "non-place" (Bender 78). The airport seen through the cultural production of the exhibit takes on an important function as mediating site and entangling force between the local and the global, the regional history and the global traveler.

## Transborder

“Transborder” differs from “Cross-Borders” by focusing relational processes over comparative perspectives. The former refer to continuous transculturation, multiplied border crossings, transcultural mobility, and multiple cultural affiliations. Sophia McClennen has recently argued that the field of Inter-American Studies must resist the notion that “history and literature are bound by regional borders” and instead focus on “the ways that culture often transgresses borders, both geographic and identitarian,” in order to “put pressure on nationalist and cultural essentialist epistemes” (408-09). Border discourses advocated by critics such as Gloria Anzaldúa, José David Saldívar, Néstor García Canclini, Walter Dignolo, and Günter H. Lenz have overcome container thinking about areas and nations as container cultures. Neither national nor ethnic groups are seen as territorially confined but as embedded in intercultural contact zones and characterized by hybridity, mestizaje, and creolization. Accordingly the culture concept assumes a new dimension beyond territory-based and rather closed assumptions of cultural plurality as represented in multicultural politics. By now a classic of border studies Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) charts hybrid processes of identity formation at the U.S. Mexican border and disrupts Anglo-centric nationalist histories as well as male-centered Chicano nationalist agenda through a radical feminist lens. As Anzaldúa emphasizes, her vision of hybrid border identities is deeply entrenched in the past and requires a dialogic negotiation between past, present, and future as well as between various cultural options, home and elsewhere: “ My Chicana identity is grounded in the Indian woman’s history of resistance ... I feel perfectly free to rebel and rail against my culture. ... To separate from my culture (as from my family) I had to feel competent enough on the outside and secure enough inside to live life on my own. Yet in leaving home I did not lose touch with my origins because lo mexicano is in my system. I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry “home” on my back “(43). Building on Anzaldúa’s work and remapping the borderlands of theory and theorists, Héctor Caledrón and José David Saldívar place recent border discourses in a larger context of postcolonial studies when they state that “Our work in the eighties and nineties, along with of other postcolonial intellectuals moves, travels as they say, between cores and peripheries, centers and margins” (7). For Saldívar borderlands are embedded in a dialogic pattern between local and global constellations and for both Anzaldúa and Saldívar mobility is at the very core of shifting and clashing identities. These critics explore new intercultural imaginaries as forms of subaltern knowledge. They are quite aware of the conditions of unequal power distribution in the Americas and engage the colonial and postcolonial differences on a local level where global power is adapted, negotiated, rejected, and

transculturated (Lenz 392). These border discourses in particular are valid for a remapping the studies of the Americas in a hemispheric context since they address interactions, dynamics and tensions between North America and Latin America. With a nod to previous border discourses I suggest that studying transborder phenomena needs further intensification for illustrating the process of transnationalizing recent and contemporary diaspora identity politics. Looking at the U.S.-Mexican border, one of the greatest impulses for transborder thinking south of the border goes back to Tin Tan, cult figure, actor, and *pachuco* personification who has served as a model of inspiration for a young generation of performance artists and musicians in Mexico to define their music as rhythmic projects transcending essentialist concepts of ethnicity and nationality as well. Tin Tan's burlesque manner of borrowing from various musical traditions for performance scenes in his films such as *El hijo desobediente* marks an inter-American dialogical model in which music traditions from south and north are adapted, fused, parodied, and reformulated as a potential "transfronterizo" identity concept that allows for flexibility, fluidity, and dialogue. Accordingly, national emblematic songs and rhythms become transculturated through new rhythmic underpinnings borrowed from Argentine, U.S. American and Spanish Arab music traditions (cf. Yolanda Campos). Tin Tan's transcultural strategies of citation anticipate more recent and contemporary transborder aesthetics developed by performance artists like Guillermo Gómez-Peña with his "polycentric aesthetic" in books and performances (Shohat and Stam 27). As multimedia performance artist Gómez-Peña has staged seminal performance art pieces including "Temple of Confessions" (1995), "The Mexterminator Project" (1997-99), "The Living Museum of Fetishized Identities" (1999-2002), and most recently "Corpo Insurrecto" (2012-2013). In his futuristic utopian vision of a transcultural *América* Gómez-Peña builds upon avant-garde strategies of audience participation and uses borders as conceptual sites of resistance. Together with Gómez-Peña Cuban American multimedia artist Coco Fusco created the performance piece *The Year of the White Bear and Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* (1992-1994), a satirical met-en-scène in which the two artists were exhibited as authentic Amerindians dressed in ethnic drag at a series of art festivals and in museums in major cities throughout the Americas. In other collaborative projects such as *The Last Wish (El Ultimo Deseo)* 1997 and *The Incredible Disappearing Woman* (2003) she uses multi-media performance and video art to highlight the trauma of gendered and migratory bodies in exile, diaspora and borderlands with reference to Cuba, Mexico and the U.S. As Marc Priewe points out, Fusco uses "a momentary and context-specific combination of a variety of national discourses or imaginaries to suit emancipator purposes" (270). As a final example for border aesthetics I would also add here the Chicano musician Robert Lopez, aka El Vez. He is an unorthodox

Elvis Presley impersonator who develops aesthetics of difference through pastiche, copy, mix and fusion. As José David Saldivar has it, “the translocal performance art of El Vez, the Mexican Elvis, thematizes a remarkable shift from acting and thinking at the state level to thinking and acting the ethnic Elvis (global) level” (89). Using strategies of citing and blending, Chicano musician Robert Lopez, aka El Vez intersperses the music of Elvis Presley and other national icons with a global mix of music citations. In El Vez’s song “Atzlán” (from the album *Graciasland*), a parody of Paul Simon’s title song from the album *Graceland* (1987), the travelers to the mythic land are a mixed group of Latinas, Latin Americans and Anglo Americans. The narrator explicitly invites and welcomes passengers from various ethnic groups, different Latin American countries and a variety of national backgrounds in general: “Homeboys, Chicanos, Latinas we all are going to Aztlán” (*Graciasland*). He reverses the flow from Latinos to the US, instead his passengers travel South to Aztlan and Miss Liberty, America’s Statue of Freedom is on board together with the La Virgen Guadalupe, emblem of Mexican hybrid sacred practice between Catholicism and indigenous religion. El Vez’s lyrics embrace transcultural imaginaries and create a transnational narrative. While doing so, El Vez’s also riffs on historically grown U.S. visions of an ideal multiethnic society but places it within a larger hemispheric framework of the Americas beyond U.S. America hegemony. The performance artists selected here create border visions of locality, identity as well as resistance and thusly challenge forms of closure, be they aesthetic, communal, political, or national, through synthesizing border aesthetics with a complex side-by-side and overlap of national and transnational imaginaries.

### **Translocational Positioning**

How the histories of seemingly remote and distant places in the Americas are related, and how a reductive divide between a south/north axis enters into a multiplicity of relations and finds chronotopical expression and how histories become multiplied and knowledge redefined we can explore by close readings of transnational memoirs and translocational narrative positioning in various types of writings by authors such as Edwidge Danticat (Haiti/USA), Dionne Brand (Trinidad/Canada), David Chariandy (Canada/Trinidad), Guillermo Verdecchia (Argentina/Canada), Karen Thai Yamashita (Brazil/USA) and Maria Mariposa Fernandez (USA/Puerto Rico) . In different genres, styles and degrees these authors develop multiple narrative patterns, dialogical and nomadic matrices of narrating personal and collective histories giving voice to multiple migratory patterns that relate localities, regions, and nations through inter-American lenses. As Floya Anthias has

demanded, "[...] we need a new imaginary for studying the complex mobilities in the modern era of transnationalism and the new emerging forms of power involved" (108). She has created such an imaginary by reframing the notion of intersectionality using the lenses of "translocation" and "translocational positionality" to account for the often shifting and contradictory spatial and temporal contexts within which social locations are produced. According to her, Transnational Migration Studies need to be conducted "within a contextual, dynamic, and processual analysis that recognises the interconnectedness of different identities and hierarchical structures relating to gender, ethnicity, "race", class and other social divisions at local, national, transnational and global levels" (102). Departing from that matrix, one finds her notion of translocational positionality "as a tool for making sense of the positions and outcomes produced through intersections between a number of different social structures and processes, including transnational ones" (107-108). Anthias' rethinking of intersectionality in terms of more agent-oriented translocational positionality provides a matrix to analyze the literary and memoir works of authors like Edwidge Danticat, Karen Thai Yamashita and Guillermo Verdecchia to illustrate plurilocal narrative strategies. Danticat develops a complex transnational narrative pattern already in her first novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) and even more so in her recent transnational memoir *Brother I'm Dying* (2007). In the latter she depicts the autobiographical self and her related families in Haiti and the U.S. in constant transition within the countries and between them. Frequent airport scenes place the narrator in a positionality of transit. Mobility in *Brother I'm Dying* is narrated in the larger framework of diaspora experience and the text is both memory work and a narrative of family migrations. Through telling the life stories of her father and uncle, Danticat creates a memoir that stretches far into colonial history and connects colonial networks to postcolonial and neo-colonial structures characterizing Haiti's multiple political and economic entanglements in the larger framework of Caribbean histories and their relations to French and US foreign policy. While always relating historic details to specific family memories in Haiti and the US, Danticat selectively recollects moments, events and periods through which she narrates a particular history of US-American-Haitian entanglements stretching back to Haitian colonial history and its struggle for independence. What she creates in the memoir is a complex web of temporalities and spatialities that include flashback, zigzag narrative progression, and a non-linear mode of narration. She lends her voice to others. "I am writing this only because they can't" (26). In doing this Danticat's narrative voice becomes translocational in outreach. Placing the Americas in a global context of mobility and migration, Karen Thai Yamashita's novel *Tropic of Orange* (1997) presents us with seven intertwined stories of its major characters living mainly in Los Angeles or moving back and forth between Mexico and the Californian

metropolis. Each character's story is told in a unique voice so that the novel progresses through narrative polyphony. Yamashita's postmodern eclectic style draws on Latin American realism, magic realism, cyberpunk, media satire, street vernacular, and immigration narrative to represent the complexity of life in one of the most heterogeneous metropolises in the Americas. Los Angeles is the urban site of the novel where the various narratives intersect and overlap and, like the symbolical center of the novel, the orange, it is constantly on the move. The orange's presence in the text is versatile and manifold; it appears as a fruit, poisoned fruit, color, and trope of geopolitical space, migration, and expansion. The orange as global fruit expresses a series of diachronic and synchronic transnational movements and signifies also an economic divide between south and north. What happens in Yamashita's novel is that the city is no longer a geographical space defined through buildings, barrios, ghettos, railroads, and industrial sites; rather, its dynamics are shaped by new means of transportation and the emergence of new communication technologies (radio, TV, telephone, internet and so on). The narrators and their stories are translocally distributed within the cityscape which means that not only do they narrate from different spatial sites within the city but their stories are linked to larger global and inter-American migrations to and from Los Angeles. Guillermo Verdecchia, a third and final example here, uses a double persona (alter ego named Wideload) and a double voice in his play *Fronteras Americanas American Borders* (1993). Wideload's voice is the one to provoke the Anglo-Saxon audience, to caricature ethnic stereotypes and clichéd identity politics. Verdecchia's voice is that of the self –reflective, doubting seeker. It is also the traveling voice that narrates from different locations in Chile, Argentina, and Canada. Set in the Toronto Distillery District as a microcosm of all continental diasporas, the play retells the colonial histories of the Americas by multiply entangling south and north and consciously deconstructing the U.S. as hegemonic center. As Rachel Adams has it, "Although he is clearly conversant in U.S.-Mexico border studies, Verdecchia seeks to transform its symbolic geographies by deemphasizing the United States, while explicitly incorporating Canada into a symbolic mapping of the American hemisphere" (315). Considering "Americanness as spatial and temporal conjunction" (Saldívar xxvii), Verdecchia develops a parodic voice play in which colonial history is retold through Argentine-Canadian perspectives and which the American hemisphere turns into a single border. "The border is a tricky place....Or is the border the whole country, the continent? Where does the U.S. end and Canada begin? (2-3) "And when I say "America," I don't mean a country, I mean the continent. Somos todos Americanos. We are all Americans" (2), Verdecchia declares.

## Transversal Flows

Flows are seen here as a prominent way to study the processes of entanglement, the emergence and development. It is important to note that flows are neither positive nor negative per se. Anna Tsing draws on nature as well as technology metaphorically to delineate the mobility of all things in global times. Her images chosen turn abstract thoughts into concrete images: “Imagine a creek cutting through the hillside. As the water rushes down, it carves rock and moves gravel; it deposits silt on slow turns; it switches courses and breaks earth dams after a sudden storm. As the creek flows, it makes and remakes its channels” (66). From natural imagery she moves to current examples from technology, migration, and commerce: “Imagine an internet system, linking up computer users. Or a rush of immigrants across national borders. Or capital investments shuttled to varied offshore locations” (66). As she concludes, “These world-making ‘flows,’ too, are not just interconnections but also the recarving of channels and the remapping of the possibilities of geography” (66). Arjun Appadurai distinguishes “five dimensions of global flows that can be termed (a) ethnoscapes, (b) mediascapes, (c) technoscapes, (d) finanscapes, and (e) ideoscapes” (33) to illustrate the omnipresence of fluidity within the spectrum of cultural production. Finally, it is Doreen Massey who specifically reminds us of agency, the power hierarchies and asymmetries involved in and hovering behind global circuits: “Different social groups have distinct relationships to ... mobility: Some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it” (n.p). For an Inter-American Studies perspective we can deduct that a more comprehensive view of circuits and circulations requires to think flows as transversal, multidirectional, constituted of different temporalities and velocities, and as embedded within a complex network of agency and control. As a paradigmatic case study I propose the analysis of complex musical flows triggered off by politically motivated diffusion of sounds, melodies, and rhythms on a transnational scale. Music, no doubt, is a global player, as it traverses national and continental boundaries faster than any other art form. It moves within transnational economic, cultural, and political circuits and forms an important asset of translocal and global community-building. But does globalization via music signify a smooth homogeneous and ideologically unified process? Perhaps music’s utopian potential should not be overestimated but its political significance has been recognized by governmental institutions and grassroots movements alike. The Son Jarocho movement and in particular its offspring the Fandango Sin Fronteras project establishes a dialog between Chicana/o culture in the North and the Jarocho/o culture in the Veracruz region of Mexico. Representative of

contemporary transnational grassroots movements, the musicians and activists involved aim for community-building through participatory music events transgressing the border between Mexico and the US. The Fandango Sin Fronteras movement draws upon a restoration policy developed by El Nuevo Movimiento Jaranero in the mid-1970s to decolonize the state identity politics of the Mexican government by re-emphasizing the multicultural ingredients of the music tradition and by reviving the participatory and improvisational elements in the fandango praxis of rural communities (cf. Gonzalez 63). To link this newly regained praxis to Chicano/a communities in the United States music groups such as Quetzal and Son de Madera started collaborations at the beginning of the new millennium, For more than a decade now the Fandango Sin Fronteras movement has produced mobile diaspora communities through the diffusion of sound, rhythm, and dance between the Caribbean cultures of Veracruz, Mexico and various cities in the US and Canada such as Los Angeles, Washington Seattle, Vancouver, and Chicago as well as along the conflicted US-Mexican border. But the sounds of Son Jarocho/o have also travelled south and produced crossover versions of fandango and tango music in Argentina. The movement feeds on transversal flows of people and sounds across regional and national boundaries and functions as a matrix for reconceptualizations of both musical tradition and diaspora identities. Musicians and activists move back and forth diffusing ideas, concepts as well as new forms of instrumentalization challenging and enriching existing traditions both in the Veracruz region and in Chicana/o/Latina/o diaspora communities. While studying the tracks of musicians and activists within the movements highlights various aspects of “ethniscapes”, “mediascapes”, and “technoscapes” a mirroring approach that juxtaposes the grassroots conditions of the Fandango Sin Fronteras project with government sponsored music diffusion adds new perspectives also on Appadurai’s “financescapes” and “ideoscapes”. In U.S. government-sponsored programs such as The Jazz Ambassadors and The Rhythm Road, music as political messenger is mobilized from above; political power structures with national interests in global politics guide the funding and distribution of “American” musical expression cross-culturally. Both projects emerged in moments of national crisis, The Jazz Ambassador program was launched as response to anti-Americanism(s) during the Cold War Period, whereas The Rhythm Road project represents a follow-up response to the global image loss of the U.S. during the Bush Administration after September 11. By contrasting mass market strategies with more individualized and democratized forms of production and distribution and government sponsored programs with grassroots movements, one contextualizes the analysis of cultural flows in a framework of ideological and hierarchical differences within global circuits and displays asymmetries of power relations within inter-American entanglements.

## **In Conclusion: Multilingual, Dialogic, and Horizontal Futures**

To conclude let us imagine Paul Simon and Ruben Bladés in a new collaboration perform a joint version of the search for America/América, and, as both have done before, include musicians of diverse cultural and musical backgrounds into the band. In such an imagined jam session multiple voices would not only be heard but cross-related in the chorus line, other languages beyond English and Spanish certainly would enter into a dialogue of difference, Amerindian, Arab, Jewish, African, Asian, Nahuatl, Creole words would be sung simultaneously, melodies and rhythms from the rain forests of Brazil to the Hawaiian Islands would have to be juxtaposed in harmony and discordance. Cultures in the Americas continue to struggle for survival in times of globalization. We may think of Garifuna cultures in the Caribbean and Gullah cultures along the U.S. Atlantic coast as just two examples. Their multiple stories and neglected histories would echo with fragmentation, difference as well as with conflictive inventions of tradition. As John Carlos Rowe reminds us, “colonial semiosis depended crucially upon the destruction of the Amerindian archive of knowledge and the repression of that history, just as slavery depends on the systematic denial of African retentions, including languages, religions, and cultural practices. A similar colonial semiosis is structurally integral to Creole nationalisms, as even the casual tourist cannot help but notice in the plethora of signs that testify to various nations’ presumed “rootedness” in their Amerindian histories, even as their policies toward indigeneous peoples have been consistently genocidal” (332). What critics like Earl Fitz and Ralph Bauer have repeatedly hinted at is the immense language diversity hidden by the imperial legacy of the history of the Americas. Hemispheric American studies, as Bauer advises, “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 (243) This ties in within Mignolo’s deconstruction of Latin American area studies that calls for diversity rather than homogeneity. To “think ‘Latin America’ otherwise, in its heterogeneity rather than its homogeneity, in the local histories of changing global designs is not to question a particular form of identification (e.g. that of ‘Latin America’) but all national/colonial forms of identification in the modern/colonial world system” (Local Histories, 170-71). “Who needs Inter-American Studies and who profits from it?” Walter Mignolo asked during the inaugural conference of the Entangled Americas project funded by the German Ministry for Research and Education at the Center for InterAmerican Studies (CIAS) at Bielefeld University in May 2013. In times of globalization and growing global studies programs, localities as well as areas remain important microcosmic reference points to investigate global politics, processes, and flows. Areas redefined as fluid, mobile, and transversally connected provide microcosmic paradigms to understand global

processes related to locality as well as region. Through a horizontal and dialogical lens, new knowledge paradigms along an Inter-American dialogical exchange are bound to emerge as contrastive and complementary fields of knowledge production to the field of Atlantic and Pacific Studies. Inter-American study paradigms, hence, serve us well in attempting to comprehend the interrelations within the Americas as well as their global connections. As I hope this essay has shown, Inter-American area studies need dialogical models within individual scholarship, between disciplines, within and across area(s). Inter-American scholarship is bound to mobilize the concept of area as porous, mobile, multiply connected; it is bound to challenge the artificially drawn boundaries between academic fields, disciplines, and departments. Certainly Inter-American scholarship is not to replace American Studies, Canadian Studies, Caribbean Studies and Latin American Studies per se but it is there to complement, bridge, and fuse the insights gained. Working also in the interstices between the confined area studies approaches frequently emphasizing the national, Inter-American scholarship provides ways out of Eurocentric based transnational studies. With the focus on the “inter” within the Americas, new dialogical paradigms are bound to emerge to add “optional” narratives to Atlantic as well as Pacific studies approaches to the Americas. And the focus on “inter” within the Americas also provides an affirmative answer to Winfried Fluck’s concern that we should be careful not to risk “dissolving America” as emptied signifier in global studies approaches (30). On the contrary Inter-American scholarship intends to give voices back to those who narrate the multiple and diverse stories from the geographically distant and multiple locations and cultures from within the Americas in a dialogical and hopefully horizontal mode with those outside. José David Saldívar’s concept of “Trans-Americanity(xvii)” certainly provides food for final thoughts. In his words:

My focus on the “comparative” as a strategy for the study of the United States, Latin America, and the hemisphere and beyond means not the familiar model of comparative literature or comparative history but, rather, a structure of comparability based on what Wallerstein and Quijano call Americanity’s “spatiotemporal” matrix. I am using the idea of comparability in Trans-Americanity to see how comparability also entails a theory of space and time that recognizes the conjunctural present—where multiple times exist simultaneously within and across the same planetary location or co-exist as uneven, subaltern temporalities. (xxviii)

Saldívar’s ideas coincide, I think, with Mignolo’s concept of optional narratives that should exist simultaneously. With respect to area studies this means an opening to the plural version and a thorough application of place, locality and area as broader reference point yet mobile and fluid concept at the same time. While Inter-American Scholarship should profit from the expertise that each one of the area studies related disciplines have provided throughout decades of scholarly achievement it should build upon its potential to fill the gaps between the disciplines in a transdisciplinary fashion. As John Carlos Rowe points out with respect to the inherent problem with “area” as a structural, geographical, or conceptual unit, “we must begin to think less in terms of the

pertinent 'rims'—Pacific, North Atlantic, mid-Atlantic, Caribbean—and more in terms of certain 'flows' describing the terrestrial, maritime, modern avian, and postmodern transits of outer (military and communication satellites) and inner (bodily prostheses and virtual realities) spaces” (327). The Inter-American scholar, hence, works within and in-between disciplinary fields and looks for gaps to fill and links to establish that expose the Americas as hemispherically connected and as microcosm of even larger global processes. Inter-American Studies by large mobilizes the knowledge production to bridge, connect, and transcend the disciplinary boundaries thus also redefining our understanding of area studies. As goes without saying, Inter-American studies as a collaborative project involves many scholars from various disciplines studying the history(ies), societ(ies), culture(s), language(s) and politic(s) of the Americas in dialog. The Inter-American project at large can only function as a transcommunal scholarly endeavor. On that note, let us converse, share, exchange, debate, but first and foremost work together.

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