

## HEMISPHERIC STUDIES BEYOND SUSPICION

## ESTUDOS HEMISFÉRICOS ALÉM DA SUSPEITA

Antonio Barrenechea<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** This essay explores the transformation of academic inter-Americanism from a “Literature of the Americas” founded by Comparative Literature (1982-2000) into a U.S.-centered “Hemispheric Studies” field as defined by English and American Studies (1998-present). The author argues that the subtraction of languages and literatures in the interest of sociological and U.S. hemispheric approaches is largely responsible for the disappearance of Latin America from Hemispheric Studies. The essay considers a return to literatures in order to reenergize an international and multilingual field—a comparative literature of the Americas.

**KEYWORDS:** Americas, Hemispheric, Comparative, Literature, Suspicion, Critique

**RESUMO:** Este artigo explora a transformação do inter-Americanismo acadêmico, de uma “Literatura das Américas”, fundada pela Literatura Comparada (1982-2000) em um campo de “Estudos Hemisféricos” centrado nos EUA, conforme é definido pelos Estudos Ingleses e Americanos (1998-present). O autor argumenta que a subtração de linguagens e literaturas em favor das perspectivas sociológicas e hemisféricas norte-americanas é largamente responsável pelo desaparecimento da América Latina dos Estudos Hemisféricos. O artigo considera um retorno às literaturas para reenergizar um campo internacional e multilíngue — uma literatura comparada das Americas.

**KEYWORDS:** Americas, Hemisférico, Comparativo, Literatura, Suspeita, Crítica

Whether understood as a globalist expansion of American Studies, or as a branch of Comparative Literature, what scholars today call “Hemispheric Studies” has its roots in a presidential address to the American Historical Association (AHA) from 1932. Speaking in Toronto on November 8<sup>th</sup> of that year, Herbert E. Bolton, a historian from Berkeley, delivered “The Epic of Greater America.” In an effort to inspire the AHA membership to consider “America” in its entirety, Bolton supplanted the typical yearly address with one outlining “the larger aspects of Western Hemisphere history (Bolton, 1933, p. 448).” Bolton’s speech reflected the type of diplomatic optimism that would lead President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to declare a U.S. “Good Neighbor” policy in the hemisphere just three months later. Yet, according to the U.S. historian, “a broader treatment of American history, to supplement the purely nationalistic presentation” was necessary not only for fostering goodwill between neighbors, but “from the standpoint of correct historiography (Bolton, 1933, pg. 448).” For Bolton, whose research had taken him to colonial archives in Latin America, forging this perspective meant rejecting the lingering “black legend” of Spanish cruelty and religious intolerance that began as Anglo-Dutch propaganda.

Because Bolton challenged Anglocentrism, and its distortion of Hispanic contributions to U.S. development, he gained esteem as a pioneer of Spanish borderlands history. Yet, his greatest ambition was to oversee a historiography that not only engaged Florida, California and

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<sup>1</sup> Professor da University of Mary Washington. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1896-4767>

other U.S. “border” domains shaped by the Iberian presence, but that made 1492 and Spanish colonialism into a hemispheric bedrock. In his own work, Puritan New England and the western frontier receded before the spread of European civilization from the former indigenous empires of Mexico and South America, and through its expansion north across several frontiers. What became known as the “Bolton thesis” (a hemispheric analogue to the “Turner thesis” of U.S. identity-formation) told a longer and more tangled tale than acknowledged by Anglo-Protestant historians at the time.<sup>2</sup> The scale of Greater America—with Spain, Portugal, France, and Britain as key players—led Bolton to postulate a paradigm for the study of the Western Hemisphere from colonialism to the present. “The Epic of Greater America” ends with a *carpe diem* of sorts:

Who has written the history of the introduction of European plants and animals into the Western Hemisphere as a whole, or the spread of cattle and horse raising from Patagonia to Labrador? Who has written on a Western Hemisphere scale the history of shipbuilding and commerce, mining, Christian missions, Indian policies, slavery and emancipation, constitutional development, arbitration, the effects of the Indian on European culture, the rise of the common man, art, architecture, literature, or science? Who has tried to state the significance of the frontier in terms of the Americas? (Bolton, 1933, p. 474)

A progenitor of Hemispheric Studies, Bolton sketches an encyclopedic discipline to encompass branches of learning in the sciences and the humanities. The scope of America is New World-wide, both in geography and sweeping subject matter. As the historian makes clear by lacing his pointed inquiries with tantalizing sets of litanies (inclusive of “literature”), the academy had drawn only parts of a much bigger picture. Bolton, who would go on to direct over one-hundred Ph.D. dissertations and create an inter-American concentration at Berkeley, invites scholars to render moot his rhetorical questions by joining together to complete a hemispheric project.

Since Bolton outlines a polycentric approach, scholars following upon his proclamation would need to study units of analysis big and small. Besides acquiring expertise in a particular subject (“art...architecture,” etc.), they would have to work dialectically by zooming into and out of particular strands of development. For scholars of literature, this might take the collective form of general training in world letters while specializing in genres, periods, and movements that took root in the Americas before and after the European arrival. A likely prerequisite would be reading literature in primary languages of the Western Hemisphere. It would also mean engaging scholarship on national or regional literatures placed within local (non-overlapping) contexts. Multidisciplinary work would thus be a key to accessing “Greater America,” the point being to connect several parts learned from the ground up for a better grasp of the whole.

Despite its heavy demands upon scholars, a Boltonian approach is compelling today because it offers a way of studying the literature of the Americas up close, rather than as part of a critique of ideology that too-often stands in for the difficult (but potentially more rewarding) task of multilingual literary analysis. The Bolton thesis contains an optimistic philosophy about what humanists can come to know about their hemispheric neighbors. Although emerging out of the Pan-Americanist ethos of the 1930s (and marked by a Eurocentric bias), “The Epic of Greater America” provides a model that can be molded to our own time and place. Earl E. Fitz, who pioneered an Inter-American Literature curriculum while at Penn State University, credits

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<sup>2</sup> Bolton’s internationalist address was a response to James Truslow Adams’s *The Epic of America* (1931), which recounted the history of “America” from a U.S. national perspective.

Bolton with establishing “a conceptual basis for inter-American commentary and analysis (Fitz, 2000, p. 154).” More recently, Ralph Bauer, a leading scholar of the colonial Americas, has described Bolton as “the founding father of comparative hemispheric scholarship in the U.S (Bauer, 2009, p. 256).” Still, Bolton’s international amplitude is missing from much of twenty-first century scholarship, which proves less “inter-American” and “comparative” than one might think.<sup>3</sup> The hemisphere has gone missing in this recent wave not through simple oversight, however, but through a mode of suspicion that privileges academic critique (particularly of U.S. imperialism) at the expense of literary insight. Ironically, a meta-discursive theorizing of hemispheric avenues and, most of all, *impasses* now tends to substitute for a more direct (and ideally disorienting) engagement with literature, languages, and authors whose perspectives come from outside the United States.

### **Literature of the Americas (1982-2000)**

In the preface to *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?* (1990), a critical anthology whose title summons the ghost of Bolton, Gustavo Pérez Firmat argues that “the lack of dialogue between ‘Americanists’ and ‘Latin Americanists’,” had made it so that “inter-American literary studies is something of a terra incognita (Pérez Firmat, 1990, pg. 2).”<sup>4</sup> Pérez Firmat’s critique is pointed, yet a body of work was already emerging within Comparative Literature. This “Literature of the Americas” was the first collective response to Bolton’s call beyond a few unacknowledged examples across the hemisphere, most notably the work of Luis Alberto Sánchez, whose four-volume *Historia comparada de las literaturas americanas* (1973) is the most ambitious history of the subject ever written.<sup>5</sup> It entered the U.S. academic mainstream with the tenth congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA), hosted by New York University in August of 1982.

There are at least four reasons why the ICLA conference, which featured a major unit titled “Inter-American Literary Relations,” is significant for the discipline in the early years. First, it regarded American literature as the fiction and nonfiction of the Western Hemisphere (i.e., the United States, Spanish America, Brazil, and Anglo-French Canada). As such, the object of study of the emerging hemispheric discipline was a multinational and multilingual field of literature. Second, papers were delivered in multiple languages (English, Spanish, and French) by scholars hailing from universities throughout North and South America. Third, critiques of methodology (the largest contribution of Hemispheric Studies since 2000) did not substitute for the close reading of literature of the Americas. As catalogued in volume three of the conference proceedings (published in 1985), juxtapositions were integral. These ranged from place and selfhood (“The Metropolis and the Nation in American Literatures” / “Regional and National Identity in American Literatures”), aesthetics and traditions (“Crosscurrents in the Development of Narrative Form in American Literatures” / “Literary Movements in American Literatures”), genres (“Crosscurrents in the Development of Poetry in American Literatures” / “The Fantastic in American Literatures”), North-South artistic flows (“Toward a History of Cultural Relations” / “Canadian and Latin American Literatures and their Interdependence”), and intellectual history (“Crosscurrents in the Development of

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<sup>3</sup> A major exception here is early American Studies, where Bauer’s scholarship is representative.

<sup>4</sup> In the preface to the volume, Pérez Firmat acknowledges the title’s relation to Lewis Hanke’s anthology *Do the Americas Have a Common History?: A Critique of the Bolton Thesis* (1964).

<sup>5</sup> The first effort at a comprehensive inter-American literary criticism is George W. Umphrey’s “Spanish American Literature Compared with that of the United States” (1943). Luis Alberto Sánchez’s *Nueva historia de la literatura americana* (1944) is the first complete literary history. The first literary anthology is Guy Cardwell’s *Readings from the Americas: An Introduction to Democratic Thought* (1947). For a summation of Anglophone work before 1982, see Shouldice.

Comparative Literature in Latin America” / “History of Genre Criticism in American Literatures”). Four, the conference featured the work of several young scholars who later produced important work on the Americas (among them, Lois Parkinson Zamora, Wendy Faris, Jorge Schwartz, Cynthia Steele, Earl E. Fitz, Owen Aldridge, Mary Louise Pratt, and Elizabeth Lowe). The collected papers in the conference volume attest that even this early work displayed care for traditions placed in two and three way dialogues. The dialogues themselves took the form of literary analysis marking continuities and differences.

Furthermore, a keynote address by the Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes confirmed the centrality of Latin America to “Inter-American Literary Relations.” At the time, Comparative Literature saw its principal concern as European national literatures (with French, German, and English forming a holy trinity of sorts). The ICLA conference signaled a shift wherein Comparative Literature’s attention to languages and literatures would refocus upon the Americas. Since its origins in the nineteenth century, Comparative Literature had not dialogued with Latin America (Spanish and Portuguese) and, even less so, with Francophone literatures from outside France. In a personal email, Fitz recalls: “Everyone seemed fired up and inspired by the idea of freeing our dear old discipline of Comparative Literature from its old, but truly venerable, European moorings and (without forgetting those) creating something new, exciting, and comparative in all the best ways. There was a palpable sense of excitement, of getting into something really new and really comparative, in meaningful and productive ways. And that it (the inter-American project) could be done and done well.” As Fitz suggests in this recollection, the disciplinary critique was magnanimous and constructive. The inter-Americanists at NYU performed a balancing act by rejecting Comparative Literature’s Eurocentrism while remaining aligned with the multilingual internationalism that had defined the discipline from the start.

The new American Literature as Comparative Literature would guide major works from the first wave. Published in 1986 and 1987, respectively, were Bell Gale Chevigny and Gari Laguardia’s *Reinventing the Americas: Comparative Studies of Literature of the United States and Spanish America* (the first edited collection of its kind) and Vera M. Kutzinski’s *Against the American Grain: Myth and History in William Carlos Williams, Jay Wright, and Nicolás Guillén* (the first such monograph). These pioneering efforts within Comparative Literature continued with Zamora’s *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Revision in Contemporary U.S. and Latin American Fiction* (1989), which brought together a broad field of authors for the first time: Gabriel García Márquez, Thomas Pynchon, Julio Cortázar, John Barth, Walker Percy, and Carlos Fuentes. At a time when such comparative projects might be considered beyond the scope of “Americanist” publishing lists, including those proclaiming a specialization in “New World,” “Americas,” and “Hemispheric” *Studies* (not literature), the ethos of close-reading in these first books dates them to a more optimistic moment in academia. Several works followed, including Pérez Firmat’s *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?*, Fitz’s *Rediscovering the New World: Inter-American Literature in a Comparative Context* (1991), José David Saldívar’s *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History* (1991), and Zamora’s *The Usable Past: The Imagination of History in Recent Fiction of the Americas* (1997). I trace the end of this first wave to Deborah Cohn’s *History and Memory in the Two Souths: Recent Southern and Spanish American Fiction* (1999), George Handley’s *Postslavery Literature in the Americas: Family Portraits in Black and White* (2000), and Santiago Juan-Navarro’s *Archival Reflections: Postmodern Fiction of the Americas (Self-Reflexivity, Historical Revisionism, Utopia)* (2000). While providing a fitting end to an era keen on including voices, these books were already competing with a second hemisphericism taking shape in American Studies. Declared unbound by comparatists in 1982, America was about to go national again.

## Hemispheric Studies (1998-present)

The Oxford Dictionaries website defines a professor as “a person who affirms a faith in or allegiance to something.” As professors of literature know, that “something”—much as the liberal arts curriculum to whose mission it was once central—has been steadily losing ground in U.S. universities. Reasons for the turn away from literature are varied and no less politically contentious. Within language and literature departments, we might attribute at least some of them to poststructuralist modes of engagement that emerged in the 1990s as theory (stemming from Comparative Literature’s search for connections across traditions) and critiques of the canon overlapped into a neo-Marxian form of Cultural Studies. As contingencies of value eclipsed any remnant of “literariness,” a blend of cultural materialism and Foucault-inspired New Historicism set upon the task of mining cultural artifacts (literary or otherwise) with the purpose of exposing the operations of power they concealed. American literature professors turned to reading texts as being either in cahoots with U.S. hegemony (and enjoying an unfair advantage within an arbitrarily-assembled canon), or praised for resisting this same power in works written by ethnic, border, and other “minority” authors who now formed an alternative multiculturalist canon. The latter characteristics served as a mark of relevance for scholars newly-attuned to postcolonialist critiques. What this orientation lacked, however, was a full awareness of how—in the interest of achieving social and political justice—interpreters were imposing their will upon literary texts. The concern for critiquing U.S. imperialism by equating literature with ideology became a hallmark of the “New Americanists,” whose strong influence begins with Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease’s collection *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (1993), a volume about race, gender, and resistance as inscribed in cultural artifacts.

The approach the volume helped to launch has become *de rigueur* over the past twenty years within English and American Studies. One unintended consequence of its attendant anxieties, however, has been its contribution to the unseating of literature from the throne of the humanities. As literary craft and cultivation became synonymous with politically-inscribed rhetoric and an exclusivist tradition, respectively, context (rather than the text) became most important. Literary works were now historical documents by another name. On the one hand, this cultural materialism dislodged nationalistic and patriarchal assumptions responsible for placing European and Euro-American literature into incomparable universal categories. On the other, the new critiques possessed an unexamined certainty that, beyond the textual surfaces, there lay hidden the truth of the work as an instrument of power. As if offering an apologia for millennial-old traditions that had praised literature as a central humanistic enterprise, scholars looked newly askance at the imagination of authors, and at the uniqueness of literary creation. Yet, the aspiration toward a more “serious” sociological approach, unwittingly placed texts into an ideological box. The point for professors was now to get beyond the aesthetic effects of the literature they professed. Criticism became the negative—but presumably more responsible—task of “demystification.” Eve Sedgwick aptly describes academic epistemologies after New Historicism as ones in which “the methodological centrality of suspicion to current critical practice has involved a concomitant privileging of the concept of paranoia (Sedgwick, 2003, pg. 125).” By comparison with this preemptive and distrustful approach (which I believe now bolsters the university’s skepticism regarding the intrinsic value of a liberal arts education), “anything *but* a paranoid critical stance has come to seem naïve, pious, or complaisant (Sedgwick, 2003, pg. 126).”

More recently, Rita Felski has denounced this type of critique, which she regards as lacking the moral capacity for the proper study of literature. Felski borrows Paul Ricoeur’s definition of “the hermeneutics of suspicion” to characterize the symptomatic approaches to reading offered by Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche. She argues that, despite its revolutionary intentions, the practice of reading against the grain conceals the critic’s own biases. It does so,

in part, by foreclosing a full range of textual associations for the sake of reproducing a privileged mode of critique that stands-in as a seal of professionalization in language and literature departments. In line with Sedgwick, we might say that the hermeneutics of suspicion has resulted in a knee-jerk complacency that prefers critical tautology to literary novelty. The main problem with this type of critique, then, is that it does not approach narrative worlds anew each time it encounters a literary text. Instead, it finds comfort—and academic legitimacy—in a fundamentalist skepticism. As vigilance becomes an academic mantra, insight means never being fooled by the machinations of art. Where literature is a ruse, only suspicion can remain.

Contrary to poststructuralist critiques of value, in *Uses of Literature* (2008), Felski claims that “evaluation is not optional: we are condemned to choose, required to rank, endlessly engaged in practices of selecting, sorting, distinguishing, privileging, whether in academia or in everyday life. We need only look at the texts we elect to interpret, the works we include in our syllabi, or the theories we deign to approve, ignore, or condemn (Felski, 2008, pg. 20).” Felski’s questioning of critique forms part of a new twenty-first century movement set upon recovering the aesthetic and the role of affect for literary studies. Her call for reassessing what were once counter-intuitive reading practices follows upon the work of Bruno Latour, who interrogates the unintended consequences of relativist epistemologies in “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern,” a 2004 article published in *Critical Inquiry*. More specifically, Derek Attridge’s 2004 book *The Singularity of Literature* provides a view of the literary text as an active agent that resists rigidity and appropriation. Literature, in this vein, functions not as a passive object to demystify for predetermined purposes. Rather, texts are irreducible artifacts that change each time they are newly encountered. Treating each act of reading as a novel experience, Attridge embraces “an openness that allows for a range of possible outcomes (Attridge, 2004, pg. 8).” Such a restorative approach to texts—and (in Attridge’s case) to a string of responses constituting literary originality—has opened up ways for acknowledging the power of literature to impact the reader across time and place. For Felski, these include visceral aspects of the reading experience (shock, enchantment, disgust, etc.). Far from espousing a reactionary traditionalism (or being unaware of contingencies of value), the work of these scholars is essential because it allows us to rethink how all literary texts resist our efforts to make them mean something. Texts are unique. They possess an unruly agency worth engaging not from some safe critical distance and with the aim of coercing truth out of them. Rather, texts command attention to linguistic expression, strangeness, and nuance best approached through close-readings that measure the effects of language on the page. Texts are literal embodiments of difference. A responsible reading of literature thus requires a willingness to meet otherness head on, registering its effects both on the brain and on the body. It is in this configuration—where literature remains an active disciplinary object—that I would like to consider how a commitment to reading might strengthen the “Inter-” prefix in “Inter-American” Studies. For that to happen, however, scholars would first need to overcome “the aversion to surprise” that Sedgwick considers a cornerstone of paranoid reading (Sedgwick, 2003, pg. 130). So how do we do this responsibly?

In a 2004 special issue of *Comparative American Studies*, Claudia Sadowski-Smith and Claire Fox make the case that “inter-Americas scholars need to establish closer contact with one another across disciplinary, regional, and national borders and to urge the reconfiguration of existing interdisciplinary fields in the United States and elsewhere (Sadowski-Smith and Fox, 2004, pg. 22).” Sadly, the international aptitude and cooperation described by these inter-Americanists is mostly missing from Hemispheric Studies today. It would seem that institutional, organizational, and linguistic asymmetries have continued to pose insurmountable challenges for scholars working in separate parts of the Americas, and within separate gathering and publishing venues. I believe that we would go a long way toward repairing the divide by taking a second look at the first incarnation of a hemispherism whose core aim was to speak

across nations by treating both “Literature” and “Americas” as plural disciplinary objects. Yet, this look back calls for a sobering clarification of the intellectual history, including some mostly unacknowledged aspects of its development. If it is true that a U.S. historian called for the discipline in 1932, and that literary comparatists followed suit within a grand consortium fifty years later, then it is also true that, in keeping with changing political tides in academia, the hermeneutics of suspicion is responsible for making “Literature of the Americas” into the more relativistic, and U.S.-based, “Hemispheric Studies.”

Of course, this is not to say that Hemispheric Studies is itself invalid, but only that we are currently in need of a more international, and literature-friendly, supplement to the work contributed by English and American Studies. We might say that the unfolding of the Americas discipline since 2000 has mostly addressed one part of a whole. It is something akin to the Spanish borderlands history that Bolton founded en route to establishing a hemispheric field inclusive of smaller disciplinary formations (but here the development has occurred in reverse: from Greater America to U.S.-America). Without this addition, however, one of the most regrettable aspects of Hemispheric Studies comes into view and exacerbates the cross-cultural divide: “hemispheric,” like the U.S. appropriation of the term “America,” remains U.S.-centered. In scholarship it denotes little more than U.S. hemispheric *relations*, *migrations*, or *imaginaries* (with an emphasis on neighboring Mexico and the Caribbean). Whereas the Literature of the Americas field used disciplinary critique as a launching pad for scholarship beyond the nation, Hemispheric Studies privileges self-reflexivity with the endgame of critiquing nationhood and, more generally, U.S. imperial influence in the Western Hemisphere. Since only the (mostly negative) presence of the United States guarantees a designation of “hemispheric” in this type of work, Pérez Firmat’s aforementioned “terra incognita” still applies. But today it is better suited to describe the non-U.S. (hemispheric) literatures that scholars have grown too skeptical to read.

The national fixture remains in place in Janice Radway’s presidential address to the American Studies Association (ASA), which inaugurated the hemispheric turn for Americanists in 1998. The conference took place in Seattle and went under the title “American Studies and the Question of Empire: Histories, Cultures and Practices.” This effort has culminated in *Hemispheric American Studies* (2007), “a sort of handbook (or guidebook) to a burgeoning field,” as claimed by editors Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine (Levander and Levine, 2007, pg. 3). Sophia McClennen has offered the most insightful assessment of Radway’s address and traced its implications for Hemispheric Studies. She critiques the ASA speech as forwarding lines of thinking that “represent themselves as post-national, but which ultimately have no cultural referents beyond the borders of the United States, and consequently are not post-national in any meaningful way (McClennen, 2005, p. 402).” As indicated by the title of the ASA conference, “Empire” (not hemispheric traditions) and “Cultures” (not literatures) attests to the influence of *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. Radway’s speech is a reference point for major volumes that claim to take American Studies global in their capacious titles, among them *Hemispheric American Studies* and Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell’s *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature* (2007). Neither book immerses itself in non-U.S. “American” literatures as a prerequisite.

Furthermore, given the waning centrality of literature in the Americas field, scholars might be surprised to learn that *The Cambridge History of the American Novel*, a 1272-page volume from 2011, includes materials that would seem to expand the “American” designation in the book’s title in connection with fiction. Two short articles, “The Hemispheric Novel in the Post-Revolutionary Era” by Gretchen Murphy and “Hemispheric American Novels” by Rodrigo Lazo (chapters 33 and 65, respectively), prove that there is interest in literature as it pertains to U.S. relations with the Western Hemisphere. As expected, both essays pause to reflect on the parameters of the “hemispheric” under question. In defense of *Hemispheric*

*American Studies*, Lazo argues for delimiting the Americas field “toward a hemispheric approach rather than a presumptuous designation of a new field that would include all novels published in the Americas (Lazo, 2011, pg. 1086).” I would like to interrogate, for a moment, this strategic narrowing, and explain what it signals about the critical aptitude of Hemispheric Studies today. Recalling Levander and Levine’s misapplication of the term “bourgeoning” to describe a field that actually began in Comparative Literature in 1982, here Lazo applies “new” as marking an impossible disciplinary formation. Perhaps he does not recognize continuity with the earlier incarnation of the academic field because his concern is for the “how” rather than the “what.” The latter, as he suggests, would comprise semi-planetary differences within a vast literary archive. Indeed, a tall order for any single scholar who does not envision collaboration in the essential ways that Sadowski-Smith and Fox do. Not by coincidence, this narrowing also makes “Hemispheric American Novels” more relevant for the Anglophone Americanists that are the intended target audience of the Cambridge volume (with a particular emphasis, in this case, on Latino Studies). After all, *The Cambridge History of the American Novel* does not include articles on, say, the *novela de la tierra* or the *roman du terroir*, to name just two telluric genres from Latin America and French Canada, respectively. Consistent with the New Americanist enterprise, the definition of the hemispheric literary field provided by Lazo “focuses on how the conception of an inter-American space is intertwined with the great violence that has been carried out in the name of colonial or imperialist triumph and economic success (Lazo, 2011, pg. 1086).” While this delimiting finds coherence in an axis of power that makes the Americas manageable for Americanists, what I object to is the elimination of a fuller span in favor of one specific type of “Hemispheric American Novel” (regardless of how much it may reflect the spirit of a U.S. Latino critique of Anglocentrism).

In keeping with the emphasis on approach rather than coverage, Hemispheric Studies has developed quite differently from Literature of the Americas. One wonders if Lazo’s definition of “Hemispheric American Novels” can set in motion the forms of international dialogue espoused by Sadowski-Smith and Fox. By contrast, what would it mean for Hemispheric Studies to fully engage the Quiché-Maya *Popol Vuh*, the Inca *Ollantay*, or any other early “Native American” texts from outside the current borders of the United States? What about Spanish American epics, such as *La Araucana* (1569-1589) by Alonso de Ercilla, or *Martín Fierro* (1872-1879) by José Hernández, two cornerstones of Chilean and Argentine national identities, respectively. Should it be a concern of Hemispheric Studies that the existentialist novels of Clarice Lispector are landmarks of Brazilian literary history? How can we understand historical divisions in Canadian culture if Margaret Atwood and Hubert Aquin are not on our reading lists? What about Spanish American post-Boom authors indebted to the non-explicitly “hemispheric” fictions of Jorge Luis Borges? Indeed, the answers to these questions will differ depending on interests, background, and professional training. I would argue—impractically—against any self-imposed limitations to intellectual discovery. Without advancing a Eurocentric ontology of America as critiqued by the Mexican historian and philosopher Edmundo O’Gorman, I embrace here—as did the first wave of Literature of the Americas scholars—a hemisphere that is geographically intact. As an updating of the Bolton thesis, this scholarship would observe a literary historical timeline based upon shared patterns of indigeneity, contact, conquest, colonization, slavery, miscegenation, independence, nation building, migration, globalization, and other such foundational topics.

Only by professing literature on a maximal scale can we turn the *terra incognita* of Hemispheric Studies into a hard-earned *terra nostra*. I invoke here the title of Carlos Fuentes’s encyclopedic novel from 1975, as it has continued to influence my thinking on the Americas through its Boltonian vision. As Fuentes contends: “the contemporary novelist uses fiction as an arena where not only characters meet, but also languages, codes of behavior, distant historical eras, and multiple genres, breaking down artificial barriers and constantly enlarging



the territory of the human presence in history (Fuentes, 1992, pg. 5).” It is one thing to talk about the hemisphere, but quite another to enter this complex. The aim of this paper has been to advocate for a Hemispheric Studies that is newly comparative on the one hand, and literature-based on the other. By returning to fiction, we may also recover hemispheric nations that have been reading and writing in Romance languages for over 400 years. I can think of nothing more vital for the future of a discipline that claims to engage the cultural differences of the Americas.

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