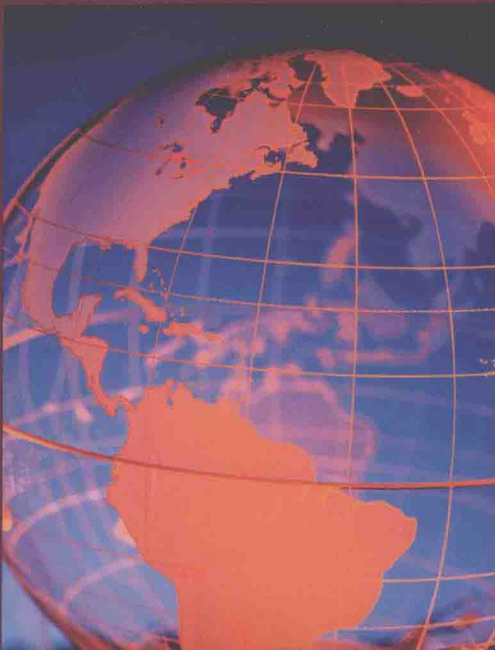


Marietta Messmer / Armin Paul Frank (eds.)

The International Turn in American Studies



PETER LANG
EDITION

Marietta Messmer Armin Paul Frank (eds.)

The International Turn in American Studies



PETER LANG
EDITION

**Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche
Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in
the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic
data is available in the internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The international turn in American studies / Marietta Messmer, Armin Paul
Frank (eds.).

pages cm. -- (Interamericana, ISSN 1618-419X ; volume 7)
ISBN 978-3-631-64799-8 -- ISBN 978-3-653-03657-2 (e-book) 1. United States-
-Civilization--1945- 2. United States--Civilization--Study and teaching. I.
Messmer, Marietta, editor, author. II. Frank, Armin Paul, editor, author.
E169.12.I478 2015
973.071--dc23

2015028479

Cover illustration:

Globe 3

©iStock.com/DNY59

ISSN 1618-419X

ISBN 978-3-631-64799-8 (Print)

E-ISBN 978-3-653-03657-2 (E-Book)

DOI 10.3726/978-3-653-03657-2

© Peter Lang GmbH

Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften

Frankfurt am Main 2015

All rights reserved.

Peter Lang Edition is an Imprint of Peter Lang GmbH.

Peter Lang – Frankfurt am Main · Bern · Bruxelles · New York ·
Oxford · Warszawa · Wien

All parts of this publication are protected by copyright. Any
utilisation outside the strict limits of the copyright law, without
the permission of the publisher, is forbidden and liable to
prosecution. This applies in particular to reproductions,
translations, microfilming, and storage and processing in
electronic retrieval systems.

This publication has been peer reviewed.

www.peterlang.com

Table of Contents

Marietta Messmer

Introduction: Transcending Borders: The International Turn in American Studies.....	7
--	---

Michael Boyden

The Semantics of Self-Denial: The New American Studies Through the Lens of Luhmann's Social Systems Theory.....	45
--	----

Ricardo D. Salvatore

If Bolton Were to Awake Today: Early Efforts Towards a Comprehensive Hemispheric History of the Americas	63
---	----

Jane C. Desmond

"And Never the Twain Shall Meet?": Considering the Legacies of Orientalism and Occidentalism for the Transnational Study of the U.S.....	89
---	----

Earl E. Fitz

Inter-American Literary Studies in the Early Twenty-First Century: The View from the United States.....	103
--	-----

Josef Raab

Difference Matters: Toward an Inter-American Approach to 'Race,' Ethnicity, and Belonging	129
--	-----

Amós Nascimento

Inter-(African-Latin-)American: An Experiment in "Inter-Location"	173
---	-----

Gabriele Pisarz-Ramirez

Transnationality and Temporality in Early African American Texts	209
--	-----

Armin Paul Frank

A Rationale for a Comprehensive Study of the History of United States Literary Culture	231
---	-----

Daniel Göske

The Literary World in the "American Renaissance" and the International Context of American Studies	271
---	-----

Reprinted Essays*Earl E. Fitz*

Inter-American Studies as an Emerging Field: The Future of a Discipline 305

*Claudia Sadowski-Smith & Claire F. Fox*Theorizing the Hemisphere: Inter-Americas Work at the Intersection of
American, Canadian, and Latin American Studies 321*Liam Kennedy*

American Studies Without Tears, or What Does America Want? 359

Marietta Messmer Armin Paul Frank (eds.)

The International Turn in American Studies



PETER LANG
EDITION

**Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche
Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in
the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic
data is available in the internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The international turn in American studies / Marietta Messmer, Armin Paul
Frank (eds.).

pages cm. -- (Interamericana, ISSN 1618-419X ; volume 7)

ISBN 978-3-631-64799-8 -- ISBN 978-3-653-03657-2 (e-book) 1. United States--
Civilization--1945- 2. United States--Civilization--Study and teaching. I.

Messmer, Marietta, editor, author. II. Frank, Armin Paul, editor, author.

E169.12.I478 2015

973.071--dc23

2015028479

Cover illustration:

Globe 3

©iStock.com/DNY59

ISSN 1618-419X

ISBN 978-3-631-64799-8 (Print)

E-ISBN 978-3-653-03657-2 (E-Book)

DOI 10.3726/978-3-653-03657-2

© Peter Lang GmbH

Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften

Frankfurt am Main 2015

All rights reserved.

Peter Lang Edition is an Imprint of Peter Lang GmbH.

Peter Lang – Frankfurt am Main · Bern · Bruxelles · New York ·
Oxford · Warszawa · Wien

All parts of this publication are protected by copyright. Any
utilisation outside the strict limits of the copyright law, without
the permission of the publisher, is forbidden and liable to
prosecution. This applies in particular to reproductions,
translations, microfilming, and storage and processing in
electronic retrieval systems.

This publication has been peer reviewed.

www.peterlang.com

Table of Contents

Marietta Messmer

Introduction: Transcending Borders: The International Turn in American Studies.....7

Michael Boyden

The Semantics of Self-Denial: The New American Studies Through the Lens of Luhmann's Social Systems Theory.....45

Ricardo D. Salvatore

If Bolton Were to Awake Today: Early Efforts Towards a Comprehensive Hemispheric History of the Americas.....63

Jane C. Desmond

"And Never the Twain Shall Meet?": Considering the Legacies of Orientalism and Occidentalism for the Transnational Study of the U.S.....89

Earl E. Fitz

Inter-American Literary Studies in the Early Twenty-First Century: The View from the United States..... 103

Josef Raab

Difference Matters: Toward an Inter-American Approach to 'Race,' Ethnicity, and Belonging 129

Amós Nascimento

Inter-(African-Latin-)American: An Experiment in "Inter-Location" 173

Gabriele Pisarz-Ramirez

Transnationality and Temporality in Early African American Texts 209

Armin Paul Frank

A Rationale for a Comprehensive Study of the History of United States Literary Culture 231

Daniel Göske

The Literary World in the "American Renaissance" and the International Context of American Studies..... 271

Reprinted Essays*Earl E. Fitz*

Inter-American Studies as an Emerging Field: The Future of a Discipline 305

*Claudia Sadowski-Smith & Claire F. Fox*Theorizing the Hemisphere: Inter-Americas Work at the Intersection of
American, Canadian, and Latin American Studies 321*Liam Kennedy*

American Studies Without Tears, or What Does America Want? 359

Marietta Messmer

University of Groningen, The Netherlands

Introduction: Transcending Borders: The International Turn in American Studies

Carolyn Porter's 1994 essay "What We Know That We Don't Know" is often cited as the first call "to break away from the bounded unit of the U.S. nation" (Levander and Levine, "Hemispheric" 397¹), and at least since Janice Radway's provocative 1998 presidential address to the American Studies Association, in which she pondered the need to rename the ASA in accordance with ongoing changes and developments within the discipline, the definition of what constitutes the domain of American Studies has come under increasingly sharp scrutiny. As Djelal Kadir has confirmed in his own presidential address to the International American Studies Association in 2003: "The challenge of being an Americanist has become more challenging than ever" ("Devotees" 13). In very general terms, the debate's most controversial questions have centered on the need to redefine (i.e. extend) the field's geographical and disciplinary boundaries, and in his speech, Kadir provides a detailed sketch of the various forms that this internationalization of American Studies is currently taking: First, due to an ongoing series of geopolitical shifts, the U.S. has started to lose its former role as the main exporter and "sponsor" of American Studies programs abroad, especially in Europe, which in turn means that the U.S. gradually stands to lose its hegemonic role as "generator of [the most privileged] epistemic [and scholarly American Studies] paradigms" (Kadir, "Devotees" 14). In other words, at a time when American Studies practitioners in different parts of the world become more self-confident and independent of their U.S. role models, an increasing number of internationally influential scholarly approaches, methodologies, and analytical criteria no longer originate in the U.S. itself so that "we are witnessing," in Kadir's words, "a reconfiguration of American Studies as an international intellectual enterprise" (Kadir, "Devotees" 14). At the same time, the U.S. also increasingly loses its status as "an object of devotion" (as it used to be for many members of the Cold War generation of U.S.-based American Studies scholars as well as the Marshall Plan generation of European

1 See Levander and Levine's essay "Hemispheric American Literary History" for an exhaustive survey of early transnational publications.

American Studies scholars), and more and more often the U.S. has become a subject of criticism and even disidentification instead. All of this has led, thirdly, to an increasing challenge to the “ideologically circumscribed reduction of [the name] America, and of American Studies, to the U.S.,” which leads Kadir to conclude that American Studies is currently turning more and more “into a transnational, hemispheric field” (Kadir, “Devotees” 22, 23).

Of course international, transnational, or hemispheric (economic, cultural, political) relations have shaped the literary and cultural productions in the Americas from the start, even if attention to this aspect by American Studies scholars has been selective and was often guided by specific national political or ideological interests.² According to Armin Paul Frank, internationality has been at the core of North, Central, and South American literary productions for centuries, and positioning themselves in relation to selected European “mediators” as well as to literatures on other continents has been a common strategy for authors throughout the Americas to develop the concept of a national literature (Frank, “An Invitation” 19).³ Yet while scholarly attention to these international literary connections was strong during the early stages of nineteenth-century U.S. literary historiography, for example, a narrowly national lens started to prevail from the early decades of the 20th century on and has dominated the field to such an extent that a turn towards internationalization could emerge as a “new” paradigm again during the 1980s and 1990s.⁴

While international, hemispheric, transatlantic, and transpacific relations have thus shaped literary and cultural productions in the Americas in earlier centuries as well, what can indeed be called new at this moment is the extent to which recent developments – including the cumulative effects of an accelerating global political

-
- 2 Marc Chenetier reminds us that most of what Kadir terms new developments in American Studies are very common practices for European-based Americanists and have been so for decades (7). For this reason, Jared Hickman argues that the current emphasis on internationalizing American Studies is both presentist and redundant because the U.S. has always been a nation of nations (11). On this question, see also the contributions to this volume by Fitz, Boyden, Salvatore, Göske, and Frank.
 - 3 These international (literary) connections have been explored in depth by a range of publications developed under the aegis of the Göttingen Center for Advanced Study on The Internationality of National Literatures. See, among others, the volumes edited by Frank and Essmann, Frank and Mueller-Vollmer, Buchenau and Paatz, Frank and Lohse, as well as Kurt Mueller-Vollmer's studies on German-American literary transfer, including his most recent *Transatlantic Crossings* (forthcoming 2015).
 - 4 For a detailed discussion of this increasing loss of an international perspective in the context of U.S. literary historiography, see Messmer, “Toward a Declaration.”

and economic interdependence, as well as the increasing mobility of people and commodities worldwide – have, since the last decades of the 20th century, started to challenge many of the established assumptions of the discipline of American Studies and have thus prompted scholars to call for a radical redefinition of the entire academic field.⁵ This redrawing of disciplinary boundaries has prompted Donald Pease to conclude in 2011 that “[t]he ‘transnational turn’ in American studies has effected the most significant reimagining of the field of American studies since its inception” (Introduction *Re-Framing* 1). In this context, “nationalized identity, nationalized belonging, regional classification, citizenship, borders, and territory” are increasingly scrutinized “not as givens but as fabricated categories, tropes, and narratives” (Pfister 17). This scrutiny may ultimately lead to a renaming of the entire discipline, as Radway had suggested, but it will most likely also include some degree of decentering of the U.S. within American Studies as well as challenging the dominance of what is frequently referred to as *American American Studies*.⁶ Part of this decentering will also consist of challenging the still widespread hegemonic use of the term “America” as a synonym for the United States.⁷

-
- 5 In this sense, nationalism is increasingly associated with provincialism, as Joel Pfister has observed (20).
 - 6 Kadir, who wrote his presidential address in light of the U.S.’s invasion in Iraq, emphasizes that this international turn in American Studies, ironically enough, occurs “at a time when the most powerful nation in America, the USA, is exerting the greatest military and economic influence in the rest of the world,” and adds that “[t]he very hyper-power and the quality of influence exerted by [the U.S.] at this historical moment may well be the ultimate cause of these shifts” (Kadir, “Devotees” 15).
 - 7 The imperialist gesture to conflate “America” with the “United States” can already be found among the founders of the U.S.; Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* of 1776, for example, already uses America as a synonym for the United States (McClennen 397). Latin American authors such as Simón Bolívar, José Enrique Rodó, or José Martí have attempted – often in direct response to the Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine – to rescue “America” semantically and conceptually (in his invitation to participate in the Panama Congress of 1826, written in 1824, Bolívar, for example, refers to the previous Spanish colonies as American republics; cf. McClennen 399). Some, like Martí, however, then exhibited an analogous form of imperialism by conflating North America with the U.S. and omitting Canada/Québec. Amós Nascimento’s contribution to this volume not only challenges the U.S.’s appropriation of the term “America” but also reminds us that “African American” is often used in a similarly reductionist way (to refer to the people of African descent currently living in the United States exclusively) and should, as a matter of course, be extended to include all people of African descent in the Americas.

Such redefinitions of the field have not remained without criticism, with Leo Marx being one of the harshest opponents. Agreeing with Alan Wolfe's 2003 diatribe titled "Anti-American Studies," Marx considers the majority of internationally oriented American Studies scholars "America haters" who have lost or abandoned their belief in the founding ideals, or what he refers to as the "ur-theory" of their discipline. Other critics such as Heinz Ickstadt have focused on the practical difficulties inherent in reorganizing teaching and research in light of transnational paradigms, while still others, including Bryce Traister – who views the current internationalization as yet another version of American exceptionalism and a form of "academic imperialism" ("The Object" 3, 17) – feels that if the nation is the enemy, we should study it rather than trying to transcend it because "without that national construct, understood as both practice and theory, ... the practical value of Americanist inquiry loses far more than it gains" ("The Object" 23). A similar stance is shared by Winfried Fluck, in whose view it would be a mistake to regard withdrawing from "analyzing the center" as an effective point of resistance and a "saving utopia" ("Inside" 28) because "globalization does not mean that American power becomes porous or is going away" ("Inside" 29).⁸ Drawing our attention to the ways in which current developments within American Studies have been viewed by other disciplines, Emory Elliott has reminded us that the international turn in American Studies "can also be seen as yet another infringement upon territories already occupied by scholars doing similar work in other departments and programs" ("Diversity" 9).

Still other critics have adopted a more strategic scepticism. In light of the fact that on U.S. campuses, many American Studies programs have started to be closed down due to financial reasons, and many ethnic studies programs have started to be assimilated into American Studies (Rowe et al., Introduction 11–12), many scholars have argued for a strategic need to preserve American Studies in its traditional form. As Amy Kaplan summarizes this view: "[T]here are strategic reasons, nationally and internationally, for maintaining the authority of American studies as a discipline" (Kaplan, "Violent" 11). Similarly, Winfried Fluck has repeatedly emphasized the distinctness of "American" Studies as a discipline and has voiced his concern that "an association that redefines the object of study as a hemispheric system risks losing the rationale for the existence of American Studies, the specific relevance of the United States as a paradigm-setting modern society" (qtd. in

8 In Fluck's view, "there is no automatic equation between outside location and outside perspective" because even those who are located outside the U.S. have often adopted U.S. research paradigms to further their academic careers ("Inside" 25).

Pease, "Politics" 82). But beyond the so-called "American Century," the U.S. may never have been the only relevant paradigm-setting society in the world, and we should not forget the extent to which a U.S.-centric version of American Studies simply tends to foreground certain research paradigms that fall within the interests of the United States while at the same time obscuring at least as many alternative paradigms that concern other American nations' interests. Don Pease, finally, also warns us that it is difficult for many U.S. Americans and maybe others to replace patriotic loyalties "with loyalty to a nonterritorial transnation" – but "[p]erhaps the invention of such an imaginary describes the central political task of Post-national American Studies" (Pease, "Politics" 90). And Paul Giles asks whether American Studies "can [indeed] morph itself successfully into a [new internationally perspectivized] field" ("Response" 22), but his comment obscures the fact that the Americas have, from the start, been a relational project, while it was U.S. American Studies as a discipline that has ignored this fact for quite a long time. Fredric Jameson therefore rightly views these oppositional voices as "occupational hazard of American Studies programs" because they "have a vested interest in preserving the specificity of their object and in preserving the boundaries of their discipline" (Jameson 35; qtd. in Giles, "Response" 20). Yet at least since the end of the twentieth century, even hard-core Americanists such as the traditionally very nationalist ASA have started to recognize the need for reconceptualizing the field by demanding "new ways of thinking the relationship among geography, culture, and identity" (Radway 4).

In the debate about this most recent international turn within American Studies, a wide range of terms and concepts have been introduced, including trans- or postnational, international, or global American Studies, (trans-)Atlantic and (trans-)Pacific American Studies, as well as intercultural, hemispheric, transborder, comparative, or inter-American Studies, to name only some of the most frequently circulating ones.⁹ While (trans)Atlantic American Studies has had a longer history in both the U.S. and Europe, three groups of terms have come to stand out as the most prominent and influential ones since the 1980s and 1990s, which I will examine more closely in the following: (1) transnational or postnational American Studies; (2) (critical) international American Studies (often

9 Often, connections are also drawn to related fields such as diaspora studies, subaltern studies, or postcolonial studies. In many ways, postcolonial studies with its "critiques of the modern nation-state as an ideological or 'imagined' construct of Western capitalist culture based on imperial or neocolonial forms of economic exploitation" can be viewed as a precursor of this current international turn, as Ralph Bauer reminds us ("Hemispheric Studies" 236).

used in opposition to *American American Studies*); and (3) hemispheric or Inter-American Studies. Some scholars use these terms almost interchangeably in an attempt to highlight the commonalities of current dynamics in the field, yet on closer examination, one can observe significant geopolitical and ideological differences in the usage of these concepts. In the following, I will first concentrate on the so-called post- or transnational approach, which has been favored by a substantial number of U.S.-based American Studies scholars since the 1980s and 1990s and which, within a U.S. context, has currently become the most frequently used concept (Pease, Introduction *Re-Framing* 1) that has assumed the role of an umbrella to cover different forms of internationalization. One reason for this preference, I will argue, is that many U.S.-based Americanists, feeling under a certain degree of pressure to adopt a more international perspective – were at first drawn to this paradigm because it allowed them to challenge traditional notions of U.S. nationalism and exceptionalism while at the same time retaining the U.S. and U.S.-based epistemological and theoretical research paradigms at the center of American Studies. The second approach, a (critical) international American Studies perspective (represented in this volume by Jane Desmond) can in many ways be seen as a more radical alternative to this paradigm, yet as Gabriele Pisarz-Ramirez demonstrates, whose contribution explicitly decenters the U.S. in a post-national approach to nineteenth-century African American texts, current uses of “transnational” have also moved beyond its earlier scope. The third approach, a hemispheric or Inter-American Studies paradigm, is seen by many critics – including Fitz, Nascimento, Pisarz-Ramirez, Raab and Salvatore in this volume – as a highly enabling alternative that transcends the limitations inherent in studying one nation in isolation and can successfully address the multifaceted economic, political, and cultural interrelations of the Americas in an age of global interconnectedness and migratory movements. Yet Inter-American Studies has also met with scepticism – in particular in its U.S.-centric variant – because of the ways it can and has been (ab)used as a form of neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism.¹⁰

Post- or Trans-National American Studies

At the start of this current wave of internationalization, a substantial number of U.S.-based interventions began to privilege a post- or transnational framework, with the two terms frequently being used and defined in interrelated or even synonymous ways. It was Shelley Fisher Fishkin's influential 2004 ASA Presidential Address

10 For a detailed discussion of this topic, see Fitz's contributions to this volume.