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Book Review

“The Routledge Companion to Inter-American Studies” *Edited by: Wilfried Raussert. Routledge, 2017. Routledge Companions to Literature Series. \$152.55 paper. ISBN 978-1138184671*

The Routledge Companion to Inter-American Studies edited by Wilfried Raussert, Chair and Professor of North American Literary and Cultural Studies and Co-Director of the Inter-American Studies at Bielefeld University, Germany, is a compendium of thirty-seven brilliant essays focusing on various facets of cultural studies in the context of Inter-American dialogic. Again, keeping in view the recent trends of socio-political and cultural issues, this companion deserves special mention. Wilfried Raussert, in his cogent Introduction to this volume opines,

In the early 21st century, the Americas are yet again in a period of transit, change, and crisis, and their cultural and political landscapes are subject to at times contradictory dynamics of change. Emerging global players from the South, Brazil in particular, are currently gaining power, whereas the geopolitical hegemony of the United States appears to be at least partially declining. At the same time, migration and transmigration create new links and tensions between Central America and North America...
(1-2)

Thus, the welter of changes that rock 'America' is an immediate concern of this volume, which opens up space for myriads of new thoughts on different cultural arena, to be included in this momentous anthology. The 'dialogical model' that Raussert intends to present through the essays has perfectly been able to bring on an even keel, 'diverse approaches and... contraries' [Raussert: Introduction, 11]. 'Without contraries, there is no progression', observed William Blake, while he was asked to comment on his motive behind writing *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience* (1742). And that is twice proved by the essays in this collection.

This compendium has a three-tiered structure, comprising, Part I: Key Ideas, methods and developments; Part II: Theory put into practice: comparative, relational and processual case studies; Part III: Power, politics and asymmetries. As the titles of the classification suggest the variegated issues, right from the 'key tropes such as border, place, mobility, language and empire' [Raussert, Introduction, 7] through appropriate placing of theoretical paradigms into practice to the narration of 'political and ideological undercurrents of Inter-American power relations and entanglements.' [Raussert: Introduction, 9] It is really an uphill task to create a balance among all these varying themes on which the essays are written. But this anthology puts the best foot forward to make it happen.

In the first section, Part I, "Key Ideas, methods and Developments", there are ten essays, each of which deals with different specific aspects related to 'transnational perspectives', 'extractive imperialism and liberty', 'hemispheric partitions' and the impact of decolonizing on it, a futuristic take on American Studies in particular, deep cogitations on 'Inter-American relations to global commons' and an essay concentrating on the canonical text *Moby Dick* by Melville and its relevance to Inter-American studies. Earl. E. Fitz, in his essay, "THEN AND NOW: The Current State of Inter-American literary studies", deals with various approaches to

Inter-American literary studies, for example, Latin-Americanist, Caribbean, Canadian, so forth. In present day Inter-American literary studies, Fitz still finds the specter of mono-lingual, mono-cultural preponderance which he hopes will be coped with in the years to come. However, for the Inter-American literature, bringing 'many nations of the Americas together like never before', leaves much to be desired. Winfried Siemerling, Djelal Kadir have almost the same take on the prospect of 'European imperial expansion' and the consequential emergence of their own cultural paradigms, quite different from the settler's cultures. And again a miscegenation of cultures helps in forming a transnational identity, which is, no doubt, a crying need of the hour. And, the 'empire of liberty' in the 21st century blurs all boundaries, be it national, beyond national or transnational, through the 'digital teletechnologies'. In support of my critical observation, it is better to quote from both the writers separately:

The beginnings and developments of black cultures join indigenous issues as primordial factors of North American and hemispheric studies. Indigenous subjects were the first to suffer enslavement at the hand of European explorers and settlers in the so-called New World, but they were soon joined by enslaved Africans....More recent United States literary debates have witnessed an intensified discussion of transnationalism. (31-3)

Plunder rather than governance is the endgame of what I have referred to as the 21st century's extractive empire. And securing the target perimeter long enough for that purpose is achieved most efficiently through digital teletechnologies... (56)

Mignolo in his article is more concerned with 'hemispheric studies', its significance in understanding the invention of America and the reasons for the creation of the Western Hemisphere. Hemispheric studies of America is thus no less an important area to focus upon, lately. Robert McKee Irwin emphasizes 'global turn' for the field of Inter-American Studies by opening dialogue among institutions of different continental locations like Asia Pacific regions and even Filipino not in a monolingual capacity, but democratizing it, much liberally. He, too, endorses hemispheric studies of America as an area of immediate attention of the scholars of various institutions, across the continents. Luz Angelica Kirschner introduces us to the significance of 'latinidad' in understanding/questioning a 'unified Latin American identity'. Latinidad might be immensely contributive to a 'greater cross-cultural understanding' or making good for lost opportunities, demands Kirschner.

Stephen M. Park strives to 'place' hemispheric thinking in the Americas in a fresh perspective. The writer also expresses his concern for positioning place, which might go contrapuntal to 'globalism and its attendant narratives'. However, 'place' creates a 'space for new conversations within Inter-American Studies.' Claudia Sadowski-Smith talks about 'place'

too, but she is more vocal about the boundaries between the U.S. and Canada and the U.S. and Mexico. She stretches her vision to the cross-border activity which might have a future impact on terrorism, undocumented migration, so on. George A. Yudice in his article focuses on the digital culture which he presents not just an Inter-American but a global issue as well. John Carlos Rowe takes up a canonical text, *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville, as a case in point and is out to consider the extent to which the 'intercultural hermeneutics' concentrating on the Western Hemisphere might impede the thoughts on East-West dimensions, with an eye on the large Pacific setting of this American novel of age-old eminence.

In the second section, Part II, there are thirteen essays, dealing with different perspectives of "Theory put into practice: Comparative, relational and processual case studies". This is, of course, a major section of this Companion, in which each writer from his/her own discipline of thinking and research strives to put the Inter-American perspectives and paradigms into practice. There is a gulf of hiatus between theory and practice, and we are basically aware of that, but each of the case studies go down to the bottom of the theory to make it feasible for putting it into real-life realpolitik. Raussert, quite cogently, in his Introduction opines:

The chapters provide a broad spectrum of case studies of Inter-American flows and entanglements with examples from literary studies, music, arts, history and popular culture. Addressing key phenomena such as citation, transfer, entanglement, and connectedness, this section unfolds three major paradigms of how to put theory into practice: using a comparative perspective (e.g. Leen, Moreiras), a relational perspective of flow and citation (Raussert, Fox) and third, a perspective of entangled Americas to explore the knots and intersectionalities within historical and cultural processes (e.g. Anatol, de la Garza). The chapters present case studies and illustrate major general paradigms to pursue Inter-American Studies... Hence, the Companion also includes relational and processual strategies for a fine tuning of Inter-American scholarship. (8)

Yet, as a reviewer, it is my responsibility to take a peek into the contents of the essays, of course, barring a few of which Raussert already mentioned in the above quote. His editorial comment stands final and I leave those essays out of the purview of my critical views. Birgit Dawes in her essay takes an elaborate look into the transnational indigenous performance in the U.S. and Canada. She rues the neglect which indigenous traditions of performance and drama have suffered for a long period of time, being totally ignored or wrongly represented in scholarly writings across the Americas. She, quite interestingly, points out how the theatre traditions of the North American Continent have a sad history of 'colonial oppression, prohibition, cultural genocide' to share. Again, the contemporary Native North American Theatre is quite international in its appeal and she goes to a certain extent to prove that. Meagan Sylvester takes a plunge into the 'sonic evidence of elements of Trinidadian identity in the soundscapes of Calypso and

Kaiso-Jazz fusion in the works of four masters over four successive generations. Her attempt to 'attach culture to geography' is convincing. Stanka Radovic in her essay on Caribbean Literature writes about the works of Derek Walcott, V.S. Naipaul and Jamaica Kincaid in a bid to point out the postcolonial decolonization of language. Isabel Caldeira in her article draws our attention to two powerful writers of our times, Toni Morrison and Edwidge Danticat, from two extremely opposite geopolitical positions: one, from the so-called superpower, wealthy United States, and, the other from Haiti, the 'poorest country in the Western hemisphere. As they look back at the 'past' of their communities, Caldeira labels them as 'daughters of memory'. Again, she chimes in unison with Radovic in supporting postcolonial decolonization of 'colonial' language.

Josef Raab disseminates an appeal of 'looking beyond the national toward the hemispheric' to a wider audience through his essay. For him, it is somewhat a parochial approach while dealing with a research topic in either 'North American, Latin American or Caribbean Studies'. For example, he refers to the Beat writer, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, in which he stretches his gaze beyond the boundaries of the United States and makes a foray into Mexico City. He suggests three foci for Inter-American understanding of Toni Morrison's novel, *A Mercy*: comparisons, transfers and hemispheric interconnections. This novel explores a horde of issues transcending the narrow hemispheric intersections, according to Raab. Thus, it is an ur-American narrative. Claire F. Fox in her essay writes about the nonagenarian Peruvian artist, Fernando de Szyszlo, the "Last Modernist", an exponent of Latin American art. His 'landscape' canvases, place-based, to be precise, take the spectator to be an actor in front of it. A cultural point of departure is noted in his writings too. Katherine E. Manthorne's article is an interesting read, in which she points out that in the early period of the 20th century, like-minded artists loomed large in the art-school scenario in Paris, Madrid, Mexico City and New York. The intercultural confluence in the heart of New York through the artwork of artists from different nations and with different identities is, no doubt, laudable. Social media, online identities, often project more than one self of a person and therein lies the crux of the question that keeps doing rounds these days, 'Are they transient or permanent?' A personal reflection from Niamh Thornton is quite timely and necessary. Creating limits into the 'private' and the 'public' selves is often difficult, though navigating makes it easy. Thornton is so hopeful with the future of Social Networking that she thinks, 'transience can obviously become permanence.'

Thus, these thirteen essays deal with varying angles of Inter-American Studies, raising queries on sundry issues and converging on compelling answers to nagging issues of contemporary times like blurring the boundaries between nations, between continents even, through literature, music, art, internet and culture.

The concluding section of the book, Part III titled "Power, Politics and Asymmetries" deals with the nitty-gritty of Political and Ideological issues that influence the Inter-American power

structure and entanglements. Raussert remarks, “The chapters explore a wide range of criteria that have shaped colonial, postcolonial and neocolonial relationships within the Americas.”[Raussert, 9] Entangled spaces that Inter-American relations stand upon are also the grist to the mill for some essays. Raussert has brilliantly grouped the essays in this Section, quite cogently, spending much thought on this specific order. Julia Roth’s essay looks into the en-gendering of the colonized places and where in most cases gender hierarchy resulted relegating the women to the ‘passive, sensual, fragile and mentally inferior’ levels. Segueing from the coloniality of gender, Roth concentrates upon ‘racial hierarchies and structural entanglements in the global economy’ thus opening up thoughts on third spaces and border thinking. Barbara Buchenau’s article focuses on indigenous agriculture , referring back to Cain who was referred to as ‘tiller of the land’ in Genesis 4. Barbara quite interestingly concentrates on the native agriculture which played a considerable role in the ‘colonization of the Americas’. It is really intriguing to learn that the Northeast of North America , a Biblical landscape, and thus incorporated into the matrix of Judeo-Christian history is a pointer to the success of the colonial endeavors. Rüdiger Kunow places Americas as a space , not just geographical, but economic, military, political , cultural as well as biological. Ecology is taken as a base by this writer on which features of socio-cultural space are considered, analyzed and discussed. Kunow goes to an extent of dealing with case studies of the diseases causing ‘hemispheric precariousness in inter-Americas’ which have their base in ecology, in a broader sense, biology.

Mary Louis Pratt and Brian Rozema focus upon the linguistic arena, the former upon the futuristic effect of language on imperialism and the latter on a particular variety of tongue spoken in the Hawai’ian Islands. In the former’s article, there is a positive note of all-inclusiveness of multilingualism, which helps the exploited class to demand redress or to plot against the continuance of imperialism. But in the latter’s article there is a critical note of seeing the language suffer less popularity though keen and concerning essay might make the situation less grim or despondent.

Gerardo Gutierrez Cham in his essay talks about annulling the status of ‘subaltern’ in the Indias through the old concept of ‘Parrhesia’, that is, cocking a snook at the confinement and oppression of slavery, some slaves would raise their voice in protest in order to realize their own rights, however modicum that might seem. Subaltern does not remain a subaltern anymore if he can speak, says Gayatri Spivak. Case studies are interestingly done by Gerardo. Sergio Costa is concerned with the issue of anti-racism in Brazil and the Americas, more widely. Imagined space of the Black Atlantic, no doubt, demands a close alliance between the U.S. and Brazil. This essay expresses concern of the shift from the real to the imagined space, to a considerable extent. Bourdieu and Wacquant’s critique are somewhat re-considered and reconstructed. The question of imperialism, the nagging issue of ‘race and inequality in Brazil’, and, finally the issue of ‘transnational anti-racist movement’ in relation to the Black Atlantic form the crux of this essay.

To quote Sergio Costa:

The conceptual repertoire of the Black Atlantic—very much based on observations about the British Empire—must certainly be widened in order to grasp the complexity of Inter-American racism and anti-racism. ... Also the connections between the Black Atlantic and the Black Pacific should be better explored. (347)

Deborah Dorotinsky in her essay, deals with the Mexico Indigena archive, the proper archival of 'photographic ethnographic collections' and lastly she deals with the challenges the non-artistic images line up to the ordered discipline of art history. This integration of 'internal others' in Mexico is quite interesting to note, though Europe has a long history of similar archiving in anthropology, art, and many such similar things. Anibal Quijano stresses upon De/Coloniality of Power in Latin America which might ensure 'an alternative social life'. He talks about 'development' in Latin America by annulling Eurocentric hegemony. And then, the essay focuses mostly on Global Coloniality of Power., its crisis and new resistance.

Alejandra Bottinelli Wolleter in her article highlights how the intellectual discourse fails to come up with the real picture of Latin American countries like Mexico and Peru, failing to do justice to the 'heterogeneities and border identities' in these countries. In fact, she deals with the role of the intellectuals in the Latin American context.

Karla Slocum in her seminal essay on the African diaspora, the Caribbean and Oklahoma, points out how black Oklahoma and Caribbean region are at once Inter-American and African in diaspora. Slocum takes Oklahoma and St. Lucia as the cases in point. And doing so, she has really thrown a gauntlet at the 'too easy and sometimes over-stated divides of space and place', by placing the Caribbean in Oklahoma and Oklahoma in the Caribbean.

Paula Prescod in her article narrates the story of the Garinagu[plural of Garifuna], who went on exile following certain chain of events and the writer positions the Garinagu-Carib experience within Weilina philosophy. The spiritual undertones of Weil's philosophy is in sync with the Garifuna endeavors to re-route to their homeland. Their re-routing of culture , too, has not been lost sight of by this researcher. Beautifully she brings rootedness and routedness on an even keel, as she says,

To the extent that Garifuna are exiled peoples, the philosophy has all its relevance: "[Uprooting] reaches its highest degree when there is massive deportation"(Weil, Simone. *L'Enracinement: Prelude a une Declaration des Devoirs Envers l'etre Humain*. Paris: Gallimard, 1949, 2014.print. p.62). However, it would be interesting to consider whether the sense of rootedness may take on other forms and whether uprootedness is the end-all and be-all of routing. (396)

Stefan Rinke and Karina Kriegesmann in their essay, written jointly, takes us back to the days of First World War, in which Latin America as well as the United States of America had been grossly affected. The present writers even claim that the Mexican Revolution in 1910 preceded the First World War, rather it sent shockwaves to Latin America, reeling under the imminent intimidation of the global violence. They throw a barrage of queries too: “How and in what areas did the United States exert and gain influence in Latin America during the war? What were the local and regional characteristics and consequences of the outburst of global violence in the Americas?” In the successive sections, they strive hard to answer these queries though the answers are blowing in the wind!

Last but not least, Deborah Cohn’s essay, the concluding one in this stupendous volume of thirty-seven essays, is a pointer to the question of considering the Latin American writers and culturists as at par, in the field, with their contemporaries in the U.S. The funds which poured in the U.S. universities, in the early nineteen-sixties for subsidizing the studies of the Cuba and Latin America, had an immediate aim: boosting up the mutual understanding among the ‘Americas’, thus benefitting national security. Cohn focuses on several ‘serious programs’ that came to stay in the 1960s, in which the Latin American authors like, Cortazar, Fuentes, Marquez and Llosa were discussed, studied, researched, ‘fostering awareness of Latin America within and beyond the University curricula. She dabbles into political scenario, the leaders, their policies and the long-lasting effect of all these on the future prospects of exploring Latin America extensively. It is better to learn from the horse’s mouth:

Given the support of many Latin American writers for Cuba(at least during the 1960s), the promotion of this literature in the U.S. carried an inherent political charge. This did not go unnoticed by the State Department or U.S. philanthropies, which provided funding for a number of programs as venues for cultural outreach, although time and again they found that funding was no guarantee of a political outcome. The academics involved in these projects often walked a fine line. A number of them played to the Cold War context in their framing of their projects and their fundraising. However, some of them also took active roles in resisting Cold War policies and interventions and in ensuring that voices oppositional to U.S. policy were heard in their programs. (425)

Thus the long journey through the thirty-seven essays of this compendium is not just a thrilling experience as a reader, but, it will surely come handy for every researcher, scholar, student or teacher who would be interested to look into the entanglements between the Northern and Southern hemisphere of the Americas and the various facets of Inter-American studies. The editor compiled a stunning group of diverse essays into a coherent whole. Such a volume was much-awaited by the students and researchers of Inter-American Studies since long. Hope it caters to the need of all avid knowledge-seekers not only in the Americas but across the globe.

Kudos to all the contributors, and of course to the editor and author Raussert who has given this near-impossible task a proper shape. Let it be read and appreciated by the readers and therein lies the reward of this back-breaking endeavor, setting all constraints at naught.