PURDUE UNIVERSITY

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture
ISSN 1481-4374
Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

Volume 3 (2001) Issue 2 Article 1

An Introduction to Intercultural Negotiations in the Americas and Beyond

Barbara Buchenau
University of Göttingen

Marietta Messmer
University of Göttingen

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb

Part of the Comparative Literature Commons, and the Critical and Cultural Studies Commons

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, Purdue University Press selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Recommended Citation

Buchenau, Barbara; and Messmer, Marietta. "An Introduction to Intercultural Negotiations in the Americas and Beyond." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 3.2 (2001): <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1117>

The above text, published by Purdue University Press ©Purdue University, has been downloaded 659 times as of 03/03/15. Note: the download counts of the journal's material are since Issue 9.1 (March 2007), since the journal's format in pdf (instead of in html 1999-2007).

PURDUE UNIVERSITY UNIVERSITY PRESS <http://www.thepress.purdue.edu>

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374 <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>
Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series.* Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Langua-ge Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monog-raph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Volume 3 Issue 2 (June 2001) Article 1
Barbara Buchenau and Marietta Messmer,
"An Introduction to *Intercultural Negotiations in the Americas and Beyond*"
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss2/1>

Contents of ***CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 3.2 (2001)**
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss2/>

Barbara BUCHENAU and Marietta MESSMER

An Introduction to *Intercultural Negotiations in the Americas and Beyond*

Current explorations of the problematics inherent in metanarratives (historiographical and other), especially those written from a Eurocentric perspective, have highlighted the necessity to rethink traditional representations of intercultural encounters. This has assumed particular urgency with respect to historiographical constructions of Europe's role in the context of postcolonial relationships. As Stuart Hall argues, postcolonial discourse has provoked a global epistemic shift, leading to irreversible alterations of cultural identity conceptions and deconstructing, in particular, the reductionist binaries between "colonizers" and "colonized," as well as between "before" and "after" colonization. This shift, in turn, has also challenged us to revise (literary) historiography's traditional narrative perspectives by moving colonial expansionism, conquest, colonization, and imperial and cultural hegemony center stage rather than relegating it to the margins of Europe's Enlightenment-dominated historiographical discourses.

In the wake of this paradigm shift, a number of projects have emerged that propose to rethink intercultural negotiations, including the present thematic issue of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* on *Intercultural Negotiations in the Americas and Beyond*. The work published here is presented from the locus of a European intellectual and cultural perspective and thus in addition to the comparative nature of the papers per se, the papers are placed in the context of comparative cultural studies, the guiding objective of the journal. Before introducing our readers to the general framework of this volume as well as to the individual contributions at hand, we offer a selected list of projects in the field of intercultural studies in the Americas and beyond, as follows.

In Germany, a strongly interdisciplinary approach to contemporary intercultural negotiations is offered by *InIIS*, the Institut für Interkulturelle und Internationale Studien established in 1996 under the direction of Bernhard Peters, Dieter Senghaas, and Michael Zürn at Bremen University (<http://www.iniis.uni-bremen.de/>). *InIIS* has devoted its forces to the investigation of the social and cultural processes of change and integration that are at the heart of both cultural conflicts and movements toward cultural and social globalization. Working in the fields of social, political and philosophical sciences, the members of *InIIS* concentrate on two interrelated areas: a) the impact of cultural diversity as well as cultural borderlines and conflicts on contemporary society, and b) the different forms, causes and effects of processes of globalization. The *Sonderforschungsbereich* (SFB) 541, "Identitäten und Alteritäten" (<http://www.sfb541.uni-freiburg.de/>), is a center for the advanced study of collective identities and alterities located at the University of Freiburg, Germany and headed by Monika Fludernik. The project involves various disciplines such as communication studies, sociology, psychology, linguistics, literature, archeology, history, anthropology, and theology in the task of analyzing the formation of collective identities through alterity constructions.

Differentiating between inclusive and exclusive identity formations, scholars working on the project stress the tensions between integrative coexistence on the one hand, and coexistence by drawing boundaries on the other. Of particular interest is the project's ambition to connect diachronic and synchronic perspectives, in this way linking contemporary conflicts within communities (including nationalism, xenophobia, and ethnic cleansing), to comparable phenomena in other epochs and cultures, and thus drawing historical and inter-cultural comparisons that might yield insights into long-range continuities and developments. Further projects in Germany include Paul Geyer, Günther Mensching, and Hans-Georg Pott's *Kritische Kulturtheorie* (*Critical Theory of Culture*) at the University of Köln (see <http://www.philfak.uni-bonn.de/Philfak/ROMSEM/geyer/> [inactive]). This project concentrates on approaching the problem of intercultural conflicts and the cultural effects of globalization from a theoretical perspective and it stresses both the impact of globalization on cultural diversity as well as the insufficiency of many contemporary cultural theories to appropriately address the ensuing problems of interculturality. Intending to develop a critical theory of culture that might serve as a cognitive tool for future intercultural negotiations, the project relies on both a systematic as well as a historical approach to intercultural phenomena.

In the field of comparative literary historiography, two ambitious ventures are currently under way. Launched in 1967, the *Comparative Literary History* series of the International Comparative Literature Association has hitherto published twelve volumes (with numerous others in preparation), which all aim at complementing literary histories "confined to specific nations, peoples, or languages" with histories that coordinate "related or comparable phenomena from an international point of view" (see <http://www.byu.edu/~icla/publications/index.html>[inactive]). To reach this goal, these comprehensive literary histories are organized around international movements, cultural historical periods, or linguistically-defined geographical areas. The other large-scope venture that also relies on structured teamwork is *Rethinking Literary History Comparatively*, launched in 1995 by Linda Hutcheon and Mario J. Valdés at the University of Toronto. This project strives to develop "comparative configurations for the historical knowledge of literature" and thus it involves, among many other things, the "recast[ing of] literary works as historical 'events' within a dynamic cultural context of both reception and transmission ... It will also involve a questioning of the basic assumptions of literary historical narrative, including those of narrative time frame and narrative authority" (see <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/lithist/>). This framework forms the basis of the project on *Comparative History of Latin American Literary Cultures*, edited by Mario J. Valdés and Djelal Kadir, who emphasize the fact that Latin America is a "nominal, social and cultural construct," and consequently intend to "take into account the very process of that constructing"; its comparative investigation "will explore a group of contingent, shifting problems which have arisen across national borders, geographic regions, time periods, linguistic systems, [and] cultural traditions" (see <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/lithist/>). *The Trans-Atlantic Project* is coordinated by Julio Ortega and his colleagues at Brown University. This project is "an academic initiative on cultural interactions between Europe, Latin America and the United States" (see <http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Hispanic_Studies/Juliortega/Transatlantic.htm>). In their focus on both transatlantic and inter-American literary and cultural relations, the members of this project want to move beyond the traditional study of "influences, dominance, and master narratives" by focusing on the "interplay between models and answers, patterns and displacements, world views and views of the local" (see <http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Hispanic_Studies/Juliortega/Transatlantic.htm>). To date, several conferences have been organized on transatlantic explorations, on Borges and translation, the Caribbean transatlantic, new cultural strategies of Hispanic culture in the US, and Latino migration into the US.

Providing an international, interactive teaching and learning community, the *Maastricht Center for Transatlantic Studies* (MCTS), Maastricht, The Netherlands, launched in 1995 by a consortium of universities from the USA, Mexico, and Europe endeavors to explore all aspects of transatlantic relationships. In conjunction with the University of Central Lancashire, MCTS has hosted the first conference in its program, "Transatlantic Studies: New Perspectives," in October 2000. Further, a nexus between academic and journalistic interests in America and its impact on British cultures, literatures, and communities is provided by AMATAS (<www.amatas.org>), a project coordinated by Alan Rice and funded by the Higher Education Funding Council in England and run by the Department of Cultural Studies at the University of Central Lancashire, with partners at Derby University, and King Alfred's College. AMATAS focuses on encouraging American Studies departments to include the topics of Americanization and the Transatlantic in their curricula. Featuring short pieces on the export of American culture and its reception in Britain, they also intend to provide academic and journalistic resources on the phenomenon of Americanization, as well as a media log containing the latest articles on this topic. Anyone interested in the study of transatlantic literary and cultural relations will profit from the Transatlantic Studies Network (TSN), a listserv initiated by Will Kaufman at the University of Central Lancashire, providing contacts, information on current projects, conferences, source materials, and a discussion forum. With the foundation of the International American Studies Association (IASA), convened by Djelal Kadir in Bellagio, Italy in June 2000, a forum for "the study of America regionally, hemispherically, nationally, and transnationally" has been established that will "provide a space for interdisciplinary

dialogues about American culture and society" (see <http://www.iasaweb.org>). In the context of the increasing concern for the multiple effects of globalization, there has been an upsurge of interest in border studies and areas of research on economic, political, cultural, religious, etc., questions. The Ford Foundation's "Crossing Borders Initiative" (offering grants for a wide variety of studies that seek to explore and challenge traditional borders) is only one example of institutionalized support for academic endeavors that move beyond the confines of traditional hermeneutic fields (for further information, see the article "Crossing Borders" by Toby Alice Volkman (see at <http://www.fordfound.org/>).

The papers in this thematic issue of *CLCWeb* represent work in progress at the Inter-American Section of the Center for Advanced Study on the Internationality of National Literatures at the University of Göttingen. Founded in 1997 under the direction of Armin Paul Frank, Manfred Engelbert, and Hans-Günter Funke, scholars at the Center focus on literary and historiographical discourses and on the necessity to situate American literatures within both their inter-American as well as their transatlantic contexts in order to develop the parameters for an interculturally-perspectivized history of North and South American literatures. Having started our explorations by concentrating primarily on nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts, we analyze various forms of intercultural and intertextual exchanges under the premise that all "national" and post-colonial literatures are "international" and inter-cultural hybrids. More specifically, we argue that writers, irrespective of their national and political affiliations, inscribe their texts in specific local, regional, national, hemispheric, or transnational contexts (literary movements, genres, etc.), thus creating (rather than being determined by) their own (inter)cultural and (inter)literary context by means of, to follow David Hollinger's notion of "voluntary affiliations" (*Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*. New York: Basic Books, 1995. *passim*).One of our starting points is the fact that all American literatures are for the most part written in the languages of and share the same reading culture as their European colonizers, a cultural and linguistic connection which remains firmly in place even after the colonies have reached political independence. In this sense, our research has so far been concerned with the question of how politically independent nations can enact their cultural and literary emancipation by acts of dissociation from the hegemonial literature without relinquishing the former colonizer's language.

The papers by members of the *Göttingen Center* published in *CLCWeb* are studies in which the phenomena of (post-colonial) intercultural negotiations are analyzed from three interrelated perspectives in order to highlight the problematics inherent in reading American literary texts within the nationalist framework favoured by tradional literary histories. Based on evidence, it is argued that traditional literary histories of American literature privilege Anglophone monolingualism and intra-American pluralism while marginalizing inter-American, and increasingly more frequently excluding transatlantic, interrelations. This perspective is represented by Armin Paul Frank, Frank Lauterbach, Annette Paatz, Marga Graf, and Josef Raab (see at <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss2/>): These authors explore the (former) colonies' negotiations of and responses to the dominant, hegemonic European literatures and cultures, with a special focus on post-independence gestures of cultural emancipation and literary nationalization. Drawing on intercultural and intertextual connections between North and South America, Great Britain, and France, these papers represent the perspective of analogies between North and South American interliterary configurations while at the same time also emphasizing local differentiations. In this perspective, the analysis ranges from nineteenth-century South America's insistence on France as the "model" culture despite France's Eurocentrically-biased constructions of Latin America as the cultural Other (Paatz) to North America's struggle to disaffiliate itself from its cultural rival Great Britain (Frank) and Britain's appropriation of Latin America for its anti-US agenda (Lauterbach), thus problematizing the concepts of colonial and post-colonial narratives. Whereas during the nineteenth-century Paris constitutes the "cultural supracapital of Latin America" (*American Literature*. Ed. Roberto González Echevarría and Enrique Pupo-Walker. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 11.), this role is renegotiated throughout the twentieth century: The Parisian media market serves as the distribution nexus of black identity constructions *against* Western cultural values (Graf) and Latin America appropriates, refashions,

and "conquers" North American writers in a process that challenges US hegemony as well as general post-colonial dichotomies and cultural hierarchies (Raab).

The second perspective is represented by Marietta Messmer, Barbara Buchenau, John Neubauer, Angela M. Senst, Krzysztof Kowalczyk-Twarowski, and Eugenia Sojka (link to <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss2/>). It focuses on the problematics inherent in reading literary texts within the strictly national, monolingual, and frequently ideologically reductionist frameworks imposed by traditional literary histories (Messmer; Buchenau). Further, it is argued that the importance of conceiving a national American literary historiography and national American literary identity is based on the interplay of both regional (Neubauer; Senst; Kowalczyk-Twarowski) and transnational, transcultural, and polylingual aspects (Neubauer; Sojka). At the same time, these analyses show that *all* cultural constructions of identity are highly artificial and their discursive processes tend toward cultural homogenization (Kowalczyk-Twarowski) and linguistic monologization (Sojka).

The third perspective is represented in the studies of Terence Martin and Roland Hagenbüchle (link to <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss2/>): The authors here focus on literary and socio-cultural aspects of intercultural encounters and highlight the explosive consequences of interracial stereotyping and, in turn, its projection onto other categories of cultural identity formation such as class (Martin). Hagenbüchle's paper concludes the volume in light of such conflicts and he proposes tentative solutions for addressing and renegotiating interracial and intercultural conflicts. The volume is complemented by a "Selected Bibliography for the Study of Interculturality in the Americas: Theories and Practice" (Buchenau and Messmer <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss2/15/>).

The papers of the volume represent new work in comparative literature and culture in the context of *CLCWeb*'s aims and objectives including the emerging framework of a "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the intrinsic value of new work about the cultures and literatures of the Americas and the background provided -- in principle -- by the framework of comparative cultural studies, the papers represent innovative thought for the reason that the studies explore boundaries of comparison applied to questions concerning "internal comparativism" -- i.e., matters cultural and literary in English in comparison with matters cultural and literary in English, i.e., matters cultural and literary English Canadian and English American (this approach, frowned upon by scholars working in traditional comparative literature, is the signature approach of the University of Warwick school of thought (see at <http:www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/BCCS/>) -- while at the same time including established comparativism such as matters cultural and literary English American compared with South American, etc. Further, work in the volume is innovative when considering the fact that more often than not collected volumes presented as comparative literature contain studies where comparativism emerges strictly by a cumulative effect; that is, the studies in the volume are about single national literatures and the comparativist perspective is represented solely by the fact they are presented in one volume. Instead, the studies in the present volume discuss and analyze matters across cultures and literatures. An important aspect of the volume in that the work presented is from the "outside," in this case from a European intellectual and cultural landscape versus work emanating from the "inside," from a landscape and history of scholarship at home in the Americas. The locus of scholarship and thus, here, the look from the outside on the Americas provides in itself a comparative context in addition to innovative insights and new knowledge.

Last but not least, the guest editors of the volume thank the editor of *CLCWeb* and the members of the journal's advisory board / associate editors for their critical comments and Purdue University Press (<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/thepress/>) for the opportunity to publish the work of the *Göttingen Center*. In addition to the value of scholarship, publishing in the mode of new knowledge management in free access demonstrates the best of possibilities available in new media scholarship. *CLCWeb* and the guest editors of this issue encourage readers to send their comments to the editors and/or to the authors of the papers via e-mail (e-mail addresses are in the authors' biographical profiles with each paper).