“East is West”: Interhemispheric American Studies and the Transnational Turn

New York[:]

Exploration here can go as deep as you let it. Have a Mexican tamale breakfast, catch a Bollywood flick, or simply grab a pizza.

(City Break Secrets, 2005:14)

As City Break Secrets’s global ethnic sandwich (Americas/Asia/Europe) suggests they should, American Studies have now long had to abandon the exceptionalist “myth, symbol and image” and “Puritan origins” paradigms of the mid-twentieth century – paradigms that, as the century drew to its close, became ever more etiolated in terms of their perceived connection to post-structural understandings of the loci of history, politics, society and culture. Instead, what is sometimes labeled the “New American Studies” largely came to possess the field, treating with the recognition that American Studies were more complex, fluid and interconnected than such earlier paradigms allowed.\(^1\) One thing that is perhaps particularly impressive about this “New American Studies” is the way that they have taken on a number of guises, each of these turning in different ways to post-colonial theory, and to cultural and gender studies in a process that in some commentators’ eyes, such as those of Gene Wise, made American Studies increasingly “parasitic” upon other fields – compared, that is, to the early, mid-twentieth century American Studies, which Wise saw as possessing a distinct methodology (Wise, 1979: 315). Wise over-states his case: the myth-symbol-image school had little claim to deploying a methodology of any rigor outside of some methods of (brilliant) close reading (also, as it happens, comparably found in literary and early cultural studies) and some knowledge of structural anthropology. So it is perhaps fairer to say that American Studies’ methods have always been largely “parasitic”. Consequently, in order to retain their pertinence when consolidating their remorseless interdisciplinarity in the late twentieth century, American Studies have always needed to be flexibly responsive to theoretical innovation. In this sense, it was inevitable that “new” American Studies would emerge, as a response to the very rapid late-twentieth century proliferation of new interdisciplinary methodologies, jettisoning “grand narrative” syntheses (just like those generated by the myth-symbol-image school) in favor of contingent, historically-specified analyses: of discourse and power, of hybridity, of transculturation, of

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\(^1\) See, for example, Rowe, 2002.
contact zones and interculturality, and – especially – of global flows in an increasingly transnational arena. Such work is post-Foucault, post-Said, post-Bhabha, post-Pratt, post-Beck and post-Butler.\(^2\) It rejects the propensity of the “linguistic turn” to privilege indeterminacy over historicization, and has decisively turned back to history – and almost as often, in the process, it has come to take up transnational foci.

Setting aside intra-U.S.-American flowerings of the new American Studies, compelling though these can be, I want to focus upon what I see as some of the main trends of the transnational “new” American Studies. Whilst it will not be possible to pick out all of these trends, I do want to distinguish between three (preliminarily), whilst also emphasizing that they are not generally as discrete in practice as my schematization suggests. Rather they substantially overlap, as will be immediately obvious – but this does not mean that distinguishing between them is fruitless.

Firstly, there is what I will call an *intra-hemispheric* approach to American Studies. Within North and South America, this re-emphasis considers the multiple ways in which the U.S. and the Americas interact, and, increasingly, the multiple ways the Americas interact *without* the USA. So, for example, volume four number one of *Comparative American Studies* considers how it is necessary to attend not only to how Canada and the USA co-exist, but also to how Canada and the rest of the Americas interact (e.g., concerning issues of migration, refugee flight, asylum and how these redefine border spatialities).\(^3\) The focus especially falls upon difference, diversity, ethnicity, gender, and interculturality.

Secondly, *contingent hemispheric studies* have expanded particularly rapidly. This is above all true of two trends: firstly Atlantic Studies – including transatlantic studies, cis-Atlantic studies and circum-Atlantic studies,\(^4\) interleaved with the black Atlantic, the Red Atlantic, the Green Atlantic, the Jewish Atlantic and – of course – the White Atlantic, including the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Atlantic;\(^5\) and secondly Pacific Studies – specifi-


\(^3\) See *Comparative American Studies* 3 (1), guest edited by Sarah Phillips Casteel and Rachel Adams, and in particular, their introduction (2005: 5–13).

\(^4\) For a discussion of how these terms can be distinguished, see Armitage, 2004: 16–21. See also, on the circum-Atlantic, Roach (1996). Armitage has even claimed that “we are all Atlanticists now” (2002: 11). Who “we” might be, here, is, however, somewhat opaque. Is he, for example, including my colleagues working in Japan?

\(^5\) See: Williams, 1944; Rodney, 1972; Mintz, 1985; Gilroy, 1993; Bailyn, 1996; Canny, 1999; Armitage, 2001; Whelan 2004; Rediker, 2004; Gabbacia, 2004. This is not to mention an Atlantic crossed by women’s movements. See, for example: Rupp, 1997; McFadden, 1999; Anderson, 2000.
cally Pacific Rim Studies, examining exchanges between Asia and the USA. Both of these Oceanic hemispheres (the Atlantic and the Pacific) possess a long U.S. coastline, and in this sense both Oceans are contingent with the USA. Contingent American Studies’ re-emphases often fall upon permeable borders, contact zones, (post-) imperial and (post)colonial exchanges, and subaltern resistances.

These hemispheric reorientations have more recently been increasingly accompanied by a third response, attending head-on both to globalizing changes in the world order, precipitated in large part by a new closeness between the post-industrial state and late corporate capitalism, and to the consequent blowbacks that have occurred, faced with the corporate’s increasing imperiousness regarding the marginalized and dispossessed. Most singularly this re-estimation has been accelerated by 9/11, but also by Lockerbie, Bali and Madrid – the list ever-lengthens. More recently, environmental degradations have been moving back up the scale, subsequent to Katrina’s impact upon New Orleans. All this has thrown increased emphasis upon a new American Studies that can accommodate the global, as espoused, for example, by Wai-Chee Dimock’s and – very recently – Donald Pease’s planetary perspectives, and by Rob Wilson’s, Kirstin Greusz’s and Susan Gillman’s “Worlding American Studies.” Each of these seeks to respond to an increasingly globalized planet. In other words, a world perspective is sought, one overleaping monocular hemispheric studies (be these intra-American Studies, Atlantic Studies or Pacific Studies). A common criticism of these approaches is that they somehow rehearse the globalized imperialist pretensions of the U.S. State. To counterbalance this, such approaches needed to become closely attentive to the politics of representation arising from identifying othered dispossession as the result of victimization by an U.S. Imperialist center, or risk the charge of deracinated reductiveness being leveled.

Yet all of these new American Studies have at least one thing in common. All, ironically, have increasingly come to call into question the intellectual foundations embedded in the term “American Studies”. Its long-assumed

6 See for example, Jones, Frost and White, 1993; Le Heon and Park, 1995; Frank, 1998; Okhiro, 2001. Frank’s determination to resist the claim to pre-eminence of the Atlantic is especially germane to my arguments in this essay. See, for example, his exchange with Peter Vries: Vries, 1998; Frank, 1998. See also Wong, 1997.
7 The term “blowback” is taken from Johnson, 2000.
8 See Wai-Chee Dimock’s forthcoming book (Dimock, 2006); Donald Pease proposed his term, “Planetary Studies” at the symposium “European Perspectives in American Studies” (February 2005); Rob Wilson, Sylvia Gruesz and Susan Gillman proposed their term in Comparative American Studies 2.3 (2004) – a special issue entitled “Worlding American Studies”. See, in particular, Gillman, Gruesz and Wilson, 2004.
clarity of enterprise (“the study of America”), long buttressed by exception-alist discourse, is confronted by what might be called the transnational turn, threatening its autonomy. Or, as one European Americanist perceived it, in near-despair, but in a cri de coeur that carried the day in the workshop in which he was participating at the European Association of American Studies (EAAS) conference in 2004, “we must hold on to the subject.” Heinz Ickstadt, in arguing that “American Studies should accept its name as its limitation and its boundary” fails to make clear whether he is joining this reversionary clarion call or failing to comprehend how permeable – how decentered – the label “American Studies” has become (554).

We must hold on to the subject” is going to become a leitmotif of this paper. It is, simply put, unlikely that American Studies of any kind can in any way “hold on to the subject,” as (in John Carlos Rowe’s words) “the ‘new’ American Studies … reconceives its intellectual project as the study of the many different societies of the western hemisphere and of the different border zones that constitute this large region … revis[ing] the traditional interdisciplinary methods of the field to be more comparative in scope” (Rowe, 2002: xiv, 4). Rather, it seems more plausible to agree with Donald Pease that the field of transnational American Studies will now (finally) emerge (Pease, 2001: 33). The sheer vigor of the transnational turn, which has seen four new “international journals” starting up in the last few years (Atlantic Studies, 2004ff.; Atlantic Literary Review, 2000ff.; Transaltantica, 2001ff.; Transatlantic Studies, 2002ff.) in the field of contingent (Atlantic) hemispheric studies alone, surely means the term “American Studies” must now at least be placed in inverted commas. Faced with such energetic transnational proliferation, in a sense the question becomes, how can “we” – whoever this “we” might held to be within an increasingly diverse community – “hold on to the subject” in any way.

This paper, however wants to contend that some ‘holding on’ is necessary, even if the very concept of “America” constituting a “subject” is becoming increasingly contested, as the idea of “roots” is more and more often superseded by attention to “routes”9 in an ever-globalizing world of flows and exchanges dominated by erosions of clarity concerning the distinction between space and place. As Ulrich Beck reminds us, “globalization means … above all … denationalization” (Beck, 2000: 14). If, as I have argued, American Studies’ theoretical parasitism demands contemporaneity in their methodological approach, then they must respond to this shift of emphasis. And this is what the “‘new’ American Studies” have done.

In the ‘new’ American Studies’ shift of emphasis, focus has fallen upon movements, contacts, diasporas and crossings. Increasing attention is being

given to various types of circulation, movement and migration, as in Gloria Anzaldúa’s 1986 *Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza*. Thus *Borderlands* is dedicated “To you who walked with me upon my path …/to you who brushed past me at crossroads.” Indeed, the book opens with Anzaldúa standing on “the edge where earth touches ocean.” and explores, celebrates and warns of the dangers of such movement: “a border culture in a constant state of transition … ‘The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live there … those who cross over, pass over or go through the confines of the “normal” … transgressors, aliens” (Anzaldúa, 1986: 3). At stake in these developments are issues of space and spatialization – the way space is conceptualized, and acculturated. Static understandings of nation-state are under siege, undermined by Édouard Glissant’s identification of how integrated yet boundless political, economic and cultural convergences of historical trajectories have *transversally* come about, in spite of the borders that cross through people and places (Édouard Glissant, 1997). All confidence in nation-based definition becomes dis-located by new modes of theorizing flows – a focus much better able to accommodate globalizing forces, most obviously and visibly those “top-down” ones fostered by international, multi-national corporate capitalism, its inter-governmental and NGO free market supports (such as the IMF, the World Bank, GATT, GATS), and its multifarious “soft” persuasive powers. These of course are not uniquely American, but the U.S.-American State and U.S.-American corporations’ huge economic reach, combined with their market penetration and advertising powers, continue to exercise a degree of domination within their thoroughly intercalated global networks. For example, as John Tomlinson points out, however much we may want to emphasize how corporations operate globally, and in this sense transnationally, many experiences are permeated by U.S.-American traces (Tomlinson, 1999). When I go to the cinema in the UK, I encounter distinctively U.S.-American elements to the experience, not only because the film is more probably than not a Hollywood-dominated co-production but also because I am asked to “deposit trash” (not throw away rubbish), invited to drink Coke and consume hotdogs or supersized portions of popcorn and required to listen to trailers using U.S.-American voiceovers.10 So that, though Tomlinson may seek to talk about “global capitalist monoculture” (81), he can never quite escape Ziauddin Sardar’s and Merryl Wyn Davies’s apocalyptic conclusion that “the tsunami of [U.S.]American consumerist culture assimilates everything, exerting immense, unstoppable pressure on the people of the world to change their lifestyles … their values … their identity … [their] stable relationships, [and their] attachment to history” (Sardar and Davies, 2003:)

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10 I am here cannibalizing Tomlinson’s example (1999: 118).
This apocalyptic metaphor was formulated before the 2005 disaster in the Indian Ocean – an event which served as a vivid reminder that Sardar and Davies are rather too apocalyptic in what they say: both Tomlinson and they are right, in a sense. Yet their identification of the continuing pressure exerted by the USA is also reflected in the response of other, less tangible bottom-up resistances to such “globalism,” which are just as important if less obviously powerful: feminist, ethnic and ecological movements involving varieties of both productive consumption and antagonistic acculturation.

These latter resistances are encapsulated in Anthony Giddens’ definition of globalization as acting and living (together) over distances, across the apparently separate worlds of national states, regions and continents (Giddens, 1994). This acting and living together may involve technology, commodities and markets, but it can also involve information exchange, green ecologisms, migrations, dissent, opposition. The emphasis falls firmly upon processes. U.S.-American Studies, faced with such conflicting transnational and globalizing pressures, are consequently engaging with deconstructions of the integrity of globalization, identifying instead how it is not just a question of the erosion of national or regional borders in processes of inter-governmental or corporate co-option and control. Globalization is also a question of soft power, state (often U.S. State) dominance and slippery and multiple resistances. Conceptualising glocal/local interfaces is by now no longer the preserve of corporate glocalisation strategies, as first developed by SONY, coiner of the term “glocalization” to define the process of corporate “thinking globally and acting locally” when grooming new markets for commodified co-option. The new American Studies instead increasingly identifies how always already the local/global may also be a process of resistance – the interaction of local yet trans-global communities in activities co-ordinated globally, exercised locally which is not to say that no “marketing” of such resistances is involved at all per se.

Ulrich Beck promotes this idea when discussing his formulation, “globalization from below” – a formulation taken up by Elisabeth Gerle when contrasting “globalization from below” to “globalization from above” (Beck, 2000: 68 and passim; Gerle, 1995: 30 and passim; Gerle, 2000: 158–71). “Globalization from above” can here be roughly equated with what Ulrich Beck defines as “globalism”, which represents globalization in terms of economic processes enshrined in the precepts of the free-market (as

11 I here take up a point made by Sabine Broeck at a recent conference at the Institute for United States Studies, a symposium occurring in March 2005. See also Campbell, McKay and Davies, 295–307.


13 See also Brecher, Costello and Smith, 2000.
understood by neo-liberals, first and foremost), producing a world market whose power is superseding political action, whether national or international (Beck, 2000: 9ff.). By contrast, “globalization from below” subsists in opposition to, critiques of and alternatives to these economic processes and their consequences. Gerle’s formulation usefully emphasizes the idea that globalization is not just a question of processes of global capital and its grand marketing movements, but also of alternative processes routed across borders and contesting their significance. As David Ludden points out, Gerle’s formulation, “participation in … global discourses.” might now well occur from “all world regions” (Ludden, 2001: 11).

All this seems to suggest that “holding onto the subject” of “American Studies” is quixotic in the extreme. However, an emphatic cautionary note needs to be sounded. When all is said and done, all these globalizing developments have to be seen as in part subordinate to – and not untypically reacting against – the powerful omnipresence of the U.S. State, U.S. multinationals and U.S. export culture. What has to be immediately guarded against in advancing this caution is incidentally establishing a new kind of U.S.-American exceptionalism, rooted in a monolithic formulation of both U.S.-American dominance and an accompanying indiscriminately monolithic anti-Americanism. To allow such a picture to become established would be to fail to recognize how, in a transnational world of global finance, the “USA” cannot be homogenized in any simple binary polarization, just as “anti-[U.S.]Americanism” is never as simply monolithic as the phrase’s formulation suggests. For example, none of the top ten multinational corporations are wholly U.S.-owned; they are indeed multinational.

At such a precarious moment, “American Studies” have inevitably come to reassess themselves: their reach, their range of reference and their ability to accommodate the global without themselves being sucked into some sort of intellectual quasi-imperialist take-over of world studies, as it were. To guard against this, there is an increasing sense of how a dialectic, or, more accurately, a dialogue exists, with full recognition given to the way global accommodations need to retain a sense of how such processual routes are still rooted in nation states, national economies, and cultural absorption of, resistance to and adaptation of “soft-power” exportations at various levels within these nation states and across them (Lenz, 1999).

“American Studies” are consequently both internationalizing themselves more intensely, recognizing their own necessarily transnational make-up and harkening to the dialogues that exist in any such an undertaking. John Carlos Rowe calls this a process of re-conceiving “American Studies” as a “comparativist … study of … many different border zones … such as the Pacific Rim and the African and European Atlantics” (Rowe, 2002: xi–xv) and, I would add, perhaps more importantly, a process of reconceiving com-
paratavist studies beyond these contingent hemispheric studies: something accommodating both intra-hemispheric studies like Mexican or Nicaraguan American Studies and other hemispheres too: Indian American Studies, Russian American Studies, Iranian American Studies, Iraqi American Studies – in Rowe’s words, an approach recurrently “more internationalist and comparativist” (Rowe, 2000, 5). Such an adjusted perspective is inevitable. It is driven by the pace and vigor of changes to the world order following the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the rise of radical Islam, and precipitated by a new closeness between the post-industrial U.S. state and late multinational capitalism – what I call a new U.S.-American state imperiousness, which has generated increased marginalization, dispossession and consequent blowbacks. What I want to focus upon now is the large gap that has opened up between the kinds of global emphasis these developments have generated on the one hand and the relatively established “new” American intra- and contingent hemispheric studies on the other.

I am aware that in describing this gap I am being a little bit reductive. Contingent American hemispheric studies, for example, inevitably also implicate other hemispheres – and their Area Studies. For example, an increasing stress on the Atlantic as a site of flows and exchanges cannot pass without impacting upon the various European Area Studies. In the same way the growing stress on the Pacific Rim impacts obviously upon Australasian Studies, Asian Studies, Chinese Studies, Japanese Studies. At its best such work explicitly bridges hemispheres, as when the Caribbeanists Antonio Benítez-Rojo takes up Édouard Glissant’s analysis of the Caribbean’s “originatings” as inextricably, boundlessly interwoven with Asian as well as African, European and American histories (Glissant, 1981; Benítez-Rojo, 1996). But what is less obvious, perhaps, is how, say, Pacific Rim Studies impact upon European Studies, since the likely world dominance, in economic terms, of the Pacific Rim for the next several decades fundamentally shifts the economic balance away from the old European “West.” What does this shift mean for American Studies?

What is opening up, I contend, is a chance to address such interhemispheric issues, their routes and their roots – considerations which can help prevent too much focus on long-established and arguably well-rehearsed exchanges – for example, the transatlantic or U.S. intrahemispheric border studies. What is becoming needed, I argue, is the identification of a range of interhemispheric American Studies procedures, as U.S.-American Studies decenter themselves along a number of intercalated global axes. Ground-breaking work has been emerging in this respect for a while – of an increasingly ambitious nature.¹⁴

Let me here provide one other example of how this might work: a comparative interhemispheric analysis of two international film co-productions, one Hollywood-style, the other Bollywood-style – both, more than by the way, seeking to interrogate their stylistic bases (Hollywood Studio and Bombay Film). The two films I want to subject to this approach are Sofia Coppola’s *Lost in Translation* (2003) and Gurinder Chadha’s *Bride and Prejudice* (2004). The first traces the mid-life crisis of a middle-aged, fading Hollywood actor, on a run to Japan to make a substantial sum in a Japanese whiskey commercial film-shoot, and his quasi-romantic encounter with a bored and neglected young American female, trailing after her almost continuously absent celebrity-photographer husband. The second, as its title makes clear, is a remake of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen’s Bennet family becomes the Bakshis (with Elizabeth Bennet becoming Lalita Bakshi, Jane becoming Jayta, Lydia Lakhi, and Mary, Maya. The Reverend Mr. William Collins becomes Mr. Kholi, a non-resident Indian from the States, Fitzwilliam Darcy becomes Will Darcy, the son of a hotel magnate mother and George Wickham becomes Johnny Wickham, an itinerant backpacker known to Darcy because he is the son of a former employee and the impregnator of Darcy’s sister when she was very young).

To subject these two films to an interhemispheric analysis is, of course, not to create a sufficient reading of either of them, but I think it is one that illuminates how having a dialogic sense of hemispheric exchange (or the lack of it) pays necessary dividends. *Lost in Translation* at first seems to be a trans-Pacific text amenable to contingent hemispheric analysis. It depicts the story of a species of brief encounter in Japan between an aging film star, Bob Harris, played by Bill Murray, and a “recently married” but neglected young woman, Charlotte, played by Scarlett Johansson. However, conspicuously, we are almost immediately forced off-hemisphere, as it were, since the story-line in large follows the story-line of David Lean’s UK film, *Brief Encounter* (1945) – the most obvious signal, this, of the film’s other and (as we shall see) dominant hemispheric orientation.

I must immediately declare that I find *Lost in Translation* to be a poor film. One of the cause célèbres of the film is, apparently, what Bob Harris whispers into the ear of Charlotte at the very end of the film. We cannot hear what is said. And, more pruriently, speculation has focused upon what was actually said by the actors acting the parts, Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson. My reply is that this moment of unheard exchange is unheard precisely because it is an empty exchange. There is almost nothing to say about what their exchange might be. At its best is unworkable (as Bob’s copulation with the hotel’s nightclub diva makes plain); at its worst it is almost faintly pedophiliac, almost sub-Lolitan. Hence Bob’s and Charlotte’s...
final remark’s translation into inaudible digitized exchange, whilst the film
over-indulges Bob Harris’ mid-life crisis.

Yet the title, *Lost in Translation*, referring to the visit of these two Amer-
cans to Japan, seems to promise much. The term “Lost in Translation” pre-
cisely negotiates with the complexity of cultural exchange – the inevitability
of some loss, yet, in that recognition, the possibility of some discovery. But,
I want to ask, is anything being discovered in “Lost in Translation”? The
short answer is: no. It might be argued that the film self-consciously thema-
tizes the stereotypes produced by people both ignorant of and uninterested
in the culture within which they have temporarily become located – if only
potentially. But the film soft-focussedly allows Bob and Charlotte to remain
in our affections and suffer only the most oblique criticism over their
Western insularity, into which they keep retreating. Bob Harris departs
Japan for the USA at the end, and we understand that Charlotte is to return
Stateside soon. And, as in *Brief Encounter* (1945), a Western narrative model
that keeps most of its two characters’ key exchanges insulated from the
world (on a station platform), most of Bob and Charlotte’s key exchanges
are framed by their near-insulation from Tokyo in an international hotel.
Ironically, though, where *Brief Encounter* does not allow its two characters
a proper final goodbye, Bob is allowed to leap out of his taxi and say his
un-overheard goodbye to Charlotte, in one final sentimental softening of
their story, keeping it yet further from any cultural engagement. Where
*Brief Encounter* has a lot to say about the cultural complexities created by
the disruptions of relationships attending a world war, *Lost in Translation*
says little meaningful about the impact of globalization, since Bob’s and
Charlotte’s relationship, which could well engage with this theme (Bob is
after all in Tokyo to make a whiskey advertisement), instead segues off into
romantic fantasy.

“Do you ever get the feeling your whole life is being lived in an airport?”
one of the characters asks Tom Hanks in *Terminal* (2004). This is in the vein
of the hackneyed joke about the globalized iterations of “international”
airports and hotel rooms, if perhaps attended by a glocalizing touch: the art
reproductions chosen to hang on the terminal or hotel walls. The experience
of any hotel room is much, if not wholly to do with the expectation of going
out. And go out the characters in *Lost in Translation* do. However, the Japan
they go out into is a disastrous series of clichéd stereotypes. Yes, “their”
Japanese are of short stature, so that, for example, Bob cannot adjust his
showerhead high enough to stand under it. Yes, this “Japan” is inscrutable,
as when the Japanese director of the advertising shoot gives long-winded
directions to Bob Harris that are translated (in a very hackneyed joke) into
a very few words of American that Bob finds incomprehensible. Yes, this
“Japan” is framed by constant intimations of the excesses of globalization –
particularly towering skyscrapers, perhaps the most decisive intimation of U.S.-Americanization, at least prior to the skyscraper’s adoption as the universal symbol of corporate power and potency. And, yes, inevitably, an experience of a species of pole-dancing on the Tokyo strip is set against visits to the now largely deserted legacies of Japanese civilization. This disastrous, stereotypical Othering of the “Orient” shows little advance on the sort of reductive representation found in an 1892 text, “A Trip to Chinatown”. Albeit a text dealing with quite another (Chinese) set of reductive cultural stereotypes, “A Trip to Chinatown” disturbingly overlaps with *Lost in Translation* in the jokey *reductiveness* of its stereotyping. Both the 1892 and the 2003 text are replicating frozen representations that rely upon this frozenness to impede any relative ethnic dialogues:15

The boy who is interested in the “Heathen Chinee” is rather rare in these days [...] We can nearly all of us remember the picture in the old geography labeled: “Chinese selling rats and puppies for pies.” The picture shows a Chinaman with the ever-present bamboo over his shoulder and the wares of his trade dangling therefrom. [...] The Chinaman is industrious and sober [...] He is not credited with a vast amount of intelligence, yet he knows enough to let “whiskey”, “the foe of all mankind”, severely alone [...] although the Chinaman does not drink whiskey, he has a worse habit in the form of opium. It was the writer’s privilege at one time to visit an opium den [...] The habit is a terrible one [...] It is perhaps not just to judge the Chinaman by those who come to America. It is said that only the lower classes come here, yet many of them have succeeded excellently in business [...] Why there should be an enmity towards them on the part of so many of our people is a question we cannot answer. (Anonymous, 1891: 122)

This essay centers upon a visit to a Chinese temple, and is accompanied by, an illustration of its altarpiece statue; *Lost in Translation* also takes this line: Charlotte’s visit to a largely deserted Japanese temple centers upon her gazing at a large altarpiece. Also “ever-present” in Coppola’s stereotypical reduction is short-statured inscrutability. What I want to suggest is that an interhemispheric analysis reveals just how unwaveringly *Atlanticist* these frozen stereotypical representations of the Chinese on the one hand and the Japanese on the other are. Just as the Chinese are either Othered or Western-ized (as “industrious [...] excellent [...] business[men]”) in the 1892 essay’s undeviating Atlanticist discourse, so *Lost in Translation* anachronistically follows suit – even if the suit is now a Western business suit (as Western soft cultural forms generally dominate the screen).

A key scene in this respect, is a particularly striking one set in an amusement arcade, where a young Japanese woman stands by distractedly whilst

15 See Bhabha, 1984. I perhaps, though, need to make it plain that I am not comparing the contents of these Chinese and Japanese stereotypes as their form.
a person, probably her male partner (for this is left uncertain), plays with inscrutable style an arcade game under the static and manipulative gaze established by the eloquent camera-framing’s interaction with the mise-en-scène (yes, I do want to praise much of the camera work by Lance Acord, and even some of Coppola’s directing). The Other produced in this sequence is incomprehensibly alien, a product of the Japanese “inscrutable’s” interaction with the Western arcade game, in a representation that quietly but steadfastly elides the significance of the global in the development of arcade games. It is a Northern Atlantic perspective in which we are stubbornly stuck.

Seemingly more promising, fuller, is the juxtaposition of the meaninglessly vapid karaoke of a touring American starlet with the karaoke of the rather drunken Charlotte, Bob Harris and their chance Japanese acquaintances. In this scene the performances, as the camera angles and mise en scène contrive, assume some meaningful dimension of feeling. But such a contrast is undercut by the presence of the booziness and its attendant vapid warmth. It becomes another exercise in nostalgia (as the scene itself is not unaware), devoid of any cultural exchange. The potential for any productive cultural cross-consumption is simply elided.

For, certainly, karaoke and arcade games, themselves clichéd representations, also offer the potential for incisive considerations of such cultural translation that are simply passed over: the adoption/adaptation of Western pop-songs in/to karaoke, a complex Japanese tradition of cultural transmission based on careful practice; or U.S. Western shoot-outs within arcade games remodeled as ninja confrontations. It is just not enough to represent these as sterile, meaningless losses, lost in translation (once again) – for these losses, I contend, carry with them some dialogic gains. That is to say, it is possible to represent what is going on in these cultural adaptations, to do with the status of authenticity, the role of originality, the importance of repetition and the cultural status given to the formulaic. But moving towards such an inter-hemispheric reading shows just how, ironically, Lost in Translation ensures that all of this is lost, as the film instead lamely center-stages a highly conventional, faintly pedophilic and deracinated Western romance, valorizing the individual. The film becomes mono-hemispherically Atlanticist, for all of its international production. All that is not lost in this translation, one might argue, are the fat bottom-line profits for the production company in this very safe co-production.16

At this point I must emphasize that this analysis does not want to lose sight of the ways in which one Romantic Atlantic discourse upon the East

16 My thanks to Corey Creekmur for his feedback on my original paper, aiding me in developing my argument at this and other points.
precisely sees it as a source of divine wisdom and insight, of profoundness and artistic simplicity, in a species of (predominantly aesthetic) incorporative Othering. Walt Whitman, with typical contradictoriness, encapsulated this almost 150 years earlier, in his 1860 poem, “Facing West from California’s Shore’ (145):

   Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,
   I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of maternity, the land of migrations, look afar,
   Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle almost circled;
   For starting westward from Hindustan, from the vales of Kashmere,
   From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage, and the hero,
   From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and the spice islands,
   Long having wander’d since, round the earth having wander’d
   Now I face home again, very pleas’d and joyous,
   (But where is what I started for so long ago?
   And why is it yet unfound?). (Whitman, 1860: 145)

The poem is deliberately drawing on the myth of the Westward progress of civilization, with its Romantic stress upon nostalgia and the transformative power of the imagination. This is indeed an Atlantic poem. Like Whitman’s later, better-known poem, “Passage to India”, “Facing West” draws on Bishop George Berkeley’s contention, in “On the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America”, that “Westward the course of empire takes its way/[…]/Time’s noblest offspring is the last” (1726). But all is not quite lost in this poem: “Facing West” also reflexively decenters itself. The gaze across the Pacific may largely be an imperial one, but the look is also strained and anxious, aware, as Whitman’s later poem, “Passage to India” is, that the westward march of empire has not been a matter of unequivocal progress, and that something crucial has been lost as well as gained. It lacks Lost in Translation’s smugness. Though incorporating anxiety in this way is still very much in tune with the Western enlightenment’s metaphysics, the poem in the same dialogic moment is also undeniably re-valuing Western empire not in terms of lost Rousseauvian natural innocence but in terms of competing and interacting civilizations, with different orient-ations. The poem ends with elegiac open questions, but it also problematizes the West that the European-U.S.-American Atlantic constructs as the apex of civilization’s development. Crucially, in this respect, the poem recognizes in its very title that “Facing West from California’s Shore” involves, necessarily, facing “the East” – the “East” to the West of California – and implicitly draws attention to how, standing in California, one is standing, for those to the West (e.g., in Japan), in the East. The limitations of Western culture’s monocural viewpoint are established by this moment of interhemispheric heteroglossia. Momentarily, the poem decenters the Atlantic viewpoint’s geographical presumptions: East is West and West, East.
In this way Whitman’s poem offers a disturbing problematization of culturally-specific geographical conventions of description (of the U.S.-American West, crucially, but also the “free West”). Focusing solely on the poem’s Atlantic referents would cause this awareness to be “lost”. In sharp contrast, *Lost in Translation* fails to embrace any such compensatory cultural resource, except in ludicrously cartoon-like and peremptory visits to tourist sights. This may offer a sort of stunted, fleeting critique of such Atlantic tourist Othering, as (just perhaps) does the near-sincere karaoke performed with Bob and Charlotte’s new Japanese acquaintances. But such readings involve an unconvincing stretch of the imagination. Not least, they are rendered unconvincing because of the strange decision to leave in the movie the moment when Bob sits in hospital waiting for Charlotte to emerge after her X-ray for a broken toe. This scene was set in an actual hospital in Tokyo, and resulted from the actor, Bill Murray, sitting in one of the hospital’s waiting areas and establishing unrehearsed, though, of course, *half-staged* exchanges with the chance Japanese patients around him. One of these stooges, for want of a better word, having established that Bob Harris/Bill Murray is American, endeavors to indicate that America is a long way away, involving air travel around a large segment of the globe, but Bob, and in this instance, the actor, Bill Murray as well, cannot understand what the Japanese man is trying to convey. Ironically, the Japanese man’s resort to perfectly clear hand-signing in his attempt to establish communication is lost on Bob Harris/Bill Murray. Harris/Murray makes no effort to understand the hand-signals at all, but instead immediately resorts to clumsy parody, intended to be comical (playing to the gallery of other Japanese patients and, one suspects, the film crew, too), even though the hand signals he neglects to try to understand need no translation. The minimal cultural engagement, the moment of dialogic inter-hemispheric awareness, required by both Bob and Bill Murray is simply not forthcoming. This failure is deeply ironic: the desire for cultural engagement is simply missing. An accidental, scathing meta-textual commentary is established, revealing the film as no kind of trans-Pacific text at all, quite unable to engage with the cultural processes with which it treats. All is lost in translation, indeed – even the straightforward sign-language of the Japanese man.

*Bride and Prejudice* does rather better. It, too, is to do with translation – quite literally, since it is based loosely upon *Pride and Prejudice*. The most textured debt it owes to its novelistic origins is a pointed one revolving around how calculations of financial suitability lubricate the wheels of love and marriage in both nineteenth century England and twenty-first century India and its global diaspora – just perhaps because India is entering upon a phase of industrialization and capitalist commercialization in a way not wholly unanalogous to what was happening in late-Eighteenth Century England (this at least seems to lie behind its director, Gurinder Chadha’s
claim that “the themes [of Pride and Prejudice] are pertinent to India”). But what is much more striking is the lavishly over-shot and over-clichéd stereotypes offered: both in Amritsar and when the main Indian female protagonists and their parents travel abroad. Here, the ironic intertextual debt is not to Jane Austen, but to the Indian film industry, and particularly to the recent flowering of Bollywood that has seen its films penetrate not just the non-resident Indian community (NRIs), but also a wider audience—so much so that the travel guide publishing company, Lonely Planet has even taken to defining a classic New York experience as one including taking in a “Bollywood movie” (City Break Secrets, 2005: 14). This new, more cosmopolitan Bollywood focuses very much on middle class NRI global travelers. Bride consciously echoes these. But Chadha goes beyond the knowing, self-referential and ironic celebration of established clichés quite generally found in Bollywood productions by instead transposing and adapting another strand of Jane Austen’s text: its ruthlessly sharp satire upon contemporary mores. London becomes reduced to a vapid series of comically exaggerated clichéd depictions of the main London tourist sites. Stripped of its guts and deboned, this version of “London” parodically flops before the viewer, ready for easy tourist consumption. Similarly, Los Angeles, rather more recalcitrant material, is boiled down, in analogous fashion, by a montage intercalating the sign for HOLLYWOOD, LA’s beach strip, and some fleeting glimpses of LA’s signature architecture—all, inevitably, culminating in a helicopter trip to the Grand Canyon, with deliberately over-familiar aerial shots that succeed in containing (by dwarfing) its scale, as a cap to the sequence. This satiric celebration of international, contemporary, bustling tourist sites is in exact contrast to the heritage sites in Lost in Translation, which, empty of tourists and apparently neglected by modern Japan, are lifted out of time into a tourist pastoral of elegaic timelessness. In contrast to such colonial nostalgia, the London and LA portraits in Bride and Prejudice are carefully and deliberately often made obviously contemporary ones, featuring, for example, the London Eye and (pointedly) LA’s Walt Disney Concert Hall.

A biting satire results (irony intended to hurt), reflecting upon the ways in which the tourist reflexes of the twenty-first century transnational upper middle-class (represented as the owners of the means of production—including tourist production, since Darcy’s family are hotel magnates) have

18 See Srinivas, 2005. See also Booth, 1995; Thomas, 1995; Dissanayake, (2004). Srinivas’s article, which I first read in the middle of the writing of this essay, has been very helpful to me.
not only connived in but fuelled the global reduction of London and L.A. London and L.A., in these tourist catalogues, are boiled down to an invariant series of visual clichés, that, more than incidentally, almost match the stereotypes of provincial India that the film also offers. Almost – but not quite, for where in India the stereotypical emphases fall upon exoticized depictions of crowded markets and streets, the Golden Temple and Goan beaches, London is trapped in a near-contemporary swinging cool Britannia mode and L.A in lavish consumerism. It is a fiercely satiric critique of mutual Othered exoticizations, be they those of “Western” global tourism, of middle-class India, or of NRI circulations. In _Bride and Prejudice_, these various European, Indian or U.S.-American tourist Otherings are transparently veiled by what is on the surface merely sentimental celebration. My contention is that an inter-hemispheric analysis of this combination of montage and mise en scène shows how it is quite opposed to the nostalgic mendacities of _Lost in Translation_, which communicate nothing beyond the mere reinforcement of the Orientalist Othering borne within its stereotypes. _Lost in Translation_ has a bitter-sweetness, but it is a depleted, Atlanticist bitter-sweetness, rooted in a crudely reductive reworking of the cultural legacies of Henry James and Nabokov concerning innocence and experience. The bitter-sweet mood of _Bride and Prejudice_, by contrast, is rooted in a recognition of the consequences of multinational incorporation of global tourism. The film complexly parodies the sweetly sentimental, subtly inflected and often self-ironized hybridities of Bollywood – the mode in which the film is shot and produced in a pattern of double irony. _Bride_ successfully intimates how such sugared commodification is also a cause for the bitterest anxieties, as culture is reduced down to some ghastly Disneyfied parody of cultural exchange.

This is encapsulated in the film in four sharply satiric sequences. Firstly, in a Bollywood dream sequence, in which Lalita Bakshi’s unsuccessful suitor, the legal high-flyer, Kholi, has transformed the iconic hill-side signifier, HOLLYWOOD into KHOLIWOOD, as a signal of the shift to complex patterns of global financing of world movies (this a moment of exquisite self-reflexivity). Secondly when, as Darcy and Lalita dine in a Mexican restaurant in L.A, a band playing at their table wears such absurdly large sombreros that these completely dominate their heads, masking their identities behind the stereotypical “Hispanic” headgear (whilst cocktail shakers ironically serve as castanets in the background). Thirdly, when Darcy and Lalita stroll along deserted sands, they find themselves suddenly strolling past a full gospel choir – the African American cultural icon parodically boiled down to its basic signifiers and bleakly placed on a sandy waste, in an image drawing plainly on Bollywood wish-fulfillment/dream-sequence conventions, but also on that moment of diegetic/non-diegetic fracturing to
be found in Mel Brooks’s *Blazing Saddles* (1974). Finally, *Bride* brilliantly turns the tables on “Western” propensities for imperial homologization of the “Orient” by cavalierly relocating the fountain in the courtyard of London’s Somerset House into Los Angles, with a geographical abandon exactly replicating that found in “Western” views of “the East.”

Hence the title change from “Pride” to “Bride”: this film is all about marriage – the marriage of East and West, in terms of narrative, of form and of their ideological ramifications, in a shot-gun wedding imposed by the reach of global late Capitalism. More than incidentally this redactive reach has reified Jane Austen, trapping her writing in the amber of love and marriage adaptations that side-line her fiercely erotic satire; but it has also created a complex series of cultural gains and losses that the film patrols. Formally its syncretistic entwining of Bollywood and Hollywood musical conventions constitute a generally refreshing culture-lite romp through a narrative long afforded classic status; more darkly, the puzzlement and distaste evinced by her multinational watchers as Maya Bakshi performs an energetic and threatening cobra dance (during which the montage’s rapid cutting emphasizes the intensity of the dance) suggests the attendant processes of loss as the transnational takes hold: Maya’s dance lacks the necessary culture-lite-ness. This I think is the point of the central protagonist’s name, Lalita; her name deliberately sounds very like Lolita – as, indeed, someone in the film mishears it. The seductiveness of such hybridity, offering “young” (yet knowing) independent Indian Bollywood to jaded Humbert Humbert-style Hollywood palates, constitutes a complex, potentially disgusting trade. But it is one in which, in the last analysis, Chadha’s good humor is superseded by something approaching anger over continuing processes of imperial patronage. As she herself puts it, though “anger might be a bit of a strong word … all my films … might be dressed up as comedy, but everything I’ve ever done is always about making whoever’s watching […] think differently.”

*Bride and Prejudice*, at one of its poles of meaning, satirizes the NRI’s (and their movies’) “Kholiwoodization,” as money’s power whisks the protagonists quite literally around the globe. And yet, as Kholi’s mispronunciation of America as Am’rica makes clear (so making America sound like Amritsar), such polarizations are crossed by complex flows of migration and diasporic exchange more difficult to unravel: Am’rica is becoming

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increasing “Amritsar-nized” (as well as Hispanized), just as Bollywood increasingly draws on and feeds into Hollywood accommodations, as in recent Bollywood transnational Indian productions, featuring dialogic exchanges between an Indian middle-calls and their NRI relatives. The film, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham (K3G)*, 2002, is a prime example of this trend (Srinivas, 2005). One way of defining the distinction that exists between *Bride* and these recent NRI Bollywood films is to compare the representation of London in *Bride* and *K3G*. In both, London is in slightly retro swinging Cool Britannia mode: the two at first glance seem closely similar in their representation. But *Bride* does not share *K3G*’s undertone of moral disapprobation, deriving from a constant sense that the dynastic family’s exiled outposts are in danger of succumbing to the turpitudinous fleshpots of central London – even if this is conveyed in a slightly tongue-in-cheek way. Furthermore, *Bride*’s kaleidoscopic montage of London, so close to that of *K3G*, makes no pretence at representing NRI London life in the self-same process. *Bride*’s London sights are tourist sights only, not also “sets.” This is what they are in *K3G*: the film’s elaborate musical numbers are staged on signature tourist sites, fusing these sites with the film’s other “sets”. *Bride* declines to introduce such condensation. Even when a pursuit along London’s South Bank occurs, this is just after Wickham has taken Lakhi for a tourist ride on the London Eye: the narrative remains integrated with the plot. In this respect it is noteworthy that, in *Bride*, all the main dramas (apart from this pursuit) are set in modest West London suburbs around Southall (where Chadha was born).

In this contrast in the way London tourist sites are condensed with dream-fantasy in *K3G* and integrated with plot in *Bride* resides the much sharper satiric edge to *Brides*’ presentation of central London. Both films are knowingly retro, both films present exaggerated stereotypical portraits, but only *Bride* sets up a subtle satiric dialogue between tourist visual excess and suburban mundanities. Such complexity has confused movie-goers: Chadha, especially in internet discussion lists, has been regularly slated for what is seen as her clumsy stereotyping. These attacks, I think, are provoked by the unavoidably messy way that *Brides*’ satirizations have to be carried in the self-same vehicle – an NRI Bollywood-style international commercial production – that the film, *Bride*, critiques. The sharply satiric intent it in fact carries within it (and indeed Chadha’s underlying anger) passes such critics by. Perhaps this is because the complex interhemispheric translations in *Bride and Prejudice* become potentially deeply disturbing, if brought to the foreground – precisely where the elegaic *Lost in Translation* cannot meaningfully translate but rests in surface depiction.

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In any transnational Asian-American reading, *Lost in Translation* fails to become inter-hemispheric, and indeed, is not even a Pacific text at all. It is largely unable to engage with the cultural processes with which it treats, except when sharply, but tritely, and very much in the Romantic tradition, observing how Bob has chosen to sell his “integrity” to the advertising company making a Japanese whiskey advert, as part of his mid-life crisis – albeit for a large payoff (– a very familiar Atlanticist theme to do with a highly individuated “crisis”). This conceded, *Lost in Translation* otherwise fails to trade effectively between *Brief Encounter* and Japanese transnational postmodernities. Indeed, it is no kind of Pacific text, instead nestling within an Atlanticist discourse. It is clearly a dislocated Atlantic text, wrenched from its cultural hemisphere (shot in Japan) into a nexus of Western cultural discourses that allows for a darkly prejudiced misrepresentation of twenty-first century South East Asia to develop.

By contrast a text apparently avowedly Western in its inspiration, a pastiche of *Pride and Prejudice*, becomes a complex inter-hemispheric satire upon process of global homogenization in the cultural marketplace. *Bride* never offers any mendacious pretence at sentimentalized authenticity, but in its complex parodies exposes the blank colorfulness of late-capitalist bourgeois world tourism. This is self-reflexively alluded to when, near the end, Wickham and Lakhi dash into the South Bank’s National Film Theater in London, in the middle of a BFI Bollywood screening session, past a poster advertising the classic Bollywood production, Manoj Kumar’s *East is West* (*Purab aur Paschim*, 1970). The Hindi poster in itself (but only for Hindi speakers) underlines how Western geographical orientations constitute the hegemon’s global tradings. But, as *Purab aur Paschim* makes clear, underneath this there are the quotidian problems of negotiating “mixed relationships” in the face of prejudice, diasporic displacement and economic hardship. *Bride*’s sardonic allusion to how consumerist tradings smooth over such realities acknowledges the extent to which the pervasiveness of global exchanges across hemispheres renders yearnings for integral cultural authenticity as narrowly nostalgic – all too vulnerable to contamination by national ersatz-myths of origin that have simply lost their viability within rampant inter-hemispheric exchange – mostly under U.S. suzerainty. Where *Purab Aur Paschim* advances the central message, “You need India and India needs you. Be proud of India and let India be proud of you” (words spoken by the central protagonist, Bharat, the child of a freedom fighter – played by Manoj Kumar himself), *Bride* offers a more complex, inter-hemispherically informed consideration of the global plays between NRIs, Indians, Americanization and Empire (including a fading British Empire and a rising consumer-driven, U.S.-American corporation-dominated economic postcapitalist “Empire”).
Faced with such texts as *Bride and Prejudice* and *Lost in Translation*, and the globalized socio-economic and cultural processes with which they treat, a new kind of approach to U.S.-American Studies is indeed necessary – one fundamentally informed by contact, hybridity, exchange, flow, migration and process, and alert to such issues of inter-hemispheric flows, (dis)advantaged exchange and (dis)location. A twenty-first century American Studies will inevitably have to be more frequently and often “messily” comparative, accommodating the transnational but also introducing the inter-hemispheric as a constant corrective. As such it will return to the subject – yes, “hold on” to it – be it in terms of economics, resources, demographics or culture. Plainly, in all this, the bare term “American Studies” (which I have been carefully avoiding whenever U.S.-American Studies is the more accurate) hardly works anymore, its grand narrative projects laid all too bare.21 There has long been an endemic unease in the rest of the Americas with the USA’s appropriation of the term, America – and for a very long time: at least from José Martí’s essay, “Our America” in 1891, through Édouard Glissant’s 1981 definition of the “Other America,”22 to Felipe Fernández-Arnesto’s insistence upon viewing America as a hemispheric term (Martí, 1891; Glissant, 1981; Fernández-Arnesto, 2003). The apologists’ explanation that the USA lacks an adjectival form, thus excusing the term “American Studies” when talking of America, correctly enrages Gabriel García Márquez: “When residents of the U.S. call themselves American, they are telling us they think of themselves as the only Americans. Actually these people are residents of a country without a name” (García Márquez, 1983: 67). Such unease should become general in the new American Studies – of whatever kind. In this respect, it is notable how Jana Evans Braziel, in advancing her term, “trans-America” in order to “capture historic and hemispheric points of cultural contact in the Americans … [and] also current geopolitical shifts,” identifies different, overlapping Americas: an America of European colonialist expansion and its contact-zone hemispheric practices of enslavement and hegemony; an America of U.S. world-wide imperialism and military intervention; and an America of geopolitical power and diasporic refiguring. Together, in overlapping fashion, these constitute her “America” – “an ideological, geopolitical, corporate, material and imaginary transnational complex” (Evans Braziel, 2004: 34–35).

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21 Of course, it is not only within American Studies that these issues are being debated. See for example, Gibson-Graham and Gibson-Graham (2004). Their analysis emanates primarily from a geographical base (though Katherine Gibson-Graham is based in an “area studies research school” (405).

22 ‘... the other America is not “Latin” …. Before its dense and multiple significance, we seem to fade into insignificance” (Glissant, 1989: 117). On this subject, see also Rowe, 2002: 3ff.
Evans Braziel’s formulation brings me back to the need to “hold on to the subject” as we reconfigure the term “American Studies” – and following Evans Braziel, let me call this subject “corporate America.” Here I am trying to spin out a pun: not only the corporate U.S.-America of big business but also the material continental landmass, the body of the United States, with its vast, incorporated human and commodity reserves, no matter how acculturated and (re-)textualized we may hold its cultural corpus to be. This is the “homeland” of the U.S.-American State and of its hegemonic ideological and repressive apparatuses that are not simply going to go away. Recognizing this runs counter to any talk of “postnational deterritorialization.” There is, I want to suggest, something of a risk in being seduced by any such spatial metaphysics. The force of Henri Lefebvre’s formulation of a “politics of space” is clear to me: “Space … has always been political and strategic. If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents … it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of processes whose traces are not always evident.” (Henri Lefebvre, 1976: 31). We cannot afford to formalize abstractly what is in fact a rooted place of power-plays and imperial dominance – enactments of the subtended relationship of the United States and the world. Stubbornly, the concept of the nation state, its place, will not implode imminently under globalizing pressures. “National pride” – that powerful investment Western culture in particular has in the idea of “nation”, which, for example, played its role in George W. Bush’s re-election, shows little sign of losing its grip. Though the sheer bulk of the USA’s military power and multinational corporate growth does not constitute the whole world story, and though any understanding of the world and the increasingly contested place of nation states within it will not remain the same because of a stubborn popular adherence to nationality, perhaps the idea of globalization requires some retention of an inter-hemispheric sense of national place within transnational space. This can then inform assessments of the “anti-Americanism” of critiques of “America”: to what extent is there due recognition of the implicatedness of transnational capital flows – both those of world economic systems but also those of cultural capital? Or to what extent is a reductive process substituted, isolating America within a self-reliant hemispheric location – a reductiveness having no grip upon processes of international exchange? In this sense, indeed, then, though “we must hold onto the subject,” this subject must be specifically recognized as both historically layered and globally implicated – with all its accretions of colonial and imperial economic (past) legacies and (present) aspirations. These are latterly interlaced with later-capitalist commodifying opacities, of course, and sometimes challenged, but also sometimes

23 See also Soja, 1989.
reinforced, by hybrid counter-discourses – diasporic, feminist, queer, proletarian – discourses of course not solely located in America, but infused with what I call inter-hemispheric ideological articulations – of either complicity or radical dissent. The historically layered, globally implicated subject, U.S.-America remains substantial enough, but to hold onto it always already requires intra- and inter-hemispheric understandings. Consequently American Studies has to recognize that in its practice it needs to specify what sort of American Studies it is seeking to be: what, exactly, it is seeking to hold on to, and not leave it to the mendacious operations of implicit ideologies – to do (ironically) with the U.S. State’s intra-hemispheric (and, indeed, inter-hemispheric) desire for hegemony. The nostalgic term “American Studies” cannot constitute a deracinated stand-alone one, anymore. We need to specify the kind of American Studies we believe we are undertaking.24 Some sort of qualification has become essential: U.S.-American Studies; intra-hemispheric studies; contingent hemispheric studies; global American Studies; or – in the instance of this essay – inter-hemispheric American Studies – perhaps these terms can figure in a long list of specific variations that need to be declared, as “American Studies” loses its self-assumed explanatory capacity.

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24 This point is being made with increasing, still largely unheeded frequency. See, for example, Sielke (2005): 90.
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