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Decolonizing American Studies Toward a Politics of Intersectional Entanglements

Abstract:

This paper aims to initiate a dialogue between several theoretical-methodological angles in light of their productivity for a Hemispheric American (studies) approach. The paper argues that (Hemispheric/inter-) American endeavors can gain from an intersectional sensitization – or framing – widening the perspective towards the simultaneous and interrelated dimensions of both macro structural levels such as patterns of knowledge circulation, localities or citizenship and micro structural levels such as racialization, socio-economic status and en-gendering. The respective postcolonial, intersectional, critical occidentalist and gender take on a Hemispheric American approach is decidedly sensitive to issues of power. It does not attempt to provide a ready-made frame or method, but rather a methodological framing or tool box for discussions of persistent and new transnational entanglements and inequalities in the Americas. It may be of use regardless of disciplinary or “regional” specificity, and therefore contributes to a theorizing in more general conceptual terms while remaining sensitive to the situatedness of knowledge in terms of thinking alternative units of analysis and new forms of connectedness.

Keywords: decolonial thinking, hemispheric American Studies, postcolonial, transnational

Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. (...) The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.

Chimamanda Adichie 2009 [1]

Introduction

In her TED speech, “The Danger of the Single Story”, Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie recounts her experience of being raised and guided by the dominating Eurocentric experiences in literature with which she could not identify. Adichie stresses that the danger of telling “single stories” lies in the precondition of a power asymmetry whereby some have the “power not just to tell the story of another person [or region], but to make it the definitive story of that person” (2009). As a critique of such knowledge asymmetries, the scientific focus on single groups, countries or nation-states, or their mere comparison – a phenomenon commonly referred to as “methodological nationalism” – has increasingly been rendered problematic in recent years. [2] In the context of hemispheric constructions, a growing academic interest in a transterritorial understanding of the Americas has emerged during the last two decades, as a number of publications demonstrate. [3] Based on the increasingly popular insight that national stories and boundaries no longer suffice in order to grasp current processes and interrelations, former US-American Studies Association (ASA) president Shelley Fisher Fishkins in her 2004 speech to the ASA has even called out a “transnational turn” in American Studies. Susan Scott Parrish speaks of a “hemispheric turn in colonial American Studies” (2005). At first sight, these recent trends sound very promising. While the advantages and promising aspects of transnationalization are evident, however, I see an inherent danger:

1. A transnational “turn” suggests a paradigmatic shift on a rhetorical level, as if the explanation of “transnationality” as such would already imply a critical stance and would automatically signify something positive. Historical examples such as colonization and the transatlantic slave trade and its legacies or recent phenomena like multinational co-operations, or North-to-South sex tourism prove otherwise. Respectively, to consider transnationality as something new runs the risk of

blinding out approaches and politics, which have already been negotiating and questioning national and other boundaries for a long time. The concept of a – presumably all-encompassing – “turn” further bears the risk of rendering one’s own disciplinary locatedness invisible and of erasing the discipline’s history.

2. Theorizations on respective concepts are predominantly US-American and stem from US discourses and institutions. They are embedded in a history of American Studies which came into being at the same time as the increasing power and influence of the US as an imperial power and were founded in light of US-American exceptionalism, and, in the US, dedicated to the mission of spreading US-American knowledge and civilization all over the globe. Outside of the US, American Studies programs were implemented as part of the US-American endeavor of practicing “cultural diplomacy” during the Cold War, with its strongest bastions in Great Britain and Germany. In turn, Latin American Studies as an academic discipline emerged in the twentieth-century mostly in Europe and North America. In the USA, Latin American Studies was boosted by the passing of Title VI of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, which provided resources for Centers of Area and International Studies. Implicitly, then, and apart from interventions from postcolonial, Critical Race and gender studies among others, American Studies as well as Latin American Studies follow the paradigm of the “intellectual division of labor” that emerged at the end of the 19th century and a “geopolitical distribution of scholarly tasks in function of their pertinence to Western modernity [and US-American exceptionalism or ‘the concept of Americanness’, respectively] still paves the way for present-day research” (see Costa and Boatcă 13).

3. If the theorizations which in “the academy” are considered legitimate and relevant on a larger scale continue to come predominantly from certain privileged positions and institutions, and the respective publications in certain languages with regard to knowledge circulations, the power structures remain intact and the respective asymmetries prevail. Anti-colonial thinkers like José Martí have already been criticizing the geopolitics of knowledge in the Americas for a long time, but their contributions have largely been excluded from the canon of relevant theorizing in the West.

Theoretically speaking, the attempt to change “not only the content but also the terms of the conversation” implies going beyond received versions of methodological nationalism (focusing on single countries and/or nation states or a simple comparison between these). However, the terms of the conversation are not changed by telling multiple stories, if these stories are told by the same storytellers (and regardless of their connectedness). The decolonization of received modes of doing knowledge production – and of American Studies respectively – rather requires listening to

new and heretofore marginalized or silenced storytellers as well, and hence reflecting upon and scrutinizing the dominant positions of the power to define and represent, and to alter the theoretical frameworks, parameters, and the respective units of analysis. At the same time, however, against the backdrop of an increasingly neo-liberalized academy, it has become mandatory to cater to fashionable terms such as “interdisciplinary” and “transnational” in the hunt for funding. A sole celebration of multiplicity, diversity, or difference might hence not suffice in order to not only change the content, but also “the terms of the conversation”, as Walter Mignolo has it (Mignolo 2009). The neoliberal appropriations of “diversity” and “hybridity” as a marketing strategy has recently been rendered problematic by post-/decolonial and queer thinkers (cf. e.g. Ha 2005 and 2010, Engel 2002 and 2009). A purely strategic catering to such paradigms and a purely positivist understanding of transnationality, however, not only blinds out the negative aspects related to such processes, but also runs the risk of becoming what Jacques Derrida has termed “doxographic discourse.” According to Derrida, “doxographic discourse” is based on “academic capitalism” and a “quotation market” (cf. Derrida 1990), and reigned by the secret underlying imperative ‘don’t use that concept, only mention it’ (cf. Derrida 1990; Knapp 254), thus serving in order to be politically correct while keeping received power hierarchies and privileges and one’s own conscience intact, selling a similar content under a slightly different label in order to continue doing what one has always done.

For the length of this paper, I will therefore pretend that a Hemispheric American (studies) Theory (or Perspective/Methodology) is interested in doing something new than what we have always done and change the terms as well as the content of the (Hemispheric American) conversation(s). I do so from a privileged white academic position. It is here that I see a great opportunity for those of us interested in new conceptualizations of received paradigms to ask ourselves what the aim of our critical endeavor is or can be:

Are we interested merely in finding new terminologies for our research in order to name inequalities, and name or quote excluded voices, while remaining politically correct and feeling better? Or do we attempt to contribute and work towards overcoming such received hierarchies and inequalities based on the fact that few people are in the position to tell the definitive stories of most other people and places, and hence to decolonize our minds and create more just conditions for all? What can a hegemony-critical endeavor indebted to a focus on entanglements gain from decolonial and intersectional gender approaches?

To contextualize and historicize our disciplines and methods (in American Studies or other disciplines engaged in “studying”, or “producing knowledge about” the Americas) provides an important dimension of such an endeavor. It implies to render established concepts such as “Area

Studies” – and “American Studies” respectively problematic. Simultaneously, it requires going beyond and overcoming the power asymmetry I term epistemic Occidentalism (see Roth 2013).

I will first elaborate shortly on the history of Inter-American (or Hemispheric American) relations/asymmetries. In the attempt to find a way of “doing Inter-American Studies” in a way that implies to change also the terms of the conversation, this paper then seeks to propose the following three angles as framings or sensitizations for a Hemispheric Entangled Approach of the Americas as different sorts of “corrective methodologies”, which in combination work towards that aim :

1. Hemispheric American Entanglements // Entangled Inequalities

2. Hemispheric American Intersectionalities

3. Decoloniality in the Americas // Critique of Occidentalism

The paper aims at elaborating on a perspectivization of (Hemispheric/inter-) American Studies stemming from and indebted to focus on intersectionalities and a politics of intersectionality. In order to address the first aspect, methodological nationalism, the concept of entanglements as coined by Shalini Randeria (and Sebastian Conrad) seems to be of interest. To pay attention to the intertwined character of “entangled histories of uneven modernities” promises to provide a wider framework of global (and local) interrelations for a hemispheric perspective; I will then in a second step propose an intersectional perspectivization (or: sensitization) in order to consider the simultaneous articulation of different axes of stratification also on the micro level. It is therefore important to take the historicity, that is, the making and becoming of, and thus the constructed and processual character of, such places and spaces into account and in particular the power dynamics at work and the asymmetries produced thereby.

To further address the (more structural) level of epistemological Occidentalism – or the Coloniality of Knowledge – a decolonial perspectivization might prove helpful. Such a perspective enables us to include the historical dimension as well as the structural and historically produced character of colonially and ongoing power asymmetries at once. A critical Occidentalist perspective which brings into view and focuses on the privileged side as proposed by Critical Whiteness studies might be useful in the endeavor of the critical reflection and decolonization of American Studies as we know it – that is, as rooted in and marked by the colonial power hierarchies inscribed in the disciplination, segregation, and hierarchization of knowledges expressed in its orientation on nation-states, national languages, and national cultures/imagined communities and the respective loci of enunciation as expressed in the conceptualization of “Ares Studies”.

Promising concepts such as José David Saldívar's "Trans-Americanity" and many of his decolonial peers do not take gender into account as a central dimension. It is in such omissions especially, that I see the necessity for a combinatory approach or methodology. As I will elaborate on later, auspicious decolonial feminist and queer approaches are oftentimes treated as separate or additional fields. Such omissions become suspiciously reminiscent of the old quarrel over *Hauptwiderspruch*/principal contradiction and *Nebenwiderspruch*/side contradiction in Marxist discourses, which usually agreed on subsuming gender hierarchies as subordinate to class hierarchies. An intersectional lens on inequalities might serve as a decisive corrective towards thinking in different axes of oppression, not as additive or subordinated to one another, but as mutually constitutive and simultaneously articulated, though in different ways and in different contexts.

Before I will return to the importance of an intersectional gender take in decolonizing American Studies, let me shortly discuss the historical becoming of the concept of *America*. I will then briefly introduce and discuss the concept of Americanity (rather than "America" as a quasi-neutral geographical entity) as a unit of analysis for hemispheric American Studies interested in a power and hegemony critical project. In the following, I will elaborate on a genealogy of the name and concept "America" from a gender perspective as I consider it crucial for an Entangled American approach in order to place the related naturalized inequalities under scrutiny.

"Americus meets America": Colonization as En-Gendering

The very name "America" to refer to the regions between the North pole and Tierra de Fuego goes back to a colonial appropriation: it is the female version of Italian seafarer Américo Vespucci's (1454-1512) first name who is supposed to have been the first in 1501 to circle the Brazilian coast and to refer to the conquered spaces as a new continent. This feminization of the name suggests that the colonial project is built upon an implicit gender dimension and the colonial hierarchy justified and made intelligible through racialized gender hierarchies. [4] Many travel narratives of the Conquest equate the colonization of continents with the domination of the female body via the gaze as a medium of penetration and appropriation. [5] Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) already described the conquered spaces in specifically gendered terms. Anne McClintock accordingly speaks of Columbus' "breast fantasies" (McClintock 1995).

The following table provides a schematic overview of the different phases of colonization as en-gendering, racialization and alienation from an intersectional world-system perspective:

Time	Global Design	Racialization / Ethnicization	En-Gendering	<i>Ver-Fremdung</i> [Alienation]	Binary Opposition
16 th -17 th Century	Christian Mission	Spatial	New World as Virgin	»People without Religion«	Christians vs. Barbarians
18 th -19 th Century	Civilization Mission	Temporal	The Exotic is Female	»People without History«	Civilized vs. Primitives
20 th Century	Development	Spatial / Temporal	Tradition is Passivity	Underdeveloped People	Developed vs. Underdeveloped
21 st Century	Global Market	Spatial / Temporal	The Local is Irrational	Undemocratic People / Regimes	Democratic vs. Undemocratic

Boatcă 2009 (cf. Mignolo 2000, Grosfoguel 2006, Shiwiy 2007, translation JR)

Theodor Galle's copperplate engraving *America* from 1580 provides one of the earliest and most well-known examples envisioning the colonial encounter as such an – intrinsically asymmetrical – encounter between two genders. 'America' is depicted in a primitivizing manner as a bare-breasted Amazon in a hammock while her European 'visitor' is fully and elegantly dressed:



Theodor Galle, "Americus meets America", copper engraving, 1580

Americus carries a flag, with a cross and a compass – from a Eurocentric perspective representing the powerful insignia of state, (Christian) religion and science, of civilization and superiority, which

authorize him as narrator of the single story of the conquest. The encounter is a structurally unequal one, as Europa, who would be the counterpart of America is nowhere visible. Marisa Belasteguigoitia Rius argues that in this drawing, America opens her mouth attempting to speak to the European conqueror, but is refused to reply and silenced. “To colonize,” Belausteguigoitia points out, “is to freeze response.” [6] The colonization of spaces and bodies is accordingly closely connected to questions on who can reply and what counts as an answer. The long trajectory of colonization as en-gendering brings into view a multi-layered hierarchy of gender positions: as the copper engraving indicates, the conquered spaces and their inhabitants were feminized and thereby downgraded. Indigenous masculinity was thereby turned into an abject, non-sufficient masculinity according to European standards, exploitable and in need for European guidance and civilization. While Gabriele Dietze speaks of a “racial quartet” (around the ‘pyramid’ white men – white women – black men – black women) at play in the “counter-productive competition between race and gender politics” (Dietze 2013: n.p., my translation) for the US-American context, the Latin American regions have been marked at least by a “racial sextet” (white men – white women – indigenous men – indigenous women – black men – black women). In fact this holds true also for the US, where the Native populations have completely left out of the picture, in a similar way as black Latin Americans for a long time in the South. In the late 19th century, the male-female dichotomy between Europe and “America” depicted in the copper engraving can be found in numerous cartoons which depict the USA as powerful masculine “Uncle Sam” and the Latin American republics as women (or blacks and/or children respectively, see Johnson 1980). The dimension en-gendering of colonial hierarchies is crucial for examining entangled histories and inequalities in the Americas. A respective sensitization is hence required in order to take this structural basis of constructions and narrations of hierarchies and Othering in and about the Americas into account.

Based on the conviction of the superiority of European technologies and knowledge productions, naming practices as expressed in the – deeply en-gendered – term “America” and from the 19th century later also “Latin America” made pre-existing names and concepts invisible. [7] The naming was an expression of the brutal appropriation and marginalization of the conquered inhabitants and their cultures. By transferring the names and concepts to colonial geographic (world) maps, Occidental geopolitics established them as presumably “neutral”, a-historical geographic entities, which could reproduce “reality”. They contributed to ensuring the position of telling the “single stories” of the newly conquered spaces and people and of the Conquest itself. As Mignolo has underscored: “The ‘idea’ of America was indeed a European invention that took away the naming of the continent from people that had inhabited the land for many centuries before Columbus ‘discovered’ it” (Mignolo 2005, 21). Octavio Paz has famously elaborated on the imaginary function

but also the related colonial power of the concept of America, which he defines rather as a discourse than a geographic entity:

[L]o que llamamos América [...] [n]o es una region geográfica, no es tampoco un pasado y, acaso, ni siquiera un presente. Es una idea, una invención del espíritu europeo. América es una utopía, es decir, es el momento en el que el espíritu europeo se universaliza, se desprende de sus particularidades históricas y se concibe a sí mismo como una idea universal que, casi milagrosamente, encarna y se afianza en una tierra y un tiempo preciso: el porvenir. (Paz 183)

[What we call America is no geographic region, neither is it a past and, maybe, not even a present. It's an idea, an invention of the European spirit. America is a utopia, that is, it the moment in which the European spirit universalizes itself. Uncouples itself from its historical particularities and conceives of itself like a universal idea, which, almost magically embodies and settles down at a land and a precise time: the future. [Translation JR]

In Wallerstein and Quijano's words, then, this idea of futurity and newness became associated with the United States, and all other American regions were positioned at another temporal and spatial level as expressed in terms like "developing" countries or "traditional cultures" or disciplines like "American Studies" or "Latin American Studies" as separated from "anthropology" which was dedicated to study everything that did not belong to and was not included in this "newness".

It was supposed to better incarnate "newness" and be more "modern". The US constituted itself as a nation at the same time as it was developing a dominant role as a hegemonic power, and, based on the doctrine of the "Manifest Destiny", started to impose a "quasi-protectorate" (as Quijano and Wallerstein have it) over the countries of the Caribbean and Central America (556) which played a geopolitical key role for the rich countries of the so-called global North. The term "America" is today usually used synonymously with the United States in hegemonic contexts. This use of the term expresses the shift in the power dynamics from the East-West (Europe vs. the Americas) to the North-South (USA vs. Latin America) axis of power, starting with the final decline of Spain as a colonial power at the end of the 19th century. With related increases in economic, military and cultural-political hegemony after independence in the 19th century, the US became increasingly perceived as diverging from Latin America.

Not coincidentally, the patriotic anthems "God Bless America" and "God Save America" as well as the presidential phrase "God Bless America" to end a public speech explicitly relate to the USA: Further, 'America' (as USA) is often used as demarcation from a hostile "Other": During the Cold War, there was a House Committee for "Un-American Activities" (HUAC), and after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the TV channel CNN first broadcasted the headline "America Under Attack" and shortly afterwards "America's New War."

In spoken language, there is usually a distinction between North America (USA, Canada, Mexico) and South America, Mexico and the South and Central American states. The Spanish speaking states of the Caribbean (Cuba, Dominican Republic, partly also Haiti) are often also subsumed under the term “Latin America” due to their official languages. The Caribbean is geographically officially independent, but the English, French and Dutch speaking countries are oftentimes subsumed under the umbrella term “Latin America “ as well, when it is about underscoring their economic “underdevelopment” in order to thus confirm and reconstruct once again the US American and/or Western European standard. [8] Simultaneously, the “epistemic violence” acted out thereby served to establish the “homo oeconomicus” as a norm (beyond cultural particularities), while pathologizing all other subjects who would impede profit maximation as “backwards” or “underdeveloped.” (see Castro-Gómez 2007).

The countries perceived as developing countries or “threshold countries” from a European perspective, require the prefix “South” “Central” or “Latin” Americas, and they do not have the same prototypical position. The former European colony of the United States hence becomes one of the few states to become a significant imperial power. Significantly, in the US, only US citizens of European origin are referred to simply as ‘*Americans*’. US citizens of South American origin are referred to as *Latinos* and *Latinas*; if they have a Mexican background as *Chicanos* or *Chicanas*. In turn, citizens of the countries South of the USA count as ‘*Mexicans*’, ‘*Ecuadorians*’ or ‘*Chileans*’.

The term “Latin America” came up in the colonial context of European claims of power and conquest. It was first used by Torres Caicedo (a representative of the European exile elite) in 1856 in order to underscore European roots and thereby appear superior. [9] The term “Latin America” was meant to highlight the Latin (and, implicitly, white) cultural-linguistic origins of the Creole inhabitants. In this way, the term subsumes the inhabitants of the thus constructed continent as descendants of a “Latin” European tradition. The manifold languages and cultures of *Pueblos Originarios* of the thus named territories and Afro-“Latin”-American traditions were thereby structurally excluded. *Latinité* became early on associated with a culturally superior *race latine*, racialized and naturalized respectively. A further function of the term “Latin America” and the described related concept has been the demarcation from “Anglo Saxon America” and the US’s growing attempts of expansion. However, while the Criole elites were considered privileged in the South American territories in comparison to the Afro-“Latin” American inhabitants and the *Pueblos Originarios*, from the viewpoint of the European metropolis and the Anglo-Saxon colonies, however, they still counted as subordinated. José Martí’s famously turned “Latin” America into a strategic “Our America” aiming at a politics of solidarity between the formerly colonized against US supremacy and Eurocentrism. He located the discourse on the two unequal Americas as legacies of Spanish colonialism and US imperialism. Since the time of independence, “Latin” America

according to Mignolo became a site for critical reflection for intellectual decolonization (Mignolo 2005, 45 and 91). From the 1960s on liberation movements and dependency theorists initiated a radical shift in the idea of Latin America.

From the Conquest on, *Pueblos Originarios* have resisted the European violence, appropriations and one-sided representations – which the absence of America’s story as told by herself in Galle’s copper engraving indicates. However, it was only in the course of the 500th anniversary of the Conquest in 1992 that numerous revisions of the Eurocentric history of discovery began to reach wider attention – increasingly also from hegemonic perspectives. More and more activists, organizations of *Pueblos Originarios* and political joint/solidary groups more visibly and collectively started to organize and resist the century-long appropriation and domination. These groups fought for their land rights and the recognition of their own cultural values and traditions. In the year 1975, the *Consejo Mundial de Pueblos Indígenas* (CMPI) was founded, a worldwide non-state union of communities of *Pueblos Originarios* in the regions termed as ‘America(s),’ South Pacific and Scandinavia (opening a truly transnational scope). Instead of “Latin America,” the CMPI suggested to use the term Abya-Yala as a self-designation. Abya-Yala in Kuna refers to the entire “American” continent; the Kuna had used the term already before the Conquest. Aymara-speaker Takir Mamani suggested using the term Abya-Yala in official documents and declarations. He has emphasized the problematic character of naming in the colonial context: “Llamar con un nombre extranjero nuestras ciudades, pueblos y continentes equivale a someter nuestra identidad a la voluntad de nuestros invasores y a la de sus herederos” (NativeWeb: “Abya Yala Net.” In: URL: <http://www.abayala.native-web.org/>) [To call our cities, people and continents by a foreign name equals to subsume our identity to the intention of our invaders and their heroes. (Translation JR)]. The continuous power to name and define Mamani mentions here indicates that the critical and academic parameters have largely remained structured along the lines of historically produced national boundaries and the respective hierarchies.

The coexistence of diverse traditions, practices, and histories, and the overlapping and interdependent nature of political and cultural phenomena and disciplines has rarely been discussed as entanglements. A focus on entanglements past and present might help bring into view the interrelations, dialectics, inequalities and subordinations. In a second step, I will elaborate on the similarities and parallels between a focus on entanglements and an intersectional gender approach to connect the macro and micro dimensions of transnational (and Trans-American) social stratification.

1st Angle: Hemispheric American Entanglements // Entangled Inequalities

In 1999 Shalini Randeria coined the notion of *entangled histories* (of uneven modernities) as a historical concept of transcultural relations. [10] The concept goes back to Sidney Mintz's elaboration on the history of sugar as a decisive factor for power structures between the European colonial nations and the colonies (Mintz 1986). This notion seems to provide a helpful frame for conceptualizing new categories of analysis and new epistemes, because of its historical dimension and the attention to historically produced and persistent colonial asymmetries. Based on the idea of a "shared and divided" history, the notion of entangled histories focuses on the interrelations and exchanges between the regions of the world. The approach examines the interconnectedness and intertwining of different regions, while accentuating that not only the colonizing countries had an impact to the colonized regions, but that the transfer has been happening vice versa as well. However, such exchanges were often marked by structural asymmetries and inequalities. [11]

The concept aims at rendering problematic the notion that Europe/the West would have developed independently from the "rest" of the world. On the contrary, Randeria and Conrad (2002; 2014) argue that the evolving contours of a transnational postcolonial world order are still marked by imperial and colonial legacies as expressed in an ongoing Eurocentrism. Randeria and Conrad point out that Eurocentrism provides the "constitutive geoculture" of the modern world (Randeria, et al. 12; cf. Wallerstein). The capitalist world system, on which according to World System theorist Immanuel Wallerstein Eurocentrism is based, is no European invention. Rather, it is a formation that depended on forces from the outside such as colonies. Thus, the figure of the world system already implies the global scale of the formation of the modern world. And it is here that critical approaches on space can tie in: current geopolitics and body-politics continue to be based on the assumption that the "West" and the related paradigms and epistemes (such as "democracy", "nation-state", or "modernity") are superior and unproblematically transferable to other spaces and places. Even though this model is characteristic for European and North American societies, it provides the model of organization for histories and social formations for *all* societies. Further, Randeria and Conrad problematize the separation of different times and different regions into different disciplines, for they avoided creating a methodological space for the multi-faceted relations and interdependencies between different geographical regions. As they argue, the focus on colonial interactions does not offer a coherent map, but temporally and spatially differing constellations (Randeria, et al. 39).

Randeria hence promotes a conceptualization of history of entanglement – or, rather, history as entanglement (Randeria, et al. 17) – in order to think new forms of connectedness. Such a notion is framed by a postcolonial perspective which avoids exchanging the essentialism of “Western” discourse with alternative essentialisms. Further, differing scales of entanglements at different times and in different places and spaces are of importance, as well as the related ruptures, boundaries, and particularities. The model of entangled histories aims at generating not only new answers, but also new questions in the direction of the “genealogy of a globalized present” (42) based on alternative visions and practices on a transnational scale which contribute to a ‘counter-hegemonic globalization’ and new forms of collective action (3; cf. de Sousa Santos). She considers it as important to take asymmetries into account, as the pure existence or marcation of entanglement does not imply reciprocity of relations. An intersectional gender focus – stemming from an understanding of addressing and fighting “interlocking systems of oppression” as the Combahee River Collective (1979) had it – goes in the same direction and might thus be a fruitful corrective in order to include a gender dimension.

Such a perspective requires the consideration of differences as power structures and taking the asymmetrical and dynamic character of transnational and transcultural entanglements in their historical and spatial dimension into account. Sérgio Costa’s elaborations on “entangled inequalities” might provide a valid starting point in this direction. Costa’s (2011) concept of entangled inequalities refers to the global linkages between social categorizations that determine social inequalities, which create asymmetries between positions of certain individuals or groups of individuals in a relationally (not spatially) determined context (such as economic positions and/or political and legal entitlements). Costa considers it thus important to link social and transregional aspects with historical ones as relevant factors for inequalities. A categorization can be advantageous in one context (e.g. quota) and disadvantageous in another (e.g. discourse, patterns of conviviality). Costa sees a strong necessity of relational units of analysis that are dynamically defined in the process of inquiry itself. However, Costa argues, the interplay of social categorizations cannot be articulated *ex ante* in a formula, but only be examined in the respective specific context. The conceptualization of entangled inequalities can serve as a dynamic unit of analysis, enabling us to take up the interdependencies between social categorizations and between different regions of the world. Further, Costa emphasizes that the examination of interrelated regimes of inequality over time allowing for the consideration of the historical construction of inequalities. I will in the following argue that an intersectional sensitization to a transnational approach to entangled inequalities might prove productive to that end. It serves in order to avoid the one-dimensional concept of inequalities turning simply into a kind of “class struggle on a global scale” or a “global version of class” without accounting for the numerous

feminist and postcolonial interventions that have happened since Marx, which are often rendered invisible or marginal in classical social science approaches to inequality. In order to further avoid the aforementioned hierarchization of different axes of stratification into the aforementioned binary between *Hauptwiderspruch* (principal contradiction) and *Nebenwiderspruch* (side contradiction) an intersectional framing of elaborations on entanglements and entangled inequalities seems crucial.

2nd Angle: Hemispheric American Intersectionalities

In Europe and the United States, “intersectionality” has recently become a widespread and celebrated concept in feminist and gender studies, and ultimately also in the social sciences in general. The concept has been transferred and travelled to numerous different contexts and spaces, and means different things at different places and for different actors. Generally, approaches dedicated to an intersectional perspective examine how various axes of stratification mutually construct one another and how inequalities are articulated through and connected with differences. An intersectional perspective always takes a multidimensional character, the entanglements, the analogies and simultaneities of various axes of stratification into account, rather than examining gender, race, class, nation, etc. as distinct social hierarchies. Accordingly, research carried out from such a perspective considers every constellation as “always already” marked by various factors, for example, race and racial hierarchization/racist exclusion as “always also” and “always already” defined by other dimensions of inequality such as gender, sexuality, social class, citizenship, or religion. An intersectional perspective considers constellations furthermore as differing from locality to locality and from context to context. An intersectional perspectivization hence aims at giving due diligence to the structural and simultaneous entanglement(s) of different axes of inequality.

The term “intersectionality” was originally coined by African American lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw for a concrete juridical context: to make visible the double discrimination experienced by black female American ex-employees of the car firm General Motors who had been made invisible by existing juridical terms. General Motors did hire blacks, but they were all male; the firm also hired women, but these, in turn, were all white, thus the black women could neither make a claim on the basis of racial discrimination, nor on the basis of gender discrimination. Long before, African American feminist activist groups such as or *Mulheres Negras* in Brazil (1975), or the *Combahee River Collective* (1979) in the US had insisted on the need to fight the “interlocking systems of

oppression.” Such interventions stand in a tradition of resistance to dominant discourses and the negotiation of representative rights. Right after the French Revolution of 1789, the revolutionaries who built the first independent Latin American state in Saint-Domingue (today Haiti) pointed at the contradiction between ideas of human rights and freedom, and the system of institutionalized enslavement. Around the same time feminists like Olympe de Gouges (1791) and Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) highlighted that the presumed newly introduced “human rights” were limited to white male citizens. At the Women’s’ Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, USA, in 1851, Sojourner Truth in her speech “A’in’t I a Woman?” questioned the universality of white bourgeois feminism by pointing at her intersectional experience as a black (and formerly enslaved) female worker. In her statement, Truth anticipated the problem of differences between women and the entanglement of different axes of stratification such as class, racialization and gender by opposing the presumed universal and collective female experience with her subjective personal experience. [12] Counter-narratives such as counter-chronicles (for instance Guaman Poma de Ayala’s *Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*), women’s autobiographies, slave narratives or testimonios build a long trajectory of resistant story telling from the Conquest onward (see Roth 2012). In Chandra Mohanty’s words,

“[T]he recognition of subalternized forms of knowledge such as (women’s) testimonios, essays, or autobiographies as valid epistemic contribution; [...] storytelling or autobiography [...] [provides] a discourse of oppositional consciousness and agency. (Mohanty 2003, 84)

It is important to note, then, that intersectionality is itself embedded in processes of knowledge circulation and “travelling theories” and the related asymmetrical power hierarchies that define what counts as “legitimate” (scientific/academic/discursive) knowledge, and who can speak as an expert and is authorized to produce and define such “legitimate” knowledge. An analysis of interdependent inequalities dedicated to an intersectional understanding must thus reflect its own positionality and situatedness within the dynamics of global knowledge circulations in an unequal world. Such a self-critical positioning provides an enriching framing also for American Studies.

Understood as a frame for epistemic sensitization, an intersectional approach might serve for taking into account the respective varying and context-specific interlocking dimensions of stratification and inequality. It might thus serve as a valid tool for processes of transnationality, migration, citizenship, and, more generally, changing conceptualizations of nationhood, as well as the dynamics by which these dimensions mutually intertwine and constitute each other as in the Americas. Anne McClintock (1995) has coined the term of “articulated categories” such as race and gender in colonial contexts. Transnational interdependent feminist approaches taking into account the interrelations and structural analogies of gender hierarchies with colonial and racial hierarchies and their structural entanglements in the global economy might provide a useful complementary framing. This is true in particular for their insistence on the need to embed feminist

struggles within a critique of capitalism (see e.g. Anzaldúa 1987, Mies 1986, Mohanty 2003a and 2003b) and seek ways of transnational feminist solidarity across differences in the vein of Gayatri Spivak's notion of a "strategic essentialism" or Judith Butler's (1992) elaborations on the necessity of "contingent foundations." Furthermore, the concept of "intersectionality" as it has been discussed predominantly in European feminist circles is problematic, because when applied regardless of concrete contexts, the concept runs the risk of re-inscribing privileged positions and *loci* of knowledge and theory production. The concept itself needs decolonization in order to pay credit to practices and theoretizations in the same vein, but not labeled under the same heading, which have been part of non-hegemonic African American, Chicana and Amerafrican feminisms in the Americas for a long time (see e.g. Anzaldúa 1987, Castillo et.al. 2009, Espinosa Damián 2009, 2010 and 2011, López-Springfield 1997). An intersectional perspectivization might accordingly serve also for a productive critique on the considerable and often uncritically accepted asymmetries of knowledge production and circulation – of which the concept is itself part. Therefore, to assure this function, a decolonial sensitization provides a further – and/or simultaneous – useful corrective methodology:

3rd Angle: Decoloniality in the Americas

Decolonial perspectives are based on the coloniality/modernity paradigm. Coloniality – other than colonialism, which describes a concrete historical era of imperialist expansion while coloniality describes the persistent structural power asymmetries created thereby – is thus considered as a structural world design closely intertwined with capitalist expansion. Coloniality is hence understood as the underside and the precondition of Modernity, not its outcome. Further, coloniality is a regime of domination of knowledge production and circulation which situates the colonized as the 'object' of study, and then makes such couplings invisible and destroys them. A decolonial approach aims to empower the marginalized and objectified and to get rid of the underlying matrix of power that endlessly reproduces the related hierarchies and is expressed also in current regimes of academic disciplines and theory writing. American Studies and Latin American Studies are no exclusion. [13]

A common misunderstanding has it that decolonial thinking is often considered as being opposed to postcolonial approaches. On the contrary, decolonial thinking elaborates on postcolonial theories by shifting the perspective to other times, places and paradigms. Both approaches aim to

critique and overcome colonial legacies. I chose a decolonial lens here, because the respective theorists have elaborated more on the Americas.

Decolonial thinking (not very different from postcolonial approaches) is first and foremost a political project. It is based on the conviction that in spite of administrative independence, there is a strong necessity for epistemic, political, economic decolonization. Decolonial thinking is hence based on the concept of the described structural *Coloniality* of power and knowledge and the notion that coloniality has been constitutive for European modernity and Eurocentrism (or Occidentalism).

Moreover, decolonial thinking provides a theoretical *perspective*. However, in contrast to postcolonial studies, which has found its way into numerous curricula and institutes, decolonial thinkers usually oppose becoming something like “decolonial studies”, as this would entail becoming part of the asymmetrical system they seek to overcome (this might also be an aspect from whence a misunderstanding stems, when decolonial thinkers refuse to provide coherent theories or talks which others could apply and exploit). Following the initial attempt of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, who claimed that Latin America had been absent from the map of postcolonial thinking, decolonial thinking focuses on Iberian Colonialism since 1492. Fernando Coronil in his path-breaking text “Latin American postcolonial studies and global decolonization” poses the problem of the absence of a corpus of Latin American postcolonial studies as “a problem not of studies on Latin America, but between postcolonial and Latin American studies“, and approaches the discussion of postcolonial studies in the Americas “by reflecting the relationship between these two bodies of knowledge” (Coronil 2013). Such a critical reflection seems also productive for American Studies and Inter-American Studies endeavors dedicated to a decolonial aim. As a consequence, Coronil pleads for pluralizing “colonialism – to recognize its multiple forms as the product of a common historical process of Western expansion” and for treating capitalism and modernity as

a global process involving the expansion of Christendom, the formation of a global market and the creation of transcontinental empires since the sixteenth century. A dialogue between Latin American and postcolonial studies ought not to be polarizing, and might range over local histories and global designs, texts and their material contexts, and subjective formations and structures of domination. (...) (T)actical postcolonialisms serves to open up established academic knowledge towards open-ended liberatory possibilities (...) in order to decolonize knowledge and build a genuinely democratic world. (Coronil 2013)

From a decolonial perspective, the European Conquest is taken to be the initiator of the structural Coloniality of power, based on the Modernity/Coloniality paradigm. Eurocentrism (Occidentalism) is hence considered a result of European colonialism. Decolonial approaches go back to anticolonial thinkers (e.g. José Martí, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire) liberation theorists (e.g. Enrique Dussel)

and World System theorists (e.g. Immanuel Wallerstein, Aníbal Quijano) as well as to Border Thinking as introduced by Chicana feminists. Such a decolonial perspective requires an epistemic de-linking (see Mignolo 2009) and (self-critique) of those privileged by coloniality of power. A perspective of a strategic “critique of Occidentalism” (Dietze 2010) might be a further useful angle for that matter:

Critique of Occidentalism in the Americas

According to Coronil the concept of Occidentalism describes the condition of possibility for Orientalism (the construction of the exoticized Other) as

the expression of a constitutive relationship between Western representations of cultural difference and worldwide Western dominance (...). (T)he ensemble of representational practices that participate in the production of conceptions of the world, which 1) separate the world’s components into bounded units; 2) disaggregate their relational histories; 3) turn difference into hierarchy; 4) naturalize these representations; and thus 5) intervene, however unwittingly, in the reproduction of existing asymmetrical power relations.

(Coronil 1996, 57)

Based on Coronil’s notion, the concept of a critique of Occidentalism [14] follows the gesture of Critical Whiteness to shift the critical gaze from “the observers to the observed” (as Toni Morrison has it), or, from the colonized to the colonizers and the process of colonization. A perspectization in the sense of a critique of Occidentalism contextualizes knowledge and requires a re-thinking of dominating regimes of knowledge production, circulation and evaluation. Further, it aims at the critical reflection of one’s own locus of knowledge production and the choice of categories or axes chosen has to be explained – also in relation to the categories not set center stage. It is in this vein that I see epistemic Occidentalism – as the continuing predominance of Western/Occidentalist, knowledges, theories and paradigms – at work. A perspectization of Hemispheric American Studies in the sense of critical Occidentalism helps to critically reflect and eventually reduce this hegemony. [15] Moreover, such a sensitization renders the oftentimes unquestioned position of the researcher problematic and points at the danger of re-inscribing knowledge asymmetries. An approach critical of the hegemony also forces researchers 1) to render their own position problematic, include the invisibilized (white/Occidental/heteronormative) norm and the related paradigms, languages, publications, genres, formats, of what counts as theory/knowledge in their reflections and put them under scrutiny, and, 2) to consider contributions which have been excluded by this very logic towards multiple stories of the Americas. The politics of the dominance

of English-language publications and peer-review journals and the fact that predominantly texts by writers whose texts are written in or translated into English are highly problematic points in the Inter-American context. Coronil respectively emphasizes the necessity to “involve not only self-reflection (...), or granting subjectivity to the subject studied (...) but the integration of these two analytical endeavors into one unified intellectual project directed at countering this unequal, colonizing relationship” (Coronil 2013). A decolonial perspectivization can provide a helpful tool in the endeavor to decolonize established notions of knowledge production and create a more complex and less hierarchical approach to grasp the multi-level and transregional interactions of social divisions. However, as I have mentioned in the beginning of this paper, even though building on insights stemming from Chicana and transnational feminism, decolonial approaches for the most part lack an intrinsic (intersectional) gender dimension. As Escobar emphasizes, “the treatment of gender by the MC group so far has been inadequate in the best of cases (...) an engagement with feminism and environmentalism would be fruitful in terms of thinking the non-discursive side of social action.” (191-2). It is therefore necessary to bring decolonial approaches into a more explicit dialogue with transnational intersectional and queer perspectives in order to then provide a framing for an (Hemispheric/inter-)American Studies, which is able to grasp a greater spectrum of complexities.

Towards a Politics of Intersectional Entanglements: Some Recent Approaches

Numerous recent studies have provided insightful alternative conceptualizations of spaces and units of analysis, which might serve as examples for new American Studies approaches indebted to a decolonial framing interested in “changing the terms of the conversation” as well. However, it remains clear that concrete methodologies can only be drawn from the concrete contexts and cases they are applied to, and thus out of “the material at hand”. A decolonial intersectional framing or sensitization, however, is likely to change the epistemological horizon and hence questions asked of/to the material and the researcher’s self-positioning in relation to it and the modes and institutions of knowledge production and circulation. The following examples shall serve as a sort of starting point for respective further projects:

En-gendering Decoloniality: The Marginalized Legacy of Chicana Feminism

One of the founding texts of Chicana feminism is Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La frontera. The New Mestiza*. The book is written in three languages interchangeably (English, Spanish, Nahuatl) and thus confronts the reader with the traps and gaps of translation and intercultural encounters also on a formal level. The text leaves the reader with an “intranslatable remainder”, which is paradigmatic for encounters, constellations and experiences at the crossroads, or border, of

different concepts and axes of stratification. Anzaldúa's concept of a border space or *borderland* describes at the same time the concrete physical territory between Mexico and the US and the fragmented, hybrid Mestiza identity which Anzaldúa designs for herself as Mexican lesbian woman for ambiguous spaces and identities between the established binary categories. Anzaldúa further introduced the concept of *Nepantla* (*border crossing*), which defines a space and a speaking position for hitherto marginalized Chicana and Latina voices. Simultaneously, *Nepantla* stands for a new epistemology, as this quote indicates:

[*Nepantla* is] the Nahuatl [Aztec] word for the space between two bodies of water, the space between two words. It is a limited space, a space where you are not this or that but where you are changing (...) – you are in a kind of transition. [...] It is very awkward, uncomfortable and frustrating to be in that *Nepantla* because you are in the midst of transformation. (...) *Nepantla* is a way of reading the world. You see behind the veil and you see these scraps. Also it is a way of creating knowledge and writing a philosophy. (Anzaldúa 237) [16]

A decolonial agenda is interested in such an epistemological shift. Its aim is a critique of Occidentalism, taking *Transmodernity* – the overcoming of the power logics inherent of European modernity – as its goal. [17] Her *Nepantla* concept can help to critically reflect also inequalities and asymmetries on the level of knowledge and theory production and circulation and to think alternative and more inclusive ways of thinking and conceptualizing the Americas. Octavio Paz' notion of "America" as "an invention of the European spirit [...] the moment in which the European spirit universalizes, separates itself from its historical particularities and conceives itself as universal (...): the future" (Paz 1950, 183) quoted earlier provides the basic of the critique of José David Saldívar's term and concept of "Trans-Americanity" in his book by the same title. Saldívar elaborates on an article entitled "Americanity as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World-System" (1992) by dependency theorists Quijano and Wallerstein. Quijano and Wallerstein take an implicitly entangled perspective and hence follow the main argument that "[t]he Americas were not incorporated into an already existing capitalist world-economy. There could not have been a capitalist world-economy without the Americas" (549). Such an understanding brings into view the mutual influences, interdependencies and interchanges between the spaces. Saldívar hence introduces the concept of Trans-Americanity as a way to contest U.S. American (and "Western"/Occidental) hegemony on knowledge, epistemic and cultural production (in the Americas) controlled by the cultural industry and academe as expressed in Quijano and Wallerstein's notion of Americanity as a logic of domination marked by structural racism and coloniality. Like many of his peers, Saldívar leaves gender out as a central dimension. As I have argued, it is in such a decolonial and intersectional omissions especially that I see the necessity for a combinatory approach. Such an approach brings into view the necessity of other than the

established units of analysis tied to certain conceptualizations of nationality, identity, culture, but also hybridity, difference and diversity.

Fernando Coronil (1996) in his illuminating essay “Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Non-Imperial Geohistorical Categories” examines the interaction of history and geography and promotes redrawing the “imperial maps” of modernity, on which – according to Coronil – time was “frozen” in space (as expressed in notions of “progressive” and “backwards” locations, “modern” and “non-modern” societies, or “developed” and “underdeveloped” regions – a notion that becomes pretty obvious in phrases like Latin America as “the backyard of the United States”. He argues:

This spatialization of time serves as the location of new social movements, as well as of new targets of imperial control; it expands the realm of imperial subjection, but also of political contestation. [...] Collective identities are being defined in fragmented places that cannot be mapped with antiquated categories. The emergence of new relationships between history and geography may permit us to develop a critical geography and to abandon worn imperial maps shaded in black and white. (Coronil 1996, 80)

A further example is Ella Shohat and Robert Stam’s “multichronotopic” perspective, which takes the simultaneity of different temporal and spatial conjunctions into account and focuses on the use of an “intercolonial” framing to cope with the “multiple dimensions of these transnational/translational intersections” (xv). In a critical self-reflective decolonial stance, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam remind us, the “Anglo-Saxon/Latinist cultural dichotomy [...] that still haunts the race/colonialism debates” (xv) Such a sensitization is of major relevance with regard to texts, theories, institutions, publications, and canons alike, and for an Inter-American or Hemispheric American perspective especially. They are interested in “the ‘transversalities,’ or the hierarchical and lateral syncretism and dialogism taking place across national spaces” (xx). Such a framing is also essential for (and could inspire?) conceptualizations of Entangled Americas. It might thus be at the crossroads and intersections of notions (in varying combinations) or angles such as Entanglements / Entangled Histories, Inequalities / Entangled Inequalities, Intersectionalities (of simultaneous and interlocking axes of stratification), Decoloniality (de-linking), Critique of Occidentalism (self-)critique of hegemony) that useful framings for Hemispheric American approaches dedicated to critique of domination emerge.

The histories of the Americas show that transnational processes are in no way new and specific to 20th century processes of globalization as the calling out of a “transnational turn” suggests. Such a narrow view neglects the colonial history that brought America into being in the first place. This narrative ignores spaces like the Caribbean which have been transnational for at least five centuries – and not necessarily voluntarily. Moreover, such a view suggests that there had been no

transnational exchange before (thereby also emphasizing the fantasy of national “container” cultures in Europe untouched by migration and encounters). Thus, the history of transnationality has to be understood at least as dialectical, as Shohat and Stam remind us, when they point out that “[s]lavery too was transnational, and Atlantic waters harbor the corpses of the enslaved thrown overboard” (Shohat and Stam xx).

Further, approaches like that of Ana Ester Ceceña, who proposes “El Gran Caribe” as “Umbral de la geopolítica mundial” as a unit of analysis or Paul Gilroy’s notion of a “Black Atlantic” point in a similar direction by proposing alternative analytical categories, and Stefan Rinke (2012) defines the shared history of the USA and Latin America as one “between spaces”. Michael Zeuske’s global history of Slavery (2013), which refers to “slaveries” in plural form and puts oceans instead of nation states and transculturations center stage provides a further example of a useful transnational approach which a Hemispheric American approach could draw on. And Luz María Martínez Montiel’s two-volume book *Afroamérica* (2006 and 2012) is very insightful for the Americas especially, as she includes the topics afrodescendants, enslavement and resistances in Canada, the US, Mexico, Central America, Guatemala and Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, the Caribbeans (Martínez Montiel refers to the British Caribbean, the Spanish Caribbean, the francophone Caribbean and the Dutch Caribbean), Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.

However, an intersectional gender dimension so crucial for bringing micro and macro levels into a dialogue is nowhere foregrounded in the mentioned examples. The work of Black, Chicana and transnational and decolonial feminisms (see e.g. Anzaldúa 1987, López-Springfield 1997, Rubiera Castillo/Martriatu 2011, Hull/Bell Scott/Christian 1982, Christian 1987, Suárez Návaz/Hernández, 2008, Mohanty 2003, Lugones 2009 and 2010) provides excellent examples for that matter, as Belausteguigoitia emphasizes:

“En el centro de esa confrontación de binarios, el sistema de género funciona como una lógica organizadora que impone un orden simbólico donde priva la exclusión, la segregación, la discriminación, la necesidad de inferiorizar, desconocer, controlar y, con demasiada frecuencia, incluso eliminar al otro. Por eso ha resultado tan iluminadora la perspectiva de los feminismos de las mujeres ‘de color’; los que discurren desde la subalteridad, desde la periferia, desde la doble discriminación, o la triple o inclusive cuádruple [...] para traer al centro de la discusión esas ‘sutiles’ diferencias que al feminismo metropolitano se le escapan te manera tan natural.” (10)

[In the center of this confrontation of binaries, the gender system functions like an organizing logic which imposes a symbolic order in where exclusion, segregation,

discrimination, the necessity to inferiorize, deny, control and, much too frequently, even eliminate the other rules. Translation JR].

She further underscores the value of the contributions by indigenous feminists at the southern border of Mexico, as well as by Chicana feminists to the North, who, as she highlights “representan muchas fronteras como límites cuya función no es sólo separar, sino también conectar” (Belausteguigoitia 2009, 14) [represent many borders as limits which function not only to separate, but also to connect. Translation JR]. They hence provide insightful examples for thinking new forms of dialogue and connectedness in the Americas.

Further, Belausteguigoitia underscores that in order to overcome persistent inequalities also on the level of knowledge and theory production, such a dialogue requires a critical reflection of the respective disciplines, their histories, methodologies, and entanglements with colonial power structures: “Me refiero a las fronteras entre México y Estados Unidos, entre idiomas, entre culturas; y también a las fronteras disciplinarias que su producción teórica y narrativa cuestiona.” [I refer to the borders between Mexico and the US, between languages, between cultures; and also to the disciplinary borders that their theoretical and narrative productions put into question. Translation JR].

The volume *Translocalities/Translocalidades. Feminist Politics of Translations in the Americas* (2014) offers a further collection of case studies, theorizations and possible dialogues for decolonial, intersectional inter-American endeavors. The volume’s structure around the subchapters “*Mobilizations/Mobilizing/Theories/Texts/Images*”, “*Mediations/National/Transnational Identity Circuits*”, and “*Movements/Feminist/-Social/Political/Postcolonial*” points at the multi-level character of the examinations and units of analysis and the focus on various levels of entanglements and intersectionalities. As editor Sonia E. Álvarez states in the introduction, the volume is based on the knowledge that currently manifold sorts of “Latin/o-Americanidades – Afro, queer, indigenous, feminist, and so on – are constructed through processes of translocation” (Álvarez 2) as people “increasingly move back and forth between localities, between historically situated and culturally specific, though increasingly porous, places, across multiple borders, not just between nations” (Pratt, book cover). Building on the feminist concept of “the politics of location”, the editors aim at tracing, analyzing and theorizing these multidirectional movements and crossings and the engendered positionalities they term *translocalities/translocalidades*, and at “linking ‘geographies of power at various scales (local, national, transnational, global) with subject positions (gender/sexual, ethnoracial, class etc.) that constitute the self” (Álvarez 2). Such an endeavor is in line with what I understand as a decolonial intersectional focus on the Americas.

With regard to an intersectional gender perspective, Floya Anthias further promotes conceptualizing intersectionality together with what she calls “translocational positionality”, which she describes as a move away from presumed group identities towards “a social process related to practices and arrangements, giving rise to particular forms of positionality for social actors [...] social spaces defined by boundaries on the one hand and hierarchies on the other hand” (Anthias 27). Anthias has also underscored the importance of avoiding the separation of the cultural from the political – or, the “texts and their material contexts”, as Coronil has it (see above) – as both dimensions are also deeply entangled and intersecting. I see this as an especially enriching aspect for an (Hemispheric/inter-) American studies perspective, as cultural studies approaches have recently tended to consider cultural texts and productions as too far separated from the respective culture industries and economic and political power regimes in a capitalist, globalizing, and deeply stratified world.

Outlook

None of these approaches or perspectives provide concrete methods or ex ante formulas that could be applied to any given context. Rather, I would like to propose them as helpful frames to sharpen an epistemic sensitization. The concrete and relevant interrelations of these different angles must be considered for every specific context individually and with regard to the concrete contexts, cases, actors, and questions at hand. For a truly Hemispheric perspective in the sense I have depicted throughout this paper, it does not suffice to speak from a “cultural studies,” “sociology,” or “history” perspective, but to start from the problem one seeks to examine and open up to respective patterns of thought that go beyond national, cultural or disciplinary boundaries. This does of course not mean that one cannot focus on the proceedings in one country or region or apply a certain methodology, but, rather, that the approach offers a different view on the respective material and processes, automatically linking them to transnational or global entanglements that have an impact on the local scale.

The proposed sensitization serves to bring into focus the historical entanglements at play in the Americas as well as the persistent and changing axes of stratification such as social status, racialization, sexuality, religion or en-gendering. All these perspectivizations point toward the importance of taking the power dynamics in their historical constructedness into account when theorizing hemispheric frames for researching the Americas. For the Americas in particular, Coronil’s suggestion of a dialogue between approaches like American Studies, Latin American Studies and the respective perspectives such as postcolonial or decolonial thinking seems a productive starting point. Moreover, and implicitly, as I have pointed out, a decolonial framing can gain from an intersectional gender dimension in order to reflect upon the relationship between the

two bodies of knowledge of an intersectional gender and a post- or decolonial approach. Such a combinatory – or dialogical – endeavor might help to work towards a decolonization of persistently unequal structures of knowledge production and circulation in the Americas and towards conceptualizing alternative epistemologies paying credit to multiple and manifold translocalities, intersectionalities and the respective interdependent inequalities. Including knowledges from heretofore excluded epistemic locations such as the Caribbean might further contribute to dismantle persistent narrations of unity and pureness and reveal how the exchange between Europe, Africa and the Americas as well as between North and South America have contributed also to the “creolization” of the so-called Global North (see Boatcă 2011). It might further provide a frame to critically reflect upon disciplines, their histories, methodologies, and entanglements with colonial power structures. By doing so, such a sensitization serves to render privileges problematic and provide a framework for the necessary critique of hegemony in the sense of a “critical Occidentalism”.

Moreover, it seems necessary to strengthen categories/axes of social stratification, which are especially relevant for transnational processes, such as citizenship entitlements and to think further transversal ones. These are, however, to be separated in relation to their specific local situatedness and articulation. In sum, being indebted to the explicitly political paradigm of African American, Indígena and Chicana feminisms and feminist thinking produced in other languages and locations, Critical Race and Critical Whiteness approaches and Queer of Diaspora interventions, an intersectionality perspective can function as a hegemony or power- sensitive tool. Taking into account the colonial legacies of power and knowledge in and between the Americas, it is hence important to continue scrutinizing established traditions of positioning subjects and objects of knowledge. As such an intersectional sensitization can frame and enrich the research of Hemispheric American processes on various levels. Thereby, intersectionality – or intersectionalities – can provide an important epistemic sensitization to an (Hemispheric/inter-) American Studies approach, a “Thinking Technology” and a means of self-reflection in doing research.

An intersectional approach indebted to the political origins of the concept further puts established divisions between the cultural and the political, between theory and practice – and academically “relevant” and “irrelevant” forms of knowledge respectively – and between hermetically separated disciplines under scrutiny. The added dimension of opening up of the privileged places of knowledge production and a radical critique of unequal knowledge circulation and an evaluation of these plays an important part in this endeavor. In combination or as a sort of “corrective methodology” or “epistemic sensitization” with the aim of decolonizing, de-linking and unlearning epistemes which reproduce hierarchies and inequalities, such a sensitization might work towards a

greater “pluriversality” of stories, positionalities, and epistemologies. A decolonial intersectional Hemispheric American (studies) approach might hence work towards overcoming the related asymmetries and established exclusions to “change the terms of the conversation” and overcome “single stories”.

Endnotes

[1] Chimamanda N. Adichie “The Danger of the Single Story”, lecture given at the TED Global Conference in Oxford, July 21-24, 2009.

[2] The research project “The Americas as Space of Entanglement(s)” at the Center for Inter-American Studies at Bielefeld University is engaged with this problematic constellation of academic traditions, terms and methodologies that no longer suffice to describe the complex interrelations and inequalities in a globalized world. This paper is based on a talk given at the colloquium of the project at Bielefeld University on May 21, 2013.

[3] See for instance Brickhouse 2004, Fitz 2004, Braig 2005, Birle/Braig/Ette/Ingenschay 2006, Gilbert et.al. 1998, Gillman 2007, Fitz 2010, Fluck/Pease/Rowe 2011, Grewal 2005, Herlinghaus/Riese 1997, Kaltmeier 2013, Levander/Levine 2006 and 2007, McClennen 2005, Pease 1994, Raab 2014, Rowe 2000 and 2010, Saldívar 1997 and 2012, Sullivan 2000. For an overview see Bauer 2009.

[4] See Trexler 1995, Schülting 1997, Belausteguigoitia 2009, Roth 2014.

[5] See McClintock 1995.

[6] Notes taken at her talk “Inequality and decolonization: From Disgust as Separation to the Hermeneutics of Love” at the conference “Social Inequalities and Global Interdependencies: Latin American Configurations”, on December 3rd, 2010 organized by the desiguALdades.net research network at Iberoamerikanisches Institut, Berlin.

[7] See e.g. Pratt 1992.

[8] On the terms “America” and “Latin America”, see Roth 2011a und 2011b, 2014. On the history of the name “America”, see Lehmkuhl/Rinke 2008.

[9] This explicitly Eurocentric naming of all countries South of Mexico goes back to the French occupation of Mexico (1862-67) and has been preserved in many languages and contexts. The prefix “Latin” refers on the one hand to the Latin origin of the Roman languages. At the same time, it calls to mind connotations of the Roman Empire, from which Latin stems, and which functions as an ancient European original myth. Moreover, the idea of “Latin America” is closely linked to the “civilizatory” concept of *latinidad* (or *latinité*), through which the elites of European origin authorized their brutally paternalistic actions. (see Mignolo 2005).

[10] Randeria 1999, Randeria and Sebastian Conrad elaborated on the concept in their 2002 volume. New edition 2014 cited below with Regina Römheld.

[11] One of the defining factors of global inequalities are citizen regimes, see e.g. Shachar 2009, who examines “citizenship as a birthright property.”

[12] For the genealogy of intersectionality see Brah 2004, Roth 2013.

[13] For an overview of decolonial approaches, see the volume *Coloniality at Large* edited by Moraña, Dussel, Jáuregui 2008.

[14] “Critical Occidentalism” or a critique on/of Occidentalism is a concept coined by Gabriele Dietze (e.g. 2010) as a attempt to adopt a hegemony critical perspective as represented by Critical Whiteness Studies to European contexts.

[15] In the Americas in particular, this hegemony is evident e.g. in the predominance of US-American and European theories and texts, the power of the related academic institutions and publications as sole relevant sites of knowledge production and circulation and the English language in the academy

[16] The Latin American Subaltern Studies group founded the journal “Nepantla: Views from the South”, which was published from 2000 to 2003. Also, Walter Mignolo’s concept of “border thinking” owes to Anzaldúa’s work. Further, there an e-journal called “Nepantla: A Journal for Queer Poets of Color” has recently been founded and is still seeking (crowd-)funding, see <https://www.facebook.com/Nepantla>.

[17] The concept of Trans-modernity has been coined by Enrique Dussel, see e.g. Dussel 2002.

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