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The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures:
Empire, Travel, Modernity (review)

Ricardo Padron

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yet demonstrates a thorough familiarity with current debates in cultural studies. Having access to this carefully circumscribed interdisciplinary and comparative approach, the reader comes away with a far better understanding of the ways in which these apparently fragmentary writings by diverse travelers on the biology, geology, and ethnography of southern Argentina had a direct relation to its literary, political and military history. By extension, these writings were linked to the creation of a national identity and of institutions of knowledge both in Europe and the Americas through the nineteenth century. As we know, the nation-state continues to rely on this myth to dehumanize the indigenous. One hopes that such scholarship will be an ally in their pursuit of justice, a goal that enriches and humanizes us all.

The University of Auckland
Auckland, New Zealand

KATHRYN LEHMAN

The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures: Empire, Travel, Modernity. By Ralph Bauer. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. xiii, 295. Illustrations. Notes. Index. \$65.00 cloth.

In this book, Ralph Bauer argues that the European encounter with the New World played a significant role in the transformation of European orders of knowledge during the early modern period. According to Bauer, the various asymmetries of status and function between metropolis and periphery that lay at the heart of mercantile settler imperialism included a specific distribution of labor in the production of knowledge. That distribution of labor obeyed a geopolitical principle, in which colonials provided empirical data and metropolitans composed that data into "science." In this way, early modern science can be said to have had a cultural geography, which Bauer calls "epistemic mercantilism" (p. 27).

The argument proceeds through a series of textual analyses that cover examples from both the English and the Spanish Atlantic worlds. In fact, one of the themes of the book is that the two imperial projects showed fundamental similarities on many levels, including that of their cultural geographies. After an Introduction concisely laying out the general argument, Bauer analyzes, in Chapter 2, the shipwreck story of the Spaniard Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca. Bauer's astute comparisons among the various versions of this narrative support its interpretation as a meta-historical allegory in which conquest, as an epistemic order centered upon the conqueror as both hero and historian, is displaced by a new order of things centered upon the self-effacing eye-witness who appeals to Nature as the objective ground of discursive authority. The next chapter turns to Samuel Purchas's *Hakluytus postumus*, which constructs a new geopolitics of knowledge by appropriating, among others, the account of Cabeza de Vaca. The discourse of the colonial informant becomes a "primary source" to be used by the authoritative, metropolitan historian, whose intellectual authority reflects and supports the political authority of the Crown.

The next four of the book's seven chapters attend to Creole texts that question the asymmetries inherent to this new epistemic order. They analyze two captivity

tales by a Chilean and a New Englander (Chapter 4), a piracy narrative by a Mexican (Chapter 5), a history a Virginian (Chapter 6), a travel narrative by a Peruvian, and a letter by a New Yorker (Chapter 7). Throughout, Bauer argues against formalist literary critics who have understood these texts in light of the history of the novel or the prehistory of American independence. Instead, he reads each of them as meta-historical allegories that in various ways respond to the specific marginalities of their Creole authors. The strength of these chapters lies in Bauer's compelling interpretations, which demonstrate his talent for detecting sophisticated ironies in texts that assume the posture of transparent reportage.

Bauer's book makes significant contributions to the emerging fields of trans-Atlantic studies, trans-hemispheric American studies, and the cultural geography of knowledge, but it is not without limitations. The book lacks a general conclusion that might have drawn the implications of its sophisticated textual analyses for the larger historical debate over the Scientific Revolution that it outlines in the opening chapter. More importantly, however, it over-emphasizes the symmetries between the Spanish and English imperial experiences. Bauer gives due attention to many of the specific differences between them, but the overall design of the book undermines his good intentions. By dividing his attention evenly between four Spanish and four English examples, and drawing only one from the corpus of early Spanish Americana, Bauer marginalizes such pioneers in the Atlantic economy of knowledge as Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo and Francisco López de Gómara. In this way, despite the author's welcome and conscientious efforts to redraw the map of early modern imperial studies in the English-speaking world, the powerful effects of today's cultural geography of knowledge linger in this otherwise innovative and interesting book.

*University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia*

RICARDO PADRÓN

Rockin' Las Américas: The Global Politics of Rock in Latin/o America. Edited by Deborah Pacini Hernández, Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste, and Eric Zolov. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004. Pp. xii, 420. Illustrations. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$60.00 cloth; \$24.95 paper.

A collection of essays focusing on rock music's unique and important role in Latin American and U.S. Latino cultural history since the 1950s, *Rockin' Las Américas* fills a longstanding and conspicuous gap in inter-American studies. At once informative and provocative, the collection serves as a comprehensive overview of a far-reaching phenomenon only recently paid serious critical attention (and usually along narrower national lines) while at the same time articulating theoretical issues central to Latin American popular culture as a whole.

In their excellent Introduction, Deborah Pacini Hernández, Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste and Eric Zolov adeptly bring together the disparate narrative strands of Latin American rock. One of the main problems with compiling such an anthology