

[Back to index](#)

Dislocations: Transatlantic Perspectives on Postnational American Studies

Introduction

For many Americanists, ideas of globalisation and transnationalism have begun to open up boundaries - geographic and intellectual - in ways that question the authority of a national symbolic order and deterritorialize 'America' as an object of knowledge. This thinking has promoted fresh modes of transdisciplinary and transnational study and been invoked as a key element in the growing interest in 'internationalising' American Studies. The essays in this special issue of 49th Parallel introduce new critical perspectives on the changing composition of the field and provide a particular focus on transatlantic perspectives as these are now inflected by postnational concerns.

The essays began as paper presentations at a colloquium held at the University of Birmingham on 24th February 2001. I am grateful to all the participants (including Carol Smith, Helen Taylor and Shamoan Zamir, whose papers were not available for publication in this issue) who made the colloquium a rich and enjoyable event. Many of the essays retain traces of the immediacy of oral presentation and it is fitting that the sense of debate occasioned within the colloquium should now be disseminated through the internet - the more so as this medium represents one of the complex sites (and mechanisms) of 'dislocation' that came under discussion. I/We welcome any comments...

There is no consensus among the essayists regarding the significance of 'postnational' American Studies. None are simply satisfied with postnationalism as an immanent category and many are wary of endorsing a postnational imaginary that appears at once to challenge and facilitate the globalising logic of late capitalism, that may both dislocate and recover the centrality of 'America' in a global age. Notwithstanding such necessary caution, however, they offer valuable mappings of the postnational space that has opened up within the field of American Studies.

My thanks to Liz Grant for help on the day and to Andy Johnstone for making it virtual.

Liam Kennedy