The Janus-faced development of 'New American Studies'

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In 2003, Amy Kaplan used her Presidential address to the ASA to urge academics engaged in American Studies to "speak to the current crisis".[1] She argued that, as the "United States occupies Iraq and marshals violent force around the world" the discipline had a role in defining 'America' independently from the actions of the State.[2] This address formed part of a number of attempts to conceptualise alternative approaches to the discipline, as part of: new; post-national; transatlantic; post-colonial; or transnational American Studies. Introspective discussions, largely in the US, about the future of American Studies have a long and distinguished history and these discussions of conceptions form part of a process, as demonstrated by the *Engaging 'New' American Studies Conference*, which is still ongoing.[3]

[1] Kaplan, A, "Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today; Presidential Address to the American Studies Association 2003", *American Quarterly*, 2004, 56, 1, p. 1
[2] Kaplan, A, "Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today; Presidential Address to the American Studies Association 2003", *American Quarterly*, 2004, 56, 1, p. 1
[3] Bestor, A. E., "The Study of American Civilization: Jingosim or Scholarship?", *William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series*, 1952, 9, 1, pp. 3-9, Curti, M, "The Democratic Theme in American Historical Literature", *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 1952, 39, 1, pp. 3-28, Wise, G., ""Paradigm Dramas" in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement", *American Quarterly*, 1979, 31, 3, pp. 293-337, Berkhofer Jr., R., "The Americanness of American Studies", *American Quarterly*, 1979, 31, 3, pp. 340-345, Davis, A., "The Politics of American Studies", *American Quarterly*, 1990, 42, 3, pp. 353-374
Interrogation of American Studies has also been evident in other geographic areas but these have largely lacked the impact of the US based introspection. See Adams, W. P., "On the Significant of Frontiers in Writing American History in Germany", *Journal of American History*, 1992, 79, 2, pp. 463-471, Allen, H. C., "American Studies and the Study of America", *American Studies International*, 1979, 17, 1, pp. 9-26, Hölbling, W, "Coming into View: European Re-Visions of 'America' after 1945", *American Studies International*, 1999, 37, 2, pp. 24-40, Fluck, W, "Internationalizing American Studies: Do we need an International American Studies Association and what should be its goals?", *European Journal of American Culture*, 2000, 19, 3, pp. 148-155, Giles, P, "European American Studies and American American Studies", *European Journal of American Culture*, 1999, 19, 1, pp. 12-16
For the importance of geography in conceptualising American Studies See Hones, S Leyda, J, 'Towards a critical geography of American Studies', *Comparative American Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (2004) pp. 185-203
Hones, S Leyda, J, 'Geographies of American Studies', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 4, 2005, pp. 1019-1032

I propose to highlight the limitations of a US-centric conception of 'new American Studies'. I then intend to discuss the benefits that can be gained from reengaging with conceptions developed by Europeans during the 1950s, and which have continued to be discussed by European Scholars such as Willi Paul Adams and with different emphasis Paul Giles.[4] This, however, is not to suggest a "European American Studies" but to demonstrate that 'new American Studies' would benefit from a synthesis between contemporary and historic approaches. This conception of a genuinely transnational approach would emphasise geographic position only to the extent it informed local interpretation, rather than providing a hierarchical ordering of understandings based on their place of origin.

Janice Radway's Presidential address and John Carlos Rowe's *Post-Nationalism, Globalism, and the New American Studies* represent convenient points of departure for a discussion of this post-national or transnational turn.[5] This discussion of the transnational was continued by the Presidential addresses to the ASA including Amy Kaplan's *Violent Belongings* and Shelly Fisher Fishkin in C*rossroads of Cultures*.[6] Rowe's post-national "contact zones" attempt to address the similar issue of borders, belonging, and identity as George Lipsitz did in *No Shining City on a Hill* and Donald Pease in his review of the *Politics of Postnational American Studies*.[7] Although these scholars expressed slightly different conceptions of the discipline, they collectively attempt to address the manner in which the internal divisions within America engage with the various understandings of America both at home and aboard.

While Fishkin, Kaplan, and Rowe particularly highlight the importance of engagement, they also identify, to varying degrees, a purpose to American Studies; to

[4] Adams, W. P., "On the Significant of Frontiers in Writing American History in Germany", *Journal of American History*, 1992, 79, 2, p. 463
Giles, P, "Response to the Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, Hartford, Connecticut, October 17, 2003", *American Quarterly*, 2004, 56, 1, p. 22
[5] Rowe, J. C., "Post-Nationalism, Globalism, and the New American Studies", *Cultural Critique*, 1998, 40, Autumn, pp. 11-28
[6] Fisher Fishkin, S, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies--Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004", *American Quarterly*, 2005, 57, 1, pp. 17-57
[7] Lipsitz, G, "No Shining City on a Hill: American Studies and the Problem of Place", *American Studies*, 1999, 40, 2, pp. 53-69 Pease, D, "The Politics of Postnational American studies", *European Journal of American Culture*, 2001, 20, 2, pp. 78-90

interpret and project 'America' in a certain way.[8] This, to an extent, limits the prospect of genuine engagement with foreign conceptions of the US, as 'America' is conceived to represent certain values or concepts around which the approach has been constructed. This is not to suggest that they are engaged in the promotion of Schlesinger style nationalism that requires the discipline to fulfil certain "patriotic duties".[9] However, neither have Fishkin, Rowe, and particularly Kaplan, totally reneged on their patriotic duties, they merely take a different form from that which Schlesinger would recognise.

Kaplan

Despite Amy Kaplan's valuable contribution to the conceptualisation of belonging, her discussions of the discipline have been influenced by the concepts which she perceived 'America' represented. She called for American Studies to engage in "a struggle over language and culture" to regain certain words, or concepts, such as "*freedom*, *democracy*, and *liberty*".[10] Kaplan, by arguing that "it is not enough to expose the lies when Bush hijacks" these words, also contends that American Studies has to reassert their 'true' meaning.[11] Paul Giles characterised this approach as an attempt "to recover American studies as a forum for the reconstitution of American democratic principles".[12] However, in conceiving there to be 'true meanings' which the discipline must attempt to enforce, the ability to listen to different understandings of 'America' and approaches derived from alternative interpretations of for example democracy and freedom, is significantly curtailed.

Rowe

[8] Janice Radway, despite being part of the movement toward the transnational should be viewed separately, particularly from Kaplan, as "she refused to reiterate the foundational statements correlating the scholarly prerogatives of the American Studies Association with the formative values of U.S. society". See Pease, D, "Dislocations: Transatlantic Perspectives on Postnational American Studies", *49th Parallel*, 2001

[9] Pease, D, "Dislocations: Transatlantic Perspectives on Postnational American Studies", *49th Parallel*, 2001 See Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: Norton, 1992).

[10] Kaplan, A, "Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today; Presidential Address to the American Studies Association 2003", *American Quarterly*, 2004, 56, 1, pp. 6,7 (emphasis in orginal)

[11] Kaplan, A, "Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today; Presidential Address to the American Studies Association 2003", *American Quarterly*, 2004, 56, 1, p. 6

[12] Giles, P, "Response to the Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, Hartford, Connecticut, October 17, 2003", *American Quarterly*, 2004, 56, 1, p. 20 quote continues; "to protest sharply against 'authoritarian incursions against civil liberties, the rights of immigrants, and the provision for basic human needs'."

John Carlos Rowe and Shelly Fisher Fishkin are more subtle in their approach. Rowe has recognised the previous nationalist purpose contained within earlier conceptions of American Studies. He argues that

> Often implicit in this nationalist approach to the study of U.S. culture was the assumption that the United States constitutes a model for democratic nationality that might be imitated or otherwise adapted by other nations in varying stages of their 'development'.[13]

However, while proposing a post-national approach in 1998 he also argued implicitly for an international projection of a specific interpretation of 'America'. He wrote;

> New institutes and forums for international scholars in American Studies are doing important work at many U.S. colleges and universities; such work is more important than ever; now that the United States Information Agency is being significantly downsized and its valuable programs lost to fiscal 'exigencies'.[14]

As the USIA had been engaged in the projection of a politically motivated image of America, Rowe appears to identify a nationalist significance in these international academic programs by suggesting that one can replace the other. He further demonstrates a form of academic exceptionalism in commenting that the implicit mission of international American studies during the 1950s and 1960s was

> "to 'enlighten' the foreign cultures from which it drew many of its most avant-garde materials and ideas".[15]

However, what this overlooks is that representatives of these 'foreign cultures' did not participate in the discipline purely to receive enlightenment from American scholarship. Nor indeed, were they necessarily enlightened by the experience. The political purpose of American Studies can best be demonstrated by his argument that through his conceptualisation of 'contact zones', "teaching and scholarship become direct, albeit never *exclusive*, means of effecting necessary social changes".[16]

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[13] Rowe, J. C., "Post-Nationalism, Globalism, and the New American Studies", *Cultural Critique*, 1998, 40, Autumn, p. 11
[14] Rowe, J. C., "Post-Nationalism, Globalism, and the New American Studies", *Cultural Critique*, 1998, 40, Autumn, pp. 16-17
[15] Rowe, J. C., "Post-Nationalism, Globalism, and the New American Studies", *Cultural Critique*, 1998, 40, Autumn, p. 17
[16] Rowe, J. C., "Post-Nationalism, Globalism, and the New American Studies", *Cultural Critique*, 1998, 40, Autumn, p. 18

Fishkin

Alfred Hornung, has characterised Shelly Fisher Fishkin's concept of a transnational American studies "is by definition political" although, in this context, the political element is significantly less nationalistic than Kaplan or Rowe.[17] In *Crossroads of Cultures* Fishkin argued that the "goal of American studies scholarship is not exporting and championing an arrogant, pro-American nationalism but understanding the multiple meanings of America and American culture in all their complexity".[18] However, while she has characterised American foreign policy as "marked by nationalism, arrogance, and Manichean oversimplification" an anecdotal reminiscence she made during her Presidential address is illustrative of the political desire to project an alternative but still proscriptive 'America'. She said;

> A former student, expressing some bewilderment and despair over the election, asked me whether what we do as American studies scholars has any relevance at all any more. I told him that it has more relevance than ever. It is up to us, as scholars of American studies, to provide the nuance, complexity, and historical context to *correct* reductive visions of America.[19]

Despite identifying this corrective function within the conception of American Studies, Fishkin has placed great emphasis on engagement and indeed focused attention on listening to non-American scholars.

The engagement with non-American Scholars was attempted through the reorganisation of the American Studies Association (ASA); as Alfred Hornung has noted, "Shelley Fisher Fishkin made a full-scale and successful attempt to reorganize the ASA and its annual convention as a meeting point for all American studies scholars and as a forum of exchange".[20] As a result, he (Hornung) has argued that "the

[17] Hornung, A, "Transnational American Studies: Response to the Presidential Address", *American Quarterly*, 2005, 57, 1, p. 68
[18] Fisher Fishkin, S, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies--Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004", *American Quarterly*, 2005, 57, 1, p. 20
[19] Fisher Fishkin, S, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies--Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004", *American Quarterly*, 2005, 57, 1, p. 20 (Emphasis added)
[20] Hornung, A, "Transnational American Studies: Response to the Presidential Address", *American Quarterly*, 2005, 57, 1, p. 68

ASA appears to be the site for the fruitful cooperation of national associations where the concept and practice of American studies is shaped, contested, and transformed."[21] However, despite the merits of this engagement and Alfred Hornung's optimistic assessment, the impact of this structural reorganisation may be limited if the academic focus of the discipline is still defined by and in the terms of those in the US.

Moving beyond discussing these individuals and their US-Centric interpretation of discipline, Liam Kennedy and Scott Lucas have argued that there is a tendency toward domination rather than engagement within the expansion of American Studies.

> The moves to "internationalize" American studies, already a distorted mirror of neoliberal enlargement, all too readily seek to expand the field rather than seek partnerships with other fields. They also tend to subordinate the study of diplomacy to an analysis of culture in its postnational and transnational imaginings, glossing the workings of state power across national borders.[22]

In addition, Ron Robin has argued that "despite tenacious institutionalized attempts to despatialize American studies, its practitioners are unable to reject a coherent geographical and cultural understanding of the United States as 'the animating idea of American Studies'."[23] In these ways, US led methods of expanding the discipline have maintained a dominant academic exceptionalism that threatens the potential effectiveness of 'New' American Studies.

Maureen Montgomery's conceptualisation of the flow of intellectual production emphasises this exceptionalism. She argued that;

> The internationalization of American Studies has had a somewhat stunted growth. The flow of ideas has been, for the most part, one way only- radiating out from the United States.[24]

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[21] Hornung, A, "Transnational American Studies: Response to the Presidential Address", *American Quarterly*, 2005, 57, 1, p. 68

[22] Kennedy, L and Lucas, W. S., "Enduring Freedom: Public Diplomacy and U.S. Foreign Policy", *American Quarterly*, 2005, 57, 2, pp. 309-333

[23] Robin, R, "Requiem for Public Diplomacy", *American Quarterly*, 2005, 57, 2, p. 352 See, Leo Marx, "Believing in America: An Intellectual Project and a National Idea," *Boston Review*, December 2003/January 2004, http://bostonreview.net/BR28.6/marx.html (accessed February 1, 2005).

[24] Maureen Montgomery, "Introduction: The Construction of an International American Studies Community", *American Studies International*, XXXVII (June, 1999) p. 5

The interpretations presented by Montgomery and Robin indicate little may have changed since Robert Berkhoffer's 1979 article in which he noted "one is struck by the Americanness of the movement's mythology".[25] As a result, while Rowe's "contact zones", Kaplan's emphasis on 'Borders', 'Empire' and 'Homeland', in addition to Fishkin's emphasis on engagement are useful, they are, to an extent, limited by the academic conceptualisation of the discipline adopted by many influential American scholars.

This is not to say that the concepts contained within these interpretations of American Studies are irrevocably contaminated by academic exceptionalism. Many are vital to the ongoing development of the discipline. However, they may be more effectively applied if not conceived as being imbued with specific US-centric purpose. As such, there is an ongoing tension between the specifically transnational engagement proposed by some US academics and an exceptionalism emanating from the same US based scholars that maintain the image of Americans speaking to the rest of the world.

Despite the criticism of purpose within the conceptualisation of the discipline, John Carlos Rowe made the point that is central to unlocking the potential of transnational American Studies in 1998. He argued that "U.S. and other Western hemispheric scholars have as much to learn from our international colleagues as they from us".[26] However, this is not merely a question of learning from contact with academic contemporaries around the world, made possible by ever increasing globalisation and the increasing speed of communication. Contemporary academics must engage with the approaches of previous scholars, whose understanding of studying America from 'outside' can inform the current debate.

The development of American Studies in Europe during the 1950s has the potential to demonstrate the conceptual limitations of the US based transnational turn. However, it also highlights a potential approach to the study of America that can be developed by combining the contemporary transnational with the understanding that was developed

[25] R. Berkhofer Jr., "The Americanness of American Studies," *American Quarterly*, 1979, *31*: p. 340
[26] Rowe, J. C., "Post-Nationalism, Globalism, and the New American Studies", *Cultural Critique*, 1998, 40, Autumn, p. 17

as the discipline evolved in Europe during the early Cold War. European scholars in the fifties were engaged in transnational analysis, without conceiving it as such. As Michael Heale has noted, when the publications produced by the first generation of British based American Studies scholars is reviewed, two thirds "were exercises in Atlantic history broadly conceived".[27] This included a focus on themes such as migration and the existence of a transatlantic relationship, by among others, Frank Thistlethwaite and later Charlotte Erickson.[28] Ironically, as Michael Heale has noted, it was "as British interest in Atlantic history has declined (at least relatively), that of American scholars has increased".[29]

However, while the British scholars were engaged in one element of the study of the transnational through immigration and ethnic or religious diasporas, German scholars were developing an interpretation of the discipline that exhibited specifically German characteristics. In doing so they demonstrated a second element of the transnational, the engagement of distinctly different cultures and the understanding that can be developed of one culture when understood in the context of the other. Willi Paul Adams likened studying America from Germany to the life of a 'Pioneer';

> While local conditions shape their daily lives and provide a living, they know they need to communicate and exchange goods with the more densely populated centers of production and consumption.

As a result, he concluded

> I think of myself as a pioneer writing and teaching American history under frontier conditions.[30]

As Adams indicated, local culture and understanding shaped the image of America that was created in Germany.

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[27] Heale, M, 'The British Discovery of American History: War, Liberalism and the Atlantic Connection', *Journal of American Studies*, 39 (2005), 3, p. 367

[28] Thistlethwaite, Frank. *The Anglo-American Connection in the Early Nineteenth Century.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,) 1959.
Frank Thistlethwaite, ''Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, '' *Rapports*, 5, XIe Congre`s International des Sciences Historiques (Uppsala, 1960).
Charlotte Erickson, ''Who Were the English and Scots Immigrants to the U.S.A. in the Late Nineteenth Century?, '' in *Population and Social Change*, eds. D. V. Glass and R. R. Revelle (London: Edward Arnold, 1972), 347–81

[29] Heale, M, 'The British Discovery of American History: War, Liberalism and the Atlantic Connection', *Journal of American Studies*, 39 (2005), 3, p. 367

[30] W. P. Adams, "On the Significant of Frontiers in Writing American History in Germany," *Journal of American History* Volume 79, Issue 2, p. 463

The 'frontier' experience was also mirrored at the early sessions of the Salzburg Seminar which evolved through the engagement between American culture and German Kultur, represented by the choice of Schloss Leopoldskron and embodied by Clemens Heller.[31] To many European scholars of the 1950s, the basic rationale of engagement behind the "New American Studies" would not be new at all.[32] They would be used to work that reflected Rowe's suggestion that a 'new' approach to 'America Studies',

> tries to work genuinely as a comparatist discipline that will respect the many different social systems and cultural affiliations of the 'Americas'.

The advantage Rowe ascribed to this 'new' approach was that;

> Rather than treating such cultural differences as discrete entities, … this new comparative approach stresses the ways different cultures are transformed by their contact and interaction with each other.[33]

To emphasise this point, prior to the development of "New American Studies", Willi Paul Adams described the tension between various boundaries, or borders that he had observed, and which had influenced his career in Germany. Beyond the national boundaries, and citizenship Adams argued he was separated by

> "boundaries that are created by the conditioning effects of another culture and another language on thinking and writing".[34]

These boundaries between, local conceptions and the image projected from America, have ensured that the transnational interaction between cultures existed within the conceptual framework of the discipline in mainland Europe significantly earlier than transnational turn originating from the US. As Maureen Montgomery has argued, "cross-cultural studies have mostly been the province of americanists outside the US".[35]

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[31] The Salzburg Seminar on American Civilization 1947 (Report by Margaret Mead to the Harvard Student Council) http://www.salzburgseminar.org/reports/1947_MeadArticle.pdf

[32] It is also highly likely that scholars have engaged in similar comparative activities wherever American Studies has been pursued by a local population. The emphasis on Europe here is due to the focus of the evidence collected.

[33] Rowe, J. C., "Post-Nationalism, Globalism, and the New American Studies", *Cultural Critique*, 1998, 40, Autumn, p. 13

[34] Adams, W. P., "On the Significant of Frontiers in Writing American History in Germany", *Journal of American History*, 1992, 79, 2, p. 463

[35] Maureen Montgomery, "Introduction: The Construction of an International American Studies Community", *American Studies International*, XXXVII (June, 1999) p. 5

However, the contribution to the development of the transnational is not purely historical. In 2004, responding to discussion of a US-centric transnational, Paul Giles argued that different receptions of 'America' are the result of

> the ways in which interactions between different cultures can open up spaces for misrecognition…that often ironically generate the most illuminating points of crosscultural contact.[36]

However, this is not 'mistranslation' as Kaplan has described it. In a genuine transnational engagement there is not a universal meaning of 'America' that could be universally understood or translated. Furthermore, translation involves an engagement with the recipient culture or language not the corrective function of one culture upon another. The cultural development of the recipient group is the result of their personal, academic, geographic, and temporal development that are influenced by exposure, experience, reception, and interactions with the numerous conceptions of 'America'. As a result, within each group subtle differences exist in the understanding of certain broadly congruous concepts. These provide the opportunity for significantly deeper and more nuanced understandings of 'America' to develop while serving the dual purpose of resisting US centric conceptions of the discipline.

In the transnational conception of the discipline, American Studies engages the numerous images of 'America' with each local framework of understanding. This echoes the conception of the non-US based American Studies identified by Sigmund Skard long before the transnational became vogue. On a trip to Japan in 1970, he told his hosts,

> The original value of our contribution to American studies will ultimately depend not on our ability to ask, and answer, American questions, but on our willingness to see America with our own eyes, asking our own questions and judging the material in accordance with our own standards. Only by facing our differences squarely will we be able to grasp even those *general* driving forces that are today moulding our world everywhere.[37]

[36] Giles, P, "Response to the Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, Hartford, Connecticut, October 17, 2003", *American Quarterly*, 2004, 56, 1, p. 22
[37] Ruland, R, "The American Studies of Sigmund Skard", *Journal of American Studies*, 1979, 14, 1, p. 142

This suggestion was "strongly reminiscent of his inaugural lecture in Oslo twenty-five years earlier".[38]

However, while geographic position has provided European scholars with a longer term understanding of the transnational, merely studying America from abroad is not enough. As Adams has warned,

> cultural distance is no *open sesame* at the disposal of the "foreign" historian. Distance and awareness of another national history can provide a fruitful tension because they encourage comparison, but that tension is no more than a chance, a tool that needs to be skilfully applied before it yields intellectual gain.[39]

The point Adams makes is emphasised by the limits of the cultural analysis applied during the early Cold War, for example the consideration of gender. Furthermore, while European scholars identified a number of immigrant and religious groups within America, the scope of these examples appears very limited when contrasted with the array of groups now part of transnational research. Therefore, while the non-US-centric approaches provide useful elements to the transnational, it is not enough merely to accept this approach. Modern approaches to the study of America demonstrate some of the weaknesses in the analysis produced during the Cold War just as European cold war approaches expose limitations in modern US-centric conceptualisation of the transnational. Therefore, the translational must engage in a synthesis between non-US-centric approaches to the understanding of America and modern cultural analysis that addresses issues of identity and belonging.

The synthetic approach to the transnational shifts the emphasis of analysis away from a conception of the discipline both as a profession with a core body of information and one with a specific political purpose. Janice Radway asked;

> Does the perpetuation of the particular name, 'American,' in the title of the field and in the name of the association continue surreptitiously to

[38] Ruland, R, "The American Studies of Sigmund Skard", *Journal of American Studies*, 1979, 14, 1, p. 142

[39] Adams, W. P., "On the Significant of Frontiers in Writing American History in Germany", *Journal of American History*, 1992, 79, 2, p. 466

> support the notion that such a whole exists even in the face of powerful work that tends to question its presumed coherence?[40]

However, in a genuine transnational approach 'America' ceases to have a singular meaning. As a result, it has also lost the coherence or rigidity from which Radway sought to escape through the proposed change of name. Furthermore, with a loss of a presumed coherence, there can no longer be a core body of knowledge usually required to demonstrate a profession. This is not to suggest that Americanists are not professional, but to emphasise that the deeper the understanding of 'America' that is developed by American Studies, the more broad the conception of the discipline must become. As such, the use of 'America' in the context of a genuine transnational engagement emphasises the variety within the discipline, rather than proscriptive rigidity.

Conclusion

The promotion of the transnational provides proponents of a universal conception of 'America' with a rationale through which this can be promulgated to a wider audience. However, a transnational approach characterised by *genuine* engagement has the potential to produce numerous interpretations of 'America'; interpretations based not on universally defined conceptions but local understandings. Each different national, ethnic, or cultural grouping has the potential to pose new questions about 'America'. In addition, they can also produce different answers to old questions by reconceptualising the assumptions contained within them. Whether local answers are to old or new questions, each different conceptualisation has the potential to increase the understanding of 'America', particularly when they form part of a genuine transnational engagement.

This broader engagement with the transnational returns American Studies to the rationale behind the inception of the ASA. In proposing the creation of an Association, Carl Bode recalled he faced a number of questions including: "Shouldn't

[40] Radway, J, "What's in a Name?; Presidential Address to the American Studies Association.", *American Quarterly*, 1999, 51, 1, p. 2

we wait till we know what American civilization is?"; and who would the ASA serve given the number of other pre-existing 'clubs'? [41]

The first question reflected the position of those for whom 'America' is ultimately knowable and definable within a universal conception. However, Bode's answer to the second question demonstrates the broader conception of the discipline into which a genuinely engaging transnational fits – He wrote in 1952 that the ASA would serve "the person who has a general interest in American Culture" neither defining nor confining the understandings of 'America' that could or should be developed.[42] If American Studies is to develop a genuine transnational this broad conceptualisation must be maintained on a global rather than national scale.

[41] Bode, C., "The Start of the A.S.A.", *American Quarterly*, 1979, 31, 3, p. 346
[42] Bode, C., "The Start of the A.S.A.", *American Quarterly*, 1979, 31, 3, p. 350