Journal of American Studies of Turkey
24 (2006) : 55-69

A British American Voice: Exploring the Transatlantic Connections in American History in Britain

Inge Dornan

Recent calls to internationalize American history have prompted American history scholars outside the United States to evaluate how their own particular experiences might contribute to this new historiographic framework (Vaudagna; Adams; Kroes). My own reflections on the usefulness of this approach to British Americanist scholars and students have encouraged a reconsideration of why and how American history came to be established in Britain's schools and universities.[1]

The introduction of American history to the United Kingdom was itself a transatlantic and international enterprise. It was inspired by Britain and America's shared past as well as present history and a mixture of public, scholarly and political affirmations of a warm and cordial Anglo American relationship. Its emergence was also inseparable from the need in Britain to craft a new identity in the wake of World War II and the demise of its Empire, and the need in America to project and defend its new superpower status abroad in a Cold War climate.

Today's pleas to internationalize American history share a similar agenda with that of the Cold War generation of British American scholars. Historians, such as Max Beloff, looked to American history and American values to comprehend their own identity, as well as Britain's destiny in the world after 1945. This Anglo American outlook affected the course of British American scholarship until the 1960s. Now American scholars are turning towards Britain and Europe to better understand their own place and identity in a newly globalized world and this is reflected in current American historiographical impulses to internationalize American history. That there is a clear relationship between historiographical trends and in the context in which they emerge is not a novel idea. As Bernard Bailyn recently acknowledged, "a general characteristic of historiographical movements" lies "[in part] not within historical study but outside it, in the public world that formed the external context of historians' awareness" (6).

This study examines the ways in which the establishment of American history and British American historiography was influenced, since the First World War, by the Anglo American relationship and British and American domestic and foreign affairs. It also suggests how these developments led British Americanists and United States Americanists to coalesce as well as diverge in their attempts to explore, in the past and in the present, the meaning of "America."

It has been remarked by historians on both sides of the Atlantic that American history, as a discipline, did not cross over to Britain until after the Second World War (Burton; Heale). John Franklin Jameson observed in 1913, for instance, that "no one in Britain 'was at all interested in American history'" (Hanke 11). It is true that British American historiography was limited until 1945. It is also true to say that prior to then few British universities and schools offered courses on American history. In 1944, Richard Johnson, Third Secretary of the United States Embassy in London, lamented that there were "only three endowed chairs of American history" in British universities and hardly any American history was taught in Britain's primary and secondary schools (73-74). The blame for this educational lacuna must be shouldered by both the British academe, who, according to Michael Heale, took the view that the "United States lacked anything that could be called a civilization" and therefore did not merit serious scholarship (508), and the British and American governments; indeed "before the [Second World] war the U.S. government left international educational and cultural exchanges to private efforts," note Smith, et al. (446).

During and after the First World War, such "private efforts" to promote American history in British classrooms were nevertheless significant. They underpinned a network of British and American scholars, teachers, philanthropists and civil servants. Their endeavors marked the first stage in a transatlantic project to bring American history to Britain. Max Beloff recognized their efforts when he observed, in 1949, that it was through "the free flow of people, of books, and of ideas" to and from the Atlantic that American history first gained its foothold in British schools and universities (26).

As early as 1922, the English-Speaking Union (ESU) organized exchanges between American and British primary and secondary school teachers. It also established a number of travelling scholarships. From 1923 through to 1942, 155 British teachers visited the United States and 221 American teachers came to Britain (Johnson 80). The ESU also created a student exchange programme with the International School Boy Fellowship of the United States; between 1928 and 1940 212 British boys visited American schools and 35 American boys visited British schools. "Since 1939 about ten thousand British primary and secondary school children have found hospitality in the United States," observed Richard Johnson. He urged that "more exchanges of young students should be organized after the war" (80).

Simultaneous with teacher and student exchanges prior to the outbreak of World War II, British and American graduates also travelled back and forth across the Atlantic. From the mid-1920s the Commonwealth Fund of New York offered grants to British students to study in America. The Rhodes Trust and Kellett Fellowships enabled American university students to study at Oxford, the Fiske and Lionel Harvard Fellowships established a steady stream of graduates from Harvard to Cambridge (Johnson 79; Smith, et al. 445).

These first transatlantic efforts to bring American history to Britain mirrored an intellectual trend that began in the United States in the final decades of the nineteenth century, led by American scholars, writers and journalists, to recognize

the historical relationship between America and the world beyond its borders. Frederick Jackson Turner, in 1891, averred: "'Our destiny is interwoven with theirs; how shall we understand American history without understanding European history?'" (Tyrrell 1033). Ian Tyrrell argues that Turner pondered "about global trends in a way that might have made him, under other circumstances, a progenitor of the modern movement of 'world history' rather than the frontier thesis and American uniqueness" (1033).

Turner's views on America's role in world history, which carried through to the 1920s, were echoed by several of his fellow writers and journalists who viewed America at this time within a wider Atlantic world. In 1917 the American journalist Walter Lippman urged that since the United States belonged to the Atlantic community it should support the allies and enter the war. "Britain, France, Italy, even Spain, Belgium, Holland, the Scandinavian nations, and Pan-America are in the main one community in their deepest needs and their deepest purposes," he believed (Bailyn 7). In 1921, Charles Homer Haskins, in his presidential address to the American Historical Association, reiterated that America "'must be seen as part of a larger world,'" and thus American history must retain its "'international outlook'" (Tyrrell 1032). It was against this background of situating America's past and present in a global context that American history, as a field of study, first travelled to Britain.

World War II proved to be a watershed in the development of American history teaching and of American historiography in both the United States and Britain. After 1945 educators and politicians across the United States called for greater emphasis upon the teaching of American history in schools and universities; their agenda rested with a nation-state centered narrative of American history, which since the end of the nineteenth century had found favour among the "scientific school" of American scholars (Tyrrell 1016-17). Given America's newly conferred status as a (or *the*) world superpower—confirmed by its military victories against Germany and Japan and economic strength in rebuilding Europe under the Marshall Plan—a nation-state based narrative signified a desire to map America's rise from colony to superpower status. "It's no secret," Carl Guarneri observes, "that American history as practiced and taught has been largely wedded to the project of building and preserving the nation" (44).

A nation-state approach also provided a stage upon which to elaborate on notions of American exceptionalism. The idea of American uniqueness had long been given voice in European and American books, pamphlets and speeches. Ever since the first Europeans migrated to America, there was a strong sense that what they had discovered and settled upon was unique. "Europeans," Joyce Appleby reminds us, "celebrated American anomalies because they gave proof that reform was possible" (420). Conviction in the distinct character and quality of America's land, people and institutions was most famously delivered to a European audience through Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and to an American public through Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis."

In the twentieth century America's superpower status went beyond simple affirmation of its unique qualities. John Franklin Jameson observed in 1920, "'the last few years have made it plain to all mankind,' that, 'we have here in the United States … the greatest power the world has ever seen'" (cited in Tyrrell 1036) The Second World War further "validat[ed] American world leadership and the role of the New Deal-created nation-state in the successful prosecution of the war," argues Tyrrell (1039). America's role in world events and their national successes generated a belief in United States superiority and greatness *compared to the rest of the world.* American exceptionalism in a twentieth century context did not imply that America was different from everyone else; it meant it was *better* than everyone else (Appleby 419-420).

A nation-state narrative of the American past—which alluded to America's unique and superior qualities—dominated the pattern of United States historiography and American history teaching in the United States until the 1960s. In the process Atlantic, European and international approaches in American history became marginalised (Bailyn). Charles Homer Haskins' insistence that American history retain an "international outwork" fast became a distant memory. It is ironic, then, that at the same time that American history in the United States became locked into a nation-state, inward-looking narrative, American history, as a discipline, travelled outside the United States to become a transnational and international phenomenon.

In Britain, the teaching and learning of American history after World War II was inseparable from British attitudes towards America as an ally and as a former colony. Among the British public, America's role in World War I had reawakened sufficient affection for the United States to lead to the first transatlantic efforts to introduce American history to British scholars and students; but it was American successes during and after World War II, militarily and economically, which reaffirmed the "special relationship" that existed between Britain and the United States. Sir Winston Churchill's six volume study on *The Second World War* and Harry Allen's *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952)* embodied this spirit and new field of "British American" historiography. What undergirded these and other studies on American history in post-war Britain was a belief that elucidating the "special relationship" between Britain and the United States would somehow help Britain understand its new position in the world and help keep America focused on the task of preserving world peace (Heale 505).

It also pushed Britain to consider that she might have something to learn from America. Although British American historiography never fully subscribed to American exceptionalism, there was nevertheless a strong sense of admiration and gratitude towards the United States among British Americanist scholars that hinted at America's unique and superior qualities. The "original dream of the founding fathers" was, Max Beloff wrote, "in the spreading of liberty and equality"; therein "the world was to see an example in America" (29). Beloff's views were formulated in direct response to the perceived threat that communist ideology posed to European and American democracies post-1945. With this in mind, Beloff insisted that the teaching of American history was fundamental to the future wellbeing of

Britain and the rest of the world. "The mutual comprehension of America and the Old World is now a vital need of civilization – vital indeed to the prospects of humanity at large" (27). Beloff was not alone in conceding the importance of American history to Britain and to British scholars. "British academic interest in American history," writes Michael Heale, "developed against a political background in which both Conservative and Labor looked on the United States with favour and an intellectual background in which liberals looked to the United States with some hope" (505-506).

Esteem for Britain and America's "special relationship" and the lessons that Britain might learn from the United States urged British American scholars, in their approach to the study of the United States, to straddle two historical worlds (Heale 509). With one foot in Britain and the other in mainland America, British Americanists – such as H. Hale Bellot, Commonwealth Fund Professor of American History at the University of London, and Frank Thistlewaite, Professor of Economic History at Cambridge and, in 1956, Visiting Professor of American Civilization at the University of Pennsylvania (Elson; Toppin) – concentrated their minds and resources on recapturing the people and events of the Atlantic and Anglo-American past. Although this approach was not unique to British Americanists—United States and European Americanists, too, explored the scholarly length and breadth of the Atlantic world (Bailyn)—it became the dominant "voice" in British American historiography in the immediate aftermath of World War II.

During the early years of the Cold War, British American historiography was buttressed by an intensification of government intervention in the establishment of American history (and also American Studies) in Britain.[2] This was principally led by the United States. In contrast to their pre-war apathy, the American government, through the Fulbright Act (1946) and the Smith-Mundt Act (1948), "attempted to exert leadership in educational and intellectual exchange and cooperation" (Smith, et al. 446). Its intentions were not purely scholarly. Through various forms of Cold War propaganda—journal, book, magazine publications, news features and international conferences—the United States Congress of Cultural Freedom, headed by a CIA agent, strove to "nudge the intelligentsia of western Europe away from its lingering fascination with Marxism and Communism towards a view more accommodating of the 'American Way'" (Smith, et al. 447). The growth of American history in Britain was thus an inseparable part of the "cultural cold war." To recognize this, Smith, et al., argue, is to understand the "transatlantic influences on higher education [in Britain]" and the "networks of influential people and the interpenetration of politics and academic life in a post-Empire world" (447). The American government's role in establishing American history in Britain post-1945 was thus hand in glove with its Cold War agenda.

In Britain, a combination of government, local government, educational and scholarly initiatives carried American history into British classrooms. According to Richard Johnson, "Public interest in the subject of America" began during World War II and "manifested itself at public meetings, in the press, and in a general feeling that the schools should try to provide more information about the United

States" (75). Such was the fervour for American history that, within a few years, Max Beloff remarked: "We are witnessing a major expansion of American studies, particularly in the field of history and political institutions" (26).

During the Cold War numerous educational schemes were established by the British and Scottish educational authorities to expand the teaching of American history in Britain—through teacher training programmes, improved library holdings, and the continued flow of students and teachers between Britain and America. By the early 1970s, transatlantic teaching workshops, such as those organized by the British Department of Education and Science and the American Embassy in London, underlined the emergence of a distinct British American academe (Asher; Avery).

In academic circles, too, American history flourished. Michael Heale's "checklist" of studies published by British American scholars, which he admits is by no means exhaustive, reveals that between 1951 and 1960 at least 80 books and articles were published on American history. These included studies by Jack Pole, Esmond Wright, and David Quinn on Colonial and Early National history; Maldwyn Jones, Brinley Thomas and P. A. M. Taylor on immigration; and Dennis Brogan, Jim Potter, Marcus Cunliffe, W. R. Brock and Henry Pelling on American domestic history (507-509). This increase in British American historiography reflected the growing number of British universities that taught American history and the establishment of new universities, such as Sussex, Keele and East Anglia, which embraced such new and innovative subjects as United States history and American Studies (Burton, 269). A survey conducted by the British Association of American Studies (BAAS) in 1963-4 revealed that, in addition to the two chairs at Cambridge and Oxford, eight chairs in American had been established in Britain: two in Manchester and one at University College, London, Hull, Leeds, Sussex, Birmingham and Edinburgh, respectively (Temperley 252). Howard Temperley surmised that by 1966 there were at least 20 chairs in American history in Britain (252). The expansion of British American historiography and American history teaching was given additional support throughout these years by BAAS, which had been established in 1955 by a group of university scholars. Just over ten years later, Temperley stated that BAAS was central to the development of American history in Britain (264). Today it is still the life force of American history and American Studies in the United Kingdom. By 1973, 38 universities across the United Kingdom delivered courses on American history and/or American Studies (Burton 275-80). Within less than thirty years, the second transatlantic enterprise to bring American history to Britain had achieved considerable success.

Whilst the discipline of American history thrived in Britain, so too did American historiography in both Britain and the United States. During the 1960s and 1970s, American history scholars on both sides of the Atlantic embraced the groundbreaking approaches in social and labor history led by British and European historians. Their studies disturbed the nation-state centered narrative of American history in the United States. For instance, through analyses on southern bondsmen and bondswomen, Native Americans, Irish immigrants, northern factory workers

and female suffragists, previously ignored or underestimated women and men were recovered from America's past. They not only exemplified the multiple identities that had created America, but also affirmed its diverse history; as well, they exposed the transnational and international connections that had shaped the American experience. Randolph Bourne recognized all of these elements in the construction of American identity as early as 1916, when he observed that the United States "'is coming to be, not a nationality, but a trans-nationality, a weaving back and forth, with the other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors'" (cited in Thelen, *Nation* 967-68). It was not until the 1960s and 1970s, however, that his views were resurrected through the new historiographic frameworks – race, class, gender, labor – that unhinged the nation-state centered narrative embraced by "consensus" historians.

British Americanists, too, embraced the new frameworks generated by social and labor history. Since their studies were overwhelmingly focused upon American race relations – the slave trade, slavery, the abolitionist movement, Reconstruction and Civil Rights – this new direction in British American scholarship complimented the Atlantic and Anglo-American history agendas that had prevailed in the previous generation. Ever since, British American historiography has deployed these frameworks in analyses of Anglo American, Atlantic and American domestic history – the three pillars of British American scholarship. The decision to embrace these new historiographic trends, however, incurred the criticism of the next generation of American history scholars on both sides of the Atlantic.

It was against this background of new social and labor history frameworks, which undermined the centrality of a nation-state narrative of America's past, that Lewis Hanke and Laurence Veysey delivered a clarion call for scholars to probe the meaning of American identity in various transnational and international contexts (Hanke; Veysey). Their articles "American Historians and the World Today: Responsibilities and Opportunities" and "The Autonomy of American History Reconsidered," respectively, signified the first efforts since the World War I generation of American scholars to look outside the United States to obtain an alternative perspective on America's past.

Crucially, both articles were written in a climate when public and political understanding of "American identity" was unraveling at the seams. Belief in the uniquely American values of equality, liberty and democracy collapsed as the United States became engulfed by race riots, assassinations, and mass public protests over the Vietnam War. Indeed America's role in Vietnam prompted *Time* magazine to decree that the United States had "lost a working consensus 'as to what we think America means.'" The debate that began then, and continues to today, is, Michael Kammen concludes, fundamentally about "the meaning of Americanism" (Kammen 10).

The crisis in American identity that began in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with America's ever growing presence in the international arena. By the 1980s, globalization – through business, education, environment, trade and culture – cemented America's international presence as much as its economic, military and

political power had in the previous decades. These developments converged to convince United States scholars, writers and journalists that the crisis in American identity might be better understood and resolved, as Hanke and Veysey had earlier suggested, through a more outward-looking and international perspective on America's past.

It was in this context that United States scholars appealed to their British and European counterparts for guidance. They hoped that British and European American scholarship would open up a new landscape in which they could better explore and understand their past (and future) *through European eyes*. What they discovered, however, turned out to be a collective disappointment: there was no "distinctive" British or European map of the American past. In 1984 Marcus Cunliffe noted that despite "some good work" British Americanists "did not establish fresh approaches and interpretations" to American history (72). Two years later, Michael Heale insisted that British Americanists "could never quite become clones of their American counterparts," since being situated in Britain meant they absorbed British influences and styles (509). Notwithstanding, it is the opening sentence of his article that lingers: "There is today probably no peculiarly British view of American history" (501). In 1991 Eric Foner concurred with Heale and Cunliffe when he summed up the state of European studies on American history: "there is nothing very distinctively European about it" (cited in Vaudagna 534).

It is not instructive to regret the lack of a distinctive British American "voice;" but it is valuable to understand why and in what context one did not appear. This is crucial since it establishes a connection between the direction of British American historiography and a change of attitude in Britain towards the United States. When asked by David Thelen to write about his experiences as a British Americanist for a special international edition of the *Journal of American History,* Tony Badger, Mellon Professor of American History at Cambridge, admitted to finding it "initially puzzling…to explain how British ideological preconceptions, audiences, and scholarly traditions of discourse shape the way I write about the United States" (515-16). "I had complacently liked to think," he continued, "that my writing did not betray my national origins" (516). Badger was of the same opinion as his British and American colleagues that British Americanists had "missed an opportunity to make a distinctive contribution" to American historiography. However this was never his – or perhaps even his British colleagues'—intention, he observed. "Perhaps to downplay one's British identity in a desire to achieve credibility as an American historian is to sacrifice the opportunity to make a substantial contribution to American historiography," he wrote (519). Instead of re-writing American history from a Briton's point of view, Badger's agenda was to concentrate on "becoming just a good historian of the United States who happens to live in Britain" (523).

Badger's observations are key to recapturing one of the reasons that prevented the emergence of a distinctive British American voice, namely the increased professionalization and specialization of history in the latter decades of the twentieth century. This affected American as much as British scholars; according to David Thelen it resulted, until very recently, in a "narrow and overspecialized

vision" of American history in the United States (Thelen, *Audiences* 432). Tony Badger's comments suggest that his identity as *an historian* overrode any sense of duty as a British person to deliver a distinctly British or European platform for understanding American history.

Badger's outlook stands in contrast to that of the post-World War II generation of British historians, such as Beloff and Bellot. They were molded by a Cold War mentality that insisted upon Britain and America's "special relationship." This had engineered the second transatlantic effort to establish American history in British schools and universities. It had urged British Americanists to concentrate on Atlantic and Anglo American history. As Beloff proclaimed, it also transformed the teaching of American history into a moral crusade in defense of liberty, equality and democracy. Badger's professional identity, on the other hand, was shaped during a period in which the notion of a British and American "special relationship" had "faltered and lost direction" (Dobson 124). His own studies on American domestic race relations inadvertently reflect this change.

Britain in the 1960s experienced, what Heale describes as, a "loss of that sense that the United States had something good to offer the world" (509). Where once Max Beloff had insisted upon America as an example of equality, liberty and democracy for the rest of the world to emulate, in the 1960s and 1970s the British public looked on in horror at America's domestic and foreign affairs—race riots, assassinations, anti-war demonstrations and military failures in Vietnam. United States aggression at home and abroad "dim[med] the American image" in Britain, argues Burton (269). At the same time, Britain began to turn politically and economically away from the United States towards Europe.

The force of these events threatened to drive a wedge between British Americanists and United States scholars. At the Bicentennial World Regional Conference in Salzburg in 1975, British historian Andrew Sinclair publicly condemned Gordon Wood's paper on American republicanism and the United States position in world affairs as "'sad and terrible words.'" He then proceeded to attack America's interference in Southeast Asia and Europe (Davis, 353). It was in this context of British dismay towards American domestic and foreign affairs that Tony Badger and many of his British American colleagues were inspired to study American race relations.

With little evidence of a distinct European and British American voice to re-articulate America's past, United States scholars have taken the lead, since the 1980s and 1990s, to identify new historiographic frameworks in order to better understand its diverse history. This has not only entailed a reconsideration of American exceptionalism but also of the nation-state centered narrative that has shaped the teaching of American history. The aim of the new historiographic framework is, David Thelen argues, to "interrogate, not assume, the centrality of the nation state as the organizing theme for American history" (*Nation* 967). For Thelen and his colleagues this means examining the transnational influences and experiences that have shaped America – most evident in national and international movements and campaigns, such as civil rights, anti-slavery, women's rights, and the environment,

as well as patterns of immigration and migration, and domestic and foreign trade networks. The historiographic emphasis lies with movement between, across, and through America's borders (Thelen, *Nation* 973).

This connects to the second element of the transnational agenda which is to explore the ways in which identity is constructed through the interplay of national and extra-national entities, for instance religion and gender (Thelen, *Nation* 973). Both of these approaches are intended to generate a more nuanced understanding of the historical processes that have shaped and constructed American identity, and how, in turn, these emanated from the interaction of nation state and transnational/international connections.

In 2000 this new historiographic agenda was given credence by the *La Pietra Report: A Report to the Profession* by the Organization of American Historians/New York University Project on Internationalizing the Study of American History. The report reiterated recent pleas by United States historians that a nation-state centered narrative was too limiting to provide an accurate understanding of America's past. It therefore repeated calls for the internationalization of American history and provided a detailed examination of the various practical ways that this might take place – for instance, through comparative and transnational frameworks and greater international collaboration among scholars.

As the *La Pietra Report* suggests, the attempt to internationalize American history is more than a historiographic trend: it is a "project," a plan of action requiring considerable international contribution. The aim of this "project" is, on one hand, to explore and clarify the meaning of "Americanism" in the past, and, on the other hand, to understand what it means to be American in the present.

Understanding the relationship between the American past and its meaning in the present is central to grasping the wider purpose of the internationalization of American history. Joyce Appleby asserts: "We find writing the multicultural history of the United States difficult because we have never rooted our present in our past. Rather we have used the past as a springboard for vaulting into a future that promises liberation from the past" (431). According to David Thelen, past and present are interwoven: "What historians contribute is the ability to uncover and hold up pieces from the past as alternatives for their audiences to consider in the present – perhaps for action, perhaps for solace, perhaps even for identity" (*Audiences* 432). We "use the past to inform the present," he argues, this is "our responsibility as historians" (*Audiences* 444). Thelen thus validates revisiting America's past in order to ameliorate its present.

For Carl Guarneri past and present also overlap in his vision of an internationalized American history: "students need a history that will help them learn how this interconnectedness [between America and the rest of the world] came to happen and how they might act effectively within it" (38). In other words, understanding America's cosmopolitan past will help American students interact in America's more cosmopolitan future.

The move to internationalize American history is as much an effort to understand as well as influence the way in which Americans interact in today's globalized society as it is a new historiographic trend. It signifies a desire to promote a sanguine view of America to the rest of the world, one that reminds of its historical attachment and connection to the international community and not American uniqueness and isolationism. As early as 1975, Lewis Hanke was unequivocal about the necessity of an international approach to American history: it "should help us to achieve relations with other cultures through dialogue and comprehension," he averred (10). Writing in the aftermath of the tragic events of 11 September 2001, Carl Guarneri insisted that internationalizing American history would help "break away from stereotyped dichotomies between 'us' and 'them,' America and the rest of the world" (45).

The events of 9/11 and the War on Terror have added even greater urgency to the task to internationalize American history. Francis Fukuyama argued that 9/11 exposed America's inward-looking and limited understanding of the world outside its borders: "September 11, 2001, was a wake up call – not just concerning the threat of terrorism, but also regarding the way we educate Americans about the outside world." He continued, "The scandal that the media has thus far failed to cover is the utter failure of the American academy to train adequate numbers of people with deep knowledge about the world outside the United States" (1). The *La Pietra Report's* encouragement to increase international cooperation and collaboration among American history scholars and its call for greater numbers of comparative studies in American history signify a pre-emptive step towards addressing Fukuyama's concerns.

Today's historiographic agenda to position American history in an international landscape is as inextricable from the current political climate as the first and second transatlantic projects to establish American history in Britain and Europe were inextricable from the events and fallout of World War I and World War II. Most especially after 1945, the establishment of American history in British schools and universities was part of a process through which Britain attempted to make sense of its new place in the world. For America, it became an assertion and means to preserve its new power and significance in Europe. Both developments produced new lines of historiographic inquiry. Today, **American** attempts to make sense of its place in a new, globalized world, especially one where the terms of engagement are not always benign, are now being reflected in yet another new historiographic approach.

With such an overtly "American" agenda, what role, if any, can British Americanists' play in this movement to internationalize American history? As this study has shown, the establishment of American history in the United Kingdom was itself a transatlantic enterprise, led by local educational authorities, the British and United States governments, and the private efforts of scholars, teachers and philanthropists on both sides of the Atlantic. Today American history in Britain remains a transatlantic endeavor. There are, for instance, numerous American-born scholars teaching and studying American history in British universities, such as Jay

Kleinberg, Susan Castillo and Jay Sexton. British scholars, too, have spent periods teaching as well as studying in the United States, such as Vivian Hart and Simon Middleton.[3] Many British and American universities also incorporate student exchange programs in their degrees. History and politics students at Brunel University, for instance, can choose to spend part of their studies at the State University of New York, Brockport.

The transatlantic nature of American history scholarship and teaching in Britain has been further enhanced by such technological innovations as the World Wide Web. Not only has this generated a "virtual" transatlantic network of scholars, it has also made it easier to explore and become familiar with archives and material housed in the United States without the need, as in the past, to undertake research trips for this purpose. It has also meant that British university students can access a far greater range of American primary sources, articles and books than previous generations, which has transformed the quality of teaching and learning of United States history in the United Kingdom. The World Wide Web is a vital instrument in redefining American history scholarship and teaching for a twenty first century international academe and maintaining the transatlantic character of American history scholarship and teaching in Britain. The "free flow of people, books and ideas" across the Atlantic that Max Beloff described in the late 1940s thus persists to this day and has become a hallmark of American history in the United Kingdom.

Despite the transatlantic networks and connections that continue to permeate American history in Britain, it is not clear how the project to internationalize American history will be received by scholars and students in Britain. The three pillars of British American scholarship—Anglo American, Atlantic and American domestic history – have long incorporated comparative and transnational approaches and adopted a conservative view of American exceptionalism. The *La Pietra Report's* recognition that "Among U.S.-based historians knowledge of foreign scholarship on the United States is distressingly limited," may well encourage greater familiarity with British American (and European American) scholarship in these fields in the United States (7). Moreover, its call for scholars to engage in collaborative projects and comparative studies may well find greater favor among British American scholars than previously, since the World Wide Web makes it easier to establish connections, share and gather information.

The practical goals to internationalizing American history have clear relevance and positive benefits to British Americanists and British American historiography, but it is not so obvious how the theories and arguments that shape this project will be received by British students of American history. In universities and schools in the United Kingdom, American history is often taught in a British, and at times international, context. Indeed it would seem unusual to British students to treat America's past in isolation from developments in Britain and Europe, not to mention elsewhere. This is confirmed by a small survey of American history students at Brunel University.[4] When asked why they had chosen to study American history and how relevant they thought the discipline was, the students delivered two interrelated responses: a desire to understand why America is the

way it is (different and unique and sometimes superior) and a desire to learn how its past and present relates to Britain and the rest of the world (comparative and similar and not always superior). What is interesting about their perspective is that it does not simply recognize the international and British context of American history. Rather, to these students, a notion of American exceptionalism and an emphasis upon the nation state does not mutually exclude recognition of America's relationship with the world beyond its borders, its crises over superiority and power, and the transnational movements that have helped shape its identity. Their viewpoint echoes the arguments put forward by George M. Frederickson and Michael Kammen about the ways in which these various processes are themselves inextricably connected and should not be treated as separate forces requiring historiographic priority (Frederickson; Kammen).

The way in which these students have been taught American history in their schools and university has no doubt informed their perspective. An even greater influence, however, is their daily encounters with the multiple meanings of the "United States" and what it means to be "American" through culture, politics, travel and the World Wide Web. In other words, their personal experience of a globalized world has meant that they look at American history through globalized spectacles.

Of course in this they differ little from the generations of scholars whose perspective on the past has been influenced by their perspective in the present, as this study has shown. For this reason, it is this generation of students who will judge the success of the project to internationalize American history and be witnesses to the creation and strength of an international American history academe. The extent to which British Americanists will participate and contribute to this project will undoubtedly reflect their degree of engagement with the current political climate and their perception of Britain's relationship with the United States in the twenty first century. In this context, it seems instructive to recollect Max Beloff's advice in 1949: "mutual comprehension of America and the Old World is now a vital need of civilization – vital indeed to the prospects of humanity at large" (27). If the project to internationalize American history helps to achieve greater mutual understanding between America and the rest of the world, then it must be valued and understood in this light.

Works Cited

Adams, Willi Paul. "American History Abroad: Personal Reflections on the Conditions of Scholarship in West Germany." *Reviews in American History* 14(1986): 557-68.

Appleby, Joyce. "Recovering America's Historic Diversity: Beyond Exceptionalism." *Journal of American History* 79 (1992): 419-31.

Asher, Eugene L. "The Voice of the Turtle: The Anglo-American Workshops in History, 1973-1074." *History Teacher* 6 (1973): 343-52.

Avery, Roy. "American Studies in British Classrooms." *History Teacher* 7 (1974): 564-73.

Badger, Tony. "Confessions of a British Americanist." *Journal of American History* 79 (1992): 515-23.

Bailyn, Bernard. *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard UP, 2005.

Beloff, Max. "The Projection of America Abroad." *American Quarterly* (1949): 23-29.

Burton, David H. "Teaching American History at British Universities: The Continuing Challenge." *History Teacher* 6 (1973): 267-80.

Cunliffe, Marcus. "Teaching United States History Abroad: Great Britain." *History Teacher* 18 (1984): 69-74.

Davis, Allen F. "The Politics of American Studies." *American Quarterly* 42 (1990): 353-74.

Dobson, Alan P. *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century: Of Friendship, Conflict and the Rise and Decline of Superpowers* London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Elson, Ruth Miller. Rev. of *The Anglo American Connection in the Early Nineteenth Century*. by Frank Thistlewaite." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 46 (1959): 307-308.

Frederickson, George M. "From Exceptionalism to Variability: Recent Developmentsin Cross-National Comparative History." *Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 587-604.

Fukuyama, Francis. "How Academia Failed the Nation: The Decline of Regional Studies." *Saisphere*. Winter 2004. 28 February 2007 <http://www.sais-jhu.edu/pubaffairs/publications/saisphere/winter04/Fukuyama.html/

Guarneri, Carl J. "Internationalizing the United States Survey Course: American History for a Global Age." *History Teacher* 36 (2002): 37-64.

Hanke, Lewis. "American Historians and the World Today: Responsibilities and Opportunities." *American Historical Review* 80 (1975): 1-20.

Heale, M. J. "American History: The View from Britain." *Reviews in American History* 14 (1986): 501-22.

Johnson, Richard A. "Teaching of American History in Great Britain." *American Historical Review* 50 (1944): 73-81.

Kammen, Michael. "The Problem of American Exceptionalism: A Reconsideration." *American Quarterly* 45 (1993): 1-43.

Kroes, Rob. "America and the European Sense of History." *Journal of American History* 86 (1999): 1135-55.

Organization of American Historians/New York University Project on Internationalizing American History. *The La Pietra Report: A Report to the Profession* 7 February 2007 <http://www.oah.org/activities/lapietra/final.html.>

Smith, David, Lewis Baston, Jean Bocock and Peter Scott. "Americanization and UK Higher Education: Towards a History of Transatlantic Influence on Policy and Practice." *Journal of Educational Policy* 17 (2002): 443-61. 28 February 2007 <http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/content/vwajm450plglc86w>.

Temperley, Howard. "American Studies in Britain." *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 251-69.

Thelen, David. "Of Audiences, Borderlands, and Comparisons: Toward the Internationalization of American History." *Journal of American History* 79 (1992): 432-62.

____. "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History." *Journal of American History* 86 (1999): 965-75.

Toppin, Edgar A. Rev. of *The Great Experiment: An Introduction to the History of the American People*. By Frank Thistlewaite. *Journal of Negro History* 41 (1956): 83-85.

Tyrrell, Ian. "Making Nations/Making States: American Historians in the Context of Empire." *Journal of American History* 86 (1999): 1015-44.

Vaudagna, Maurizio. "The American Historian in Continental Europe: An Italian Perspective." *Journal of American History* 79 (1992): 532-42.

Veysey, Laurence. "The Autonomy of American History Reconsidered." *American Quarterly* 31 (1979): 455-77.

Notes

[1] I am grateful to Jay Kleinberg for casting her keen editorial eye over this paper and offering thoughtful suggestions for its improvement. Any errors or shortfalls that remain are my own.

[2] This article recognizes that the establishment and growth of American Studies in Britain and the United States differed from American history and therefore merits a separate analysis.

[3] I am grateful to Jay Kleinberg for pointing out this transatlantic connection.

[4] This survey was conducted in March 2007 with the assistance of Martin Folly and Niall Palmer at Brunel University. In total, sixty-nine history, politics and American Studies students responded to this questionnaire on the value and purpose of American history in Britain.