

## Reflection on 2013 Hughes/Robbins Transatlantic Seminar

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I've always resisted the idea of having to choose a camp of American or British, and now I have scholarly evidence to support my resistance! Clear-cut categories of region, nation, or century are somewhat artificial constructions, which do serve a purpose in laying a foundational grounding to help us orient ourselves before we take off into more complicated understandings of the networks and continuums and evolutions of particular genres, texts, figures, movements, etc. (Similar to how personal labels are helpful in establishing a general identity based on a common understanding of what is entailed by that label, but you have to get to know the person as an individual to fully appreciate their intersectionally shaped and nuanced version of that label.)

A transatlantic approach recognizes and embraces the movements, exchanges, intersections, and parallels across space and time, widening the context to get a fuller view, and even shifting the view entirely. For example, I loved the piece by Dimock which reexamined the familiar history of America by tracing its relationship to Islam. I think that's one of the great values of transatlantic scholarship: it encourages you to change the way you approach something methodologically, making something old new.

Since (at this point) I envision my future research and work to be about spirituality and animal studies, especially from a variety of cultural contexts, I can't imagine transatlantic frameworks—or at least the emphasis on motion, exchange, and blurred boundaries—*not* being an underlying current in my methodological approach. It probably always would have been in some way or another, but now after this class I will be much more *aware* of when I am taking that perspective and much more intentional about it. I will be able to declare that I am operating within a specific field, or at least with its techniques, and show the relevance of my work to it and it to my work.

We've studied periodicals, novels/novelists, women's suffrage, and slavery through a transatlantic lens to show contrasts, similarities, and influences on the subject's evolution or construction, and I see myself applying this approach to feminist and queer spirituality/theology, ecocriticism, and animal studies to show threads crossing time and space. I want to learn and explore the way we make sense of ourselves as humans—as gendered, sexual, regional/global, species, and mortal/divine beings—and our relation to everything “other.” Seriously, I can't put into words my excitement at all the potential here, because for me and my purposes, transatlantic scholarship is about building solidarity, about crossing boundaries (which I HATE) to create an awareness of “earthlings.”