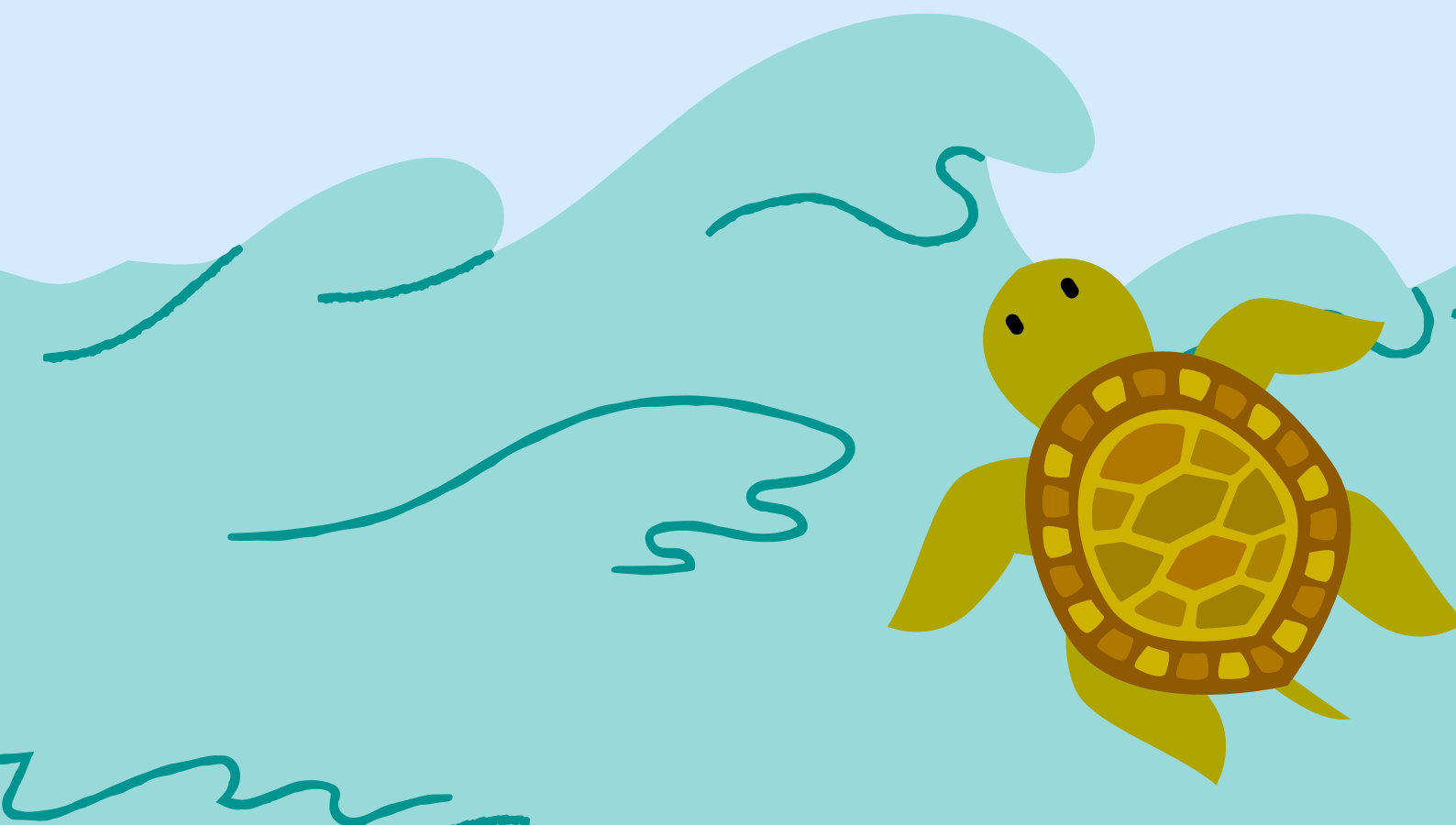


THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR AMERICAN STUDIES PRESENTS



**DIGITAL CONFERENCE**

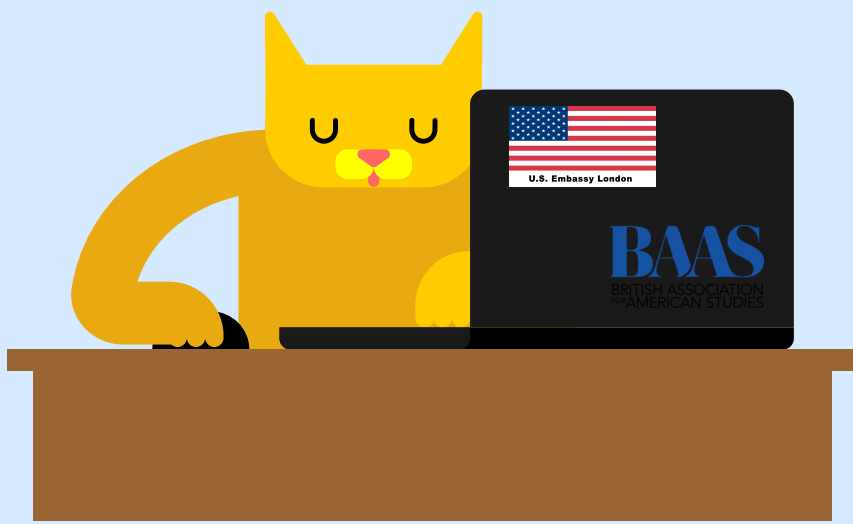
**#BAAS2021**

**APRIL 5-11, 2021**



Eccles Centre  
for American  
Studies





# Welcome!

We are glad to have you with us for this first-ever digital BAAS conference. We have six days of the best scholarship and people that American Studies has to offer ahead of us. This year, the roster is international; we are taking advantage of our digital format by welcoming an unprecedented number of participants from outside of the UK, all while preserving BAAS' aim to serve as a hub for UK-based Americanists. We look forward to the conversations this geographic diversity will spark. We are also pleased to be digital as part of the Green BAAS initiative. We aspire to be sustainable and accessible—on the program you will find many panels and roundtables that will endeavor to inspire critical conversations on our environmental footprint, both on the globe as a whole and at BAAS as a microcosm of this, both in the past and in our current moment.

This file contains a simple detailed program with all session descriptions and information. The closed conference environment will be made available later and contains a password-protected grid schedule where you can find all the session times and Zoom links. Once you register, you will receive this password via email. You can also use this password to access our 'on demand' section, where we will host recordings of sessions if you are unable to make the live edition—no need to miss out on any of the fun!

On behalf of everyone who worked to make this conference a success, we are very glad to have you and hope it will provide some community in these solitary times. The program contains many excellent panels, roundtables, and networking events. We are honored you are part of it either as a speaker or a delegate. We are also tremendously grateful for all our sponsors, whose info you will find on the next page. Have a great time!

Suzanne Enzerink

BAAS 2021 conference manager



Digital BAAS 2021 is made possible by the support  
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Studies



*genealogy*

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# PLENARY ADDRESSES



**DR. LAURA  
U. MARKS**

MONDAY APRIL 5  
5- 6:30 London time

**STREAMING MEDIA,  
ONLINE CONFERENCES,  
AND THE JEVON'S  
PARADOX**



**DR. SARAH  
M.S.  
PEARSALL**

THURSDAY APRIL 8  
5:30- 7:00 London time

**THE 'DANGEROUS  
DISORDERS'  
OF EARLY AMERICA**

sponsored by the Eccles Centre  
for American Studies at the British Library



**DR. SAMI  
SCHALK**

SATURDAY APRIL 10  
5:30- 7:00 London time

**Articulating and Enacting Black  
Disability Politics in the National Black  
Women's Health Project"**

sponsored by the  
Journal of American Studies

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## FRIDAY, APRIL 2

### PRE-CONFERENCE EVENT: BIPOC Hangout, April 2, 15:00

Come have a chat with your fellow BIPOC BAAS folks on 2nd April, 3pm and exchange experiences, ideas, and rants. Though this is primarily a social hang-out (BYO snacks and drinks!) we'd also love to hear about what BAAS can do to support BIPOC scholars working in the field.

If you identify as Black, indigenous, or a person of colour just send an email with your name to [christine.okoth@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:christine.okoth@warwick.ac.uk) and we'll send you an invite!

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## MONDAY, APRIL 5

### PLENARY I: LAURA U. MARKS—April 5, 17:00

“Streaming Media, Online Conferences, and the Jevons Paradox”

Dr. **Laura U. Marks** (Simon Fraser University)

According to the Jevons paradox, more efficient technologies tend to encourage greater use of a resource, reducing or eliminating savings. Our skyrocketing consumption of data in streaming media and online conferences (not to mention artificial intelligence and the “Internet of things”) is obliterating any energy savings promised at the outset of these technologies. Because about 80% of that energy comes from fossil fuels, streaming data has a dangerously bloated growing carbon footprint that could well destroy any hope of meeting the Paris Climate Accords. Media corporations, telecoms, and energy companies rely on fictional future efficiencies. In contrast, I will suggest some practical, if unpopular, solutions.

—This plenary, as the description makes clear, ties in directly with the Green BAAS agenda, and will offer us food for thought about the new normal of online conferencing. **Dr. Marks** works on media art and philosophy with an intercultural focus, and on small-footprint media. She was the co-organizer of the 2020 Small File Media Festival. Her most recent monograph is *Hanan al-Cinema: Affectations for the Moving Image* (MIT Press, 2015), and in 2020 Marks published “Let’s Talk About the Carbon Footprint of Streaming Media” in *AfterImage*.

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## TUESDAY, APRIL 6

### SESSION I: April 6, 12:00-13:30

#### IA: Lights, Camera, Crash: Finance and Contemporary Genre Film

##### **Chair: Cara Rodway**

**Abstract:** Following the 2008 financial crisis and the upsurge in critical and cultural interest in the financial market, New Economic Critics have recently looked to genre fiction in their analysis of cultural representations of capitalism. A 2015 special issue of *Journal of American Studies* entitled 'Fictions of Speculation' asserts that, while realism struggles to effectively communicate the more fantastical elements of finance – like futures, or the notion of spectral debt – genre fiction is pre-equipped to explain these phenomena within a literary environment where fantastical elements can be accepted as real. As such, the economic humanities is experiencing a significant turn towards genre studies, with the range of texts potentially classified as 'financial fiction' rapidly expanding.

This panel will contribute to this growing discussion by providing financial readings of three popular genres: superhero crime thriller, children's animated fairy tale, and dystopian science fiction. Each paper will engage with the representation of financial crisis, neoliberal critique, and explore how the financial market is presented to layman audiences through genre cinema.

##### *Exploring the 1981 of Joker - allegory of Reaganite original sin*

##### **Tom Cobb**

Through utilising concepts from International Relations theory and Political Science, this paper argues that *Joker's* 1981 *mise en scene* scrutinises the Reagan era's hegemony. It accomplishes this through analysing Arthur Fleck, the titular Joker who initiates his descent into criminal violence by killing three yuppie employees. Fleck's antagonism of Thomas Wayne, *Joker's* symbol of 1% elitism, elucidates clashes between populism and plutocracy corrosive to conservatism. Like the 2007 Neo-Western *No Country for Old Men*, *Joker* frames the Reagan era as causative of political disjunction.

##### *'The Matrix is a system, Neo. That system is our enemy': Financial Disconnection and Market Metaphor in The Matrix Trilogy*

##### **Amy Bride**

This paper will read *The Matrix* as a metaphor for financialization, and the entire franchise as a speculative revisioning of futures trading, market deification, and financial crisis. More specifically, I will read Neo's character arc as mimicking the progressive construction of the financial second self (a psychological condition experienced by futures traders), as well as the elevated personhood of the market itself which coincides with periods of intense financialization.

## *Disney's Frozen and The Lehman Sisters Hypothesis*

### **Edward Jackson**

This paper reads Disney's *Frozen* as an oblique allegory for the 2008 financial crash and subsequent years of austerity. Specifically, I argue that the film supports what has been called 'The Lehman Sisters Hypothesis'. This is the notion that if more women had been in positions of power in the financial sector before 2008, the crash might not have happened. Elsa and Anna, the film's aristocratic sisters, redeem and rejuvenate an imperiled financial system through ostensibly 'feminine' modes of risk-taking. I end by considering what this means for the much debated question of whether or not *Frozen* articulates a feminist politics.

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## **IB: Pandemics and the U.S. State: From AIDS to COVID-19**

**Abstract:** Public health law is almost entirely unintegrated into our accounts of the U.S. polity, yet pandemics and disease have long shaped histories of state-building, federalism, and constitutional states of exception. Focusing on the AIDS epidemic and our current moment, this panel will present new and invigorating scholarship that fills this historiographical lacuna. Considered together, the papers not only demonstrate how the history of AIDS can enhance our understandings of the carceral state, federalism, and public health governance: they also illuminate the historical forces driving the Covid-19 crisis.

**Chair:** Professor **Jonathan Bell** (University College London)

*'Dying in a Leadership Vacuum': Police Power, Public Health Federalism, and the Politics of Disease in the States*

**Stephen Colbrook** (University College London, PhD candidate)

Stephen Colbrook's paper examines how both AIDS and Covid-19 shed much-needed light on America's federalist system of public health governance. Throughout U.S. history, the primacy of local and state responsibility for public health has been a function of constitutional design. As a result, the states were at the leading edge of responding to AIDS, passing a flurry of HIV-specific bills in the 1980s. Equating the U.S. government with the *federal* government, many historians have framed the legislative and policy response to AIDS around national political developments, ignoring how responsibility for public health still rested primarily with state and local governments. The final part of this paper will explore how public health federalism produced a patchwork and diffuse response to Covid-19, which proved inadequate to a crisis that was national and global in scope.

*Education Not Repression': Risk, Policing, and Public Health*

**Salonee Bhaman** (Yale University, PhD candidate)

As the AIDS epidemic spread, questions of privacy and confidentiality quickly came to the fore, pitting traditional public health strategies against the new rights consciousness of post-1960s America. Salomee Bhaman's paper explores this dynamic by spotlighting the history of a 1984 public health ordinance that closed San Francisco's thirty bathhouses and sex clubs. Announced without public hearing or meeting, the order triggered a series of protests from gay democratic clubs, bathhouse owners, and AIDS activists, alongside enhanced surveillance of newly defined 'high risk' sex acts in public places. Disputes raged within the LGBT community over whether the bathhouse ordinance was sound public health policy or a violation of individual civil liberties, exposing cleavages around race, class, and political orientation. Ultimately, this case study reveals how the language of rights came to dominate public health discourse in the late-twentieth century, triggering sharp debates over the practical and ethical ramifications of coercive public health strategies.

### *The Fire Inside: Women Protesting AIDS in Prison, 1990-2005*

Dr **Emma Day** (University of Oxford, Research Fellow)

At the same time, women struggled to centre their needs and their risk within public health responses to the crisis that typically focused on men. Intersecting histories of the carceral state and the AIDS crisis, Emma Day's paper charts the rise of women's AIDS activism in prisons. From the 1980s onwards, rates of HIV in women's prisons were particularly high, but women in prison struggled to access treatment through health delivery systems that were designed with men in mind. This paper will explore how women in prison responded to this situation and attempted to achieve structural reform, highlighting the gendered dimensions of the carceral state and the interconnections between grassroots activism and structures of state power. It will also consider why and in what ways vulnerable and incarcerated women are again being left behind in the race to contain Covid-19.

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## IC: The Slave Narrative and Literary Exchanges in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World

**Panel format:** short papers (7-10 minutes each) followed by a Q&A involving the speakers, Chair, and audience members.

**Chair:** Tom F. Wright (University of Sussex)

*Black Households and Radical Housekeeping: Harriet Jacobs makes 'Arrangements'*

Prof **Bridget Bennett** (Leeds)

The emergence of third wave feminism has led to a re-examination of domesticity and a new focus on the complexity of households, and the gendered and raced practices which take place within them. My presentation reflects upon the way a sense of home was nurtured in black communities in the South during the period of slavery. In a well-known moment in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs describes the impact of Nat Turner's rebellion on the black community in Edenton. Faced with

the imminent invasion and search of her grandmother's 'snug little home' by what she calls 'country bullies and...poor whites' who were terrified by the possibility of black insurrection, "Linda Brent" takes pre-emptive action; she tidies the house. In the face of systematic racial terror Jacobs thus resorted to a resistant form of domestic work that I am calling *radical housekeeping*. This, I suggest, is a very specific form of domesticity. The term provides more nuance to the way we examine processes taking place in sites which are themselves being established under precarious conditions. Importantly, it is explicitly connected to identity formation and to acts of resistance. Radical housekeepers understood themselves to be actively creating homes spaces as sanctuaries within which the conditions of enslavement could be kept at bay for periods of time, however fleeting. Thus, by calling it *radical* I want to suggest both that it is a progressive activity, and that it is carried out under difficult circumstances. Since radical housekeepers were teaching lessons of self-sufficiency in order to change lives, it follows that radical housekeeping, practiced under conditions of extremity, has an explicit intentionality.

### *Race and Place in Frederick Douglass, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Charles Dickens*

Dr **Clare Elliott** (Northumbria)

In this paper I introduce literary kinships between Frederick Douglass, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Charles Dickens in my effort to re-establish the complex interaction of transatlantic literary and cultural endeavours surrounding abolition and anti-racism in the nineteenth century. To do this I consider Emerson's second British lecture tour, in 1847-8 during which he met key thinkers of the Victorian age, Carlyle, Clough, Arnold, Tennyson, Thackeray, Francis Jeffrey and Wordsworth, but his most profound meeting was with Charles Dickens – and their friendship lasted a lifetime. Through an analysis of the Emerson/Dickens friendship I argue that Emerson's thinking about slavery and race began to evolve from that point, becoming more closely aligned with Dickens's anti-slavery stance. During these same years, in the 1840s, Frederick Douglass was also crossing the Atlantic back and forth, on his Britain and Ireland tour and back to the US (1846-7). At this time he referred to Dickens in his speeches, while he shared a stage with Emerson at an anti-slavery address in the US. In constructing this triangulation between Dickens, Douglass and Emerson I show how all three writers were responding to each other's literary and abolitionist work, in ways that defies expected hierarchies of race and place.

### *"Words are now useful only as they stimulate to blows": African-American Soldiering and the Rhetoric of Contact*

Dr **Kristen Treen** (St Andrews)

In the months immediately following the publication of the Emancipation Proclamation, Frederick Douglass called on 'full-grown black men' -- emancipated, self-emancipated, and free -- to enlist in the Union army and realise, in practice, the promise of liberty contained within Lincoln's document. 'Action! Action, not criticism is the plain duty of this hour', he informed an audience in Rochester, New York: 'Words are now useful only as they stimulate to blows.' In this paper I address the fantasy of physical contact which emerged with the radical abolitionist enlistment efforts of 1863, and trace its importance to the conceptualisation of Black liberation and the prospective agency of the 'citizen-soldier' in the war's final years. Douglass' own moment of transformational touch -- as represented in the *Narrative's* relation of his fight with Edward Covey -- offers us a way of understanding the complex ethics of emancipatory contact, and the pressures it exerts both upon sentimental forms of touch, and

upon the structures of white subjectivity that sentimental conceptions of touch sustain. By re-reading African American soldiers' wartime letters in the light of Douglass' claims for the liberatory power of Black military violence, I suggest that the use of correspondence to describe and imagine contact with the Confederate enemy enabled formerly enslaved troops to explore the form and function of freedom. In grappling with epistolary etiquette and navigating the possibilities of epistolary contact, they also found ways to define the prospect of emancipation for themselves.

## Bios

**Bridget Bennett** is Professor of American Literature and Culture in the School of English, University of Leeds. Her research interests include a focus of representations of home in American culture, the focus of *Dangerous Domesticities*, her monograph in progress. A number of related publications have already appeared including two in *Early American Literature*, a 2018 article "'The Silence Surrounding the Hut': Invisible Slaves and Vanished Indians in *Wieland*" which was awarded the 2019 Arthur Miller Prize; and a 2014 article "The Crisis of Restoration: Mary Rowlandson's Lost Home". She is currently also working on a research project titled "The Dissenting Atlantic: Archives and Unquiet Libraries, 1776–1865," which is supported by a Major Research Fellowship from the Leverhulme Trust.

**Clare Elliott** is Senior Lecturer in Nineteenth-Century Literature at Northumbria University. Her research lies in Atlantic Literary Studies and responds to current critical approaches in the field - interdisciplinary cultural history and transatlantic Romanticism particularly. She is interested in transatlantic literary connections in the long nineteenth century especially in William Blake's afterlives. She has also published on Francis Jeffrey, Charlotte Brontë, Louisa May Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman and this new work on Charles Dickens and Frederick Douglass will appear in the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* this year. She edited the *Companion to Atlantic Literary Studies* with Leslie Eckel (EUP, 2016).

**Kristen Treen** is Lecturer in American Literature at the University of St Andrews. She is presently finalising revisions for her first monograph, on American Civil War literature, memory, and material culture. She has published and forthcoming work in *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal of Southern Cultures*; *Glossator*; and *Visions of Glory: The Civil War in Word and Image*, edited by Kathleen Diffley and Benjamin Fagan. She is the co-creator, with Dr Jillian Caddell (U. of Kent), of 'Commemorative Cultures: The American Civil War Monuments Project', an online resource which seeks to offer an alternative approach to the questions raised by the Civil War's public commemoration, and which will launch later this year (further information can be found here: <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/american-civil-war-monuments/>).

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## SESSION 2: April 6, 14:00-15:30

### 2A: Rock Ecologies

**Chair: Ellie Armon Azoulay**

**Abstract:** This panel will look at how American forms of popular music provide particular insight when

viewed ecocritically, and that such forms are as much a product of particular ecosystems as they are of a more conventionally understood “tradition”. The concept of rock *terroir* is well established, but it needs to be understood in ways that go beyond the mythopoetic, instead reflecting upon the dynamics of music are a product of particularities of history and stringencies of situation. In this way, we can build an understanding of translocational possibilities, and understand how American music can be seen as a complex, living organism. Because it relies on context, creation, and dissemination for its public status, American music serves as a rich source for an examination of environmental thought and expression.

### *The River in Reverse*

**Asbjørn Grønstad** and **Øyvind Vågnes** (University of Bergen)

The Mississippi Delta is, as Amanda Petrusich points out, “arguably the world’s most bountiful sonic ground – not just the land where the blues began, but where it all began, where many of America’s most important musicians were reared and set free.” In a recent article, Babette Tischleder reconsiders the materialist philosophies of Jane Bennett and Bruno Latour, arguing that their emphasis on nonhuman agency might limit our knowledge of non-anthropomorphic entities such as rivers. “The life of objects,” she writes, “can be grasped only within our earth-bound existence and through the imaginative forms of worlding that literature, art, and other cultural expressions afford.” This paper surveys the place that the Mississippi River occupies in the musical imagination – from Bessie Smith’s “Backwater Blues” on to Randy Newman’s “Louisiana 1927,” Elvis Costello and Allen Toussaint and beyond – as a site of ecological struggle, a phenomenon beyond “right and reasonable conduct,” as Mark Twain once put it. Adam Gussow describes the Mississippi as “the wellspring not just of blues *music* but blues *feeling*, a whole complex of emotions and attitudes engendered in its African-American residents – a swirling mixture of fear, despair, fury, heartache, extreme restlessness, freely ranging sexual desire, and a stubborn determination to persist against all odds and sing the bittersweet song of that persistence.” In our paper we will explore how a tradition of songwriting might be said to comprise what we propose to refer to as an “aesthetic imaginary” of the Mississippi River.

### *‘Illuminated by my attention’: ecologies of joint attention in David Berman and the Silver Jews*

Dr. **Ellen Dillon** (Independent Scholar)

David Berman’s poem ‘World: Series’ describes and enacts a moment where the world, or a small slice of it, gets captured within the poet’s attention and becomes a poem before our very eyes. The poem moves from capturing the world in the form of words, to grabbing a snapshot of objects and moments as they transit through the poem’s attention, with the gesture of putting down a book and moving to the window signalling a yielding of control to the things of the world themselves. This paper will begin by situating this poem’s gestures within Yves Citton’s ‘ecology of attention,’ summarized by McKenzie Wark as ‘Attend to the in-between spaces...Observe the connections. And act on them.’

The paper will go on to consider the Silver Jews song ‘The Wild Kindness’ as a similar gesture of attending, observing and acting, an example of the ‘striving for affective harmonisation’ (Citton, 2017: 86) that Citton considers central to an ecology of joint attention. In particular, it will attend to the interplay between Stephen Malkmus’s guitar solos and backing vocals and Berman’s lyrics, arguing that Malkmus’s improvised guitar line shows itself to be ‘attentive to the attention of the other’ (87), constituting an intersubjective gesture, one of ‘the living dialogical structures in which joint attention takes place’ (88).

*“Don’t Fall on Me”: The allusive politics of pop climate change advocacy*

Dr. **Jonathan Silverman** (University of Massachusetts, Lowell)

It’s hard to write a good song and save the world at the same time. While ascribing specific reasons to why musicians write songs would be a mistake, self-expression often takes precedence over politics when writing songs. Still, writing about the planet and ecology is obviously not new to pop music—Joni Mitchell’s “Big Yellow Taxi” and The Pretenders’ “My City Was Gone” are just two examples of anti-development songs. But there is often a slyness to artist expression when being political. Perhaps the slyness comes from audience concerns—after all, not all audiences want their politics so straightforward. But acknowledging and incorporating climate politics coincides with clever artists confirming their savvy and awareness. One example is in Lana Del Ray’s majestic “The Greatest,” a song about lost love. After detailing the sense of loss she feels, she sings in a list of cultural observations (including that Kanye West “is blond and gone), “L.A. is in flames; it’s getting hot.” The expression is poetic and feels true; at the same time, the sentiment is also fatalistic and is not necessarily a call to action. This is in context with other songs like R.E.M.’s “Don’t Fall on Me,” which seems to be about pollution, with a lyric like “Buy the sky and sell the sky and bleed the sky and tell the sky/Don’t fall on me.” The lyric seems important and ecological, but any insights of their meaning only come with a particular interpretation; the meanings are allusive rather than illustrative. This paper will explore the allusive politics of climate change, what work it aims to and does, and put it context with the histories of popular song and politics.

*Hear it in the Deep Earth’s Core: Full of Hell and the Sludge We Make*

Dr. **Michael Hinds** (Dublin City University)

Hardcore punk is the necessary expression of the counter-sublime in late capitalism, and its downward mobility has proved to be a remarkably fungible phenomenon. This is evidenced by its apparently infinite mutations into subgenres on either side of the Atlantic (Christian hardcore, Crunkcore, Deathcore, Deathgrind, Easycore, Electrocore, Grindcore, Horrorcore, Jazzcore, Krishnacore, Mathcore, Nardcore, Nintendocore, Taqwacore, Thrashcore for starters). These mutations can be indexed to the proliferating crises and catastrophes of late capitalism, even if they might share an abiding existential narrative of abjection and alienation, of querying the difference between living and merely surviving. If the emphasis in early hardcore from the UK during the late 70s and 80s was on the politics of nuclear proliferation and its attendant apocalypticism, emphasis has shifted in the past decades to how social and environmental entropies have converged. To discuss this turn, I explore the work of Full of Hell, a band from Ocean City, Maryland and Eastern Pennsylvania, whose name evokes landscapes both avernal and infernal, possibly a reference to the landscapes left by coalmining in the latter state. Full of Hell have been described as noise metal, grindcore or sludge metal; whatever the designation, in their music we are presented with the radically modernist force of their noise, which appears to make impossible any conventional faculty of sense-making, and then face the work of attempting to articulate that to their often intricate word structures. Their first album *Roots of Earth are Consuming My Home* (2011) contains one admonitory and emphatic lyric after another in relation to the devastations of being human, not just in terms of afflicted subjectivity, but of the damage done by us to the planet as something that we can

objectively understand. At the same time, that understanding cannot be processed, cannot be understood. Hardcore brings us to the necessarily brutal impasse, to a sense of consequence about climate change that demands a realization of its destructive power. Through it we have to realize the worst, because only imagining it is not an option.

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## 2B: Transatlantic Women's Letter Writing of the 19th and Early 20th Century

**Chairs:** **Katrin Horn** (University of Bayreuth) and **Laura Rattray** (University of Glasgow)

**Abstract:** This roundtable session brings together an international group of academics and archivists to reconsider transatlantic networks of correspondence, specifically via women's letter writing of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Exploring both public and private correspondence and the often ill-defined spaces in-between, participants address the shifting publicity/intimacy of letter writing between the mid nineteenth and early twentieth century. These presentations individually and the roundtable discussions collectively highlight transatlantic networks forged and supported through letter writing, and its connection to the increasing public role of women as activists and professionals.

Embracing the possibilities of the digital format, the roundtable presents a variety of material to its audience: a range of primary documents plus digital tools that illustrate the intricate and far-reaching networks of correspondence. Participants offer a variety of methodological approaches: from practical questions of transcription to the theoretical, analytical and ethical issues of working with material often not meant for public consumption, and the telling of otherwise inaccessible stories by letters.

**Katrin Horn** (University of Bayreuth) draws on the unpublished transatlantic correspondence between actress Charlotte Cushman (1816–1876) and publishers James T. (1817-1881) and Annie Fields (1834-1915) (Huntington Library) to contrast Cushman's blunt management of her public reputation with the subtle and intimate communication of the open secret of her relationship with sculptor Emma Stebbins (1815–1882).

**Etta Madden** (Missouri State University) illuminates the emotional gaps between the "Letters from Rome" Anne Hampton Brewster (1819-1892) wrote for the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* and the *Boston Daily Advertiser* and private letters she received, which prompted outpourings in her diaries. For over twenty years, Brewster bolstered the professional profiles of artists such as Harriet Hosmer but also inflamed jealousy among writers such as Anna Edwards, who sought her support.

Considering the implications of letters that Frederick Douglass sent from the US to Britain, during the Civil War, **Sarah Meer** (University of Cambridge) argues that it was Julia Griffiths who passed these to a British newspaper, and that their printing drew, paradoxically, on the authenticating prestige bestowed by the sense that they were private testimony.

**Elizabeth A. Novara** (Library of Congress) reflects on the use of women's letters in public engagement and outreach efforts, including a gallery exhibition and online crowdsourced transcription campaigns, during the United States women's suffrage centennial. Letters discussed document the importance of personal relationships, transatlantic connections, and political ambitions of correspondents such as Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Blackwell, Susan B. Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Nellie Quander.



**Julie Olin-Ammentorp** (Le Moyne College) discusses the letters of Willa Cather (1873-1947) from France, focusing on Cather's first trip in 1902, at age twenty-eight. The lifelong Francophile wrote both public letters documenting her trip and personal letters to friends and family members. Paradoxically, while the personal letters reveal her deepening admiration for French culture, it is in the public letters that she reveals her growing ambitions as a writer.

**Laura Rattray** (University of Glasgow) discusses the unpublished correspondence between Edith Wharton (1862-1937) and art historian Mary Berenson (1864-1945). While Wharton's friendship with Mary's husband, Bernard Berenson, has long taken centre stage, this talk considers the writer's complex negotiation of public gossip and private revelations, with a rare intimacy and vulnerability revealed through correspondence with her female friend.

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## 2C: Elemental America

**Chair: Moritz Ingwersen** (University of Konstanz)

**Abstract:** This roundtable seeks to foreground the productivity of an elemental approach for conceptualizing human-environment relationships in American literature and culture. It takes its cue from recent proposals of “elemental ecocriticism” (Cohen and Duckert 2015), “elemental media theory” (Peters 2017, Parikka 2015, Starosielski 2019), and “elemental philosophy” (Macauley 2011, Serres 2010) that have introduced elements and the elemental as a promising analytical tool to examine the interrelated dimensions of environmental exposure, material agency, and physical infrastructures as constitutive of ecological entanglements and precarities. Expanding from the Empedoclean quartet of water, air, earth, and fire, the roundtable seeks to access American subjectivities by tracing the material elements that sustain and suffuse them. In response to the emerging “elemental turn” in environmental cultural criticism, the contributions take up what materialist ecocritics have conceptualized as “storied matter” (Iovino and Opperman 2014) by addressing American elements not as an ontological given or a passive background but as simultaneously material products and producers of cultural technologies, texts, and metaphors.

Drawing on examples from experimental film, narrative fiction, photography, poetry, and painting, the 5-10-minute contributions unfold the social, aesthetic, political, and poietic dimensions of elemental America. With regard to methodology, the aim of this roundtable is to put elemental approaches in dialogue with cutting-edge scholarship in the environmental humanities, including environmental media theory, materialist ecofeminism, critical infrastructure studies, and the energy humanities.

*Henry David Thoreau and the Politics of Fire in the Anthropocene*

**Savannah DiGregorio** (Vanderbilt University)

This contribution attends to the history of environmental ethics and its affiliation with exclusionary politics of anthropocentric violence by examining Thoreau's invocation of fire as lively matter and ecological agent.

*Surfacing Ecological Disaster: “Poets for Living Waters” and the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill*

**Aaron Pinnix** (Fordham University)

This contribution illustrates how the work of the poetry collective “Poets for Living Waters” counteracts the repressive aesthetic and political regimes of the use of Corexit in the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon spill by rendering oil visible.

*Aurum’s Agency: The Material Aesthetics of the Klondike Gold Rush in Bill Morrison’s Dawson City: Frozen Time*

**Linda Hess** (University of Augsburg)

This contribution attends to the entanglements between “natural” elements and “cultural” artifacts by examining the relationship between filmic material and material landscapes in Morrison’s experimental film on the Klondike Gold Rush.

*Rotters and Runoff: Elemental Fluidities in the American Zombie Narrative*

**Drago Momcilovic** (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)

This contribution examines how the contemporary zombie apocalypse narrative exposes the violence of anthropogenic climate change by depicting environments that are reshaped amid ongoing interpenetrations of infectious and toxic fluids.

*“The Thunder of the Cylinders”: Automobile Airs and the American Road Narrative*

**Timo Müller** (University of Konstanz)

This contribution traces how early accounts of car travel employ air as a materialdiscursive trope to negotiate the manifold cultural tensions created by automobility.

*“Basically Burning Computers”: The Pluming Exhausts and Chemical Afterlives of Astronautical Rocketry*

**Rachel Hill** (Goldsmiths University of London)

This contribution focuses on the visual cultures of rocket plumes to examine the epistemological gap between their aestheticization as atmospheric media and their multiscalar, yet invisible toxicities as lingering chemical elements.

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## SESSION 3: April 6, 16:00-17:30

### Plenary Roundtable: Teaching Environmental American Studies in a Time of Crisis

**Abstract:** As part of the upcoming nearly-carbon-neutral Digital BAAS 2021 conference, we propose a roundtable conversation exploring the teaching of environmental American Studies. Our intention is for a roundtable that is broad in coverage, spanning teaching from a range of multi- and inter-disciplinary perspectives.

As the climate emergency has moved from abstract to concrete—with parts of America *On Fire* (Naomi Klein)—Americanists are starting to respond. We are beginning to green all aspects of our work, from administration to research and public engagement. Perhaps the most fundamental way in which Americanist academics can directly intervene in the mounting crisis is through teaching.

The foundational myths and nation-building histories of America are based on carbon-propelled geographic and social mobilities, settler-colonial and environmental plunder, freedom (including the

freedom to consume), militarized expansion and capitalist accumulation. Today, US media and politicians lead the way in representing climate change as a controversial 'culture war' issue, rather than an existential threat, which poses representational challenges for climate activists. Working through American environmental histories and representational crises with young people (who make up the vast majority of our student cohorts and will be more adversely affected by global heating than their teachers) is provocative and urgent.

While American Studies scholars in fields such as environmental humanities and ecocriticism have long been delivering teaching in this field – inspired by America's history of ecology and environmental protest movements – these pedagogies are evolving. Environmental teaching is being pushed in ambitious, critical, applied, intersectional and activist directions. How can conventional academic knowledge production and dissemination be challenged to meet the scale of the crisis?

Some of the answers have to do with reframing histories and recalibrating texts: what we might call 'de-carbonizing the curriculum.' Others are broader and involve interrogating the parameters and purpose of teaching and learning, drawing up new ways of partnering with and challenging students, university infrastructures, and non-academic sectors and communities. How do we use the classroom as a portal to hold our institutions, governments, and ourselves to account in the face of climate breakdown?

Roundtable topics may include:

#### CURRICULAR THEMES

Histories, literatures and politics of US environmentalism and eco-crisis

Decarbonizing the curriculum (rethinking American Studies survey courses)

Antiracist and native/indigenous environmentalism; eco-feminism; queer ecologies

Capitalism versus the climate

US media (mainstream, social, etc.) and pop culture and environmental risk communication

Green social movements and theories of change

Energy humanities and environmental studies

American empire, slow violence and the living planet

Borders, migration, scarcity, refuge

Polarization, authoritarianism, 'culture wars', resistance

Failure of liberalism / twilight of democracy

Representational crises of climate change and catastrophe

#### ENGAGED TEACHING IN A TIME OF CRISIS

Emotions (fear, anger, grief, apathy, etc.) elicited by teaching/learning about climate crisis

Weighing individual ('what can I do?'), institutional, and societal responses to climate crisis

Bridging academic abstraction and meaningful action

Student-staff climate activism, divestment campaigns, and institutional critique

Building partnerships between researchers, students and communities ('Public Humanities')

Energy transition and inconvenient truths for American Studies in Britain (carbon footprints of exchange programmes; mobility dreams; research travel; etc.)

**Chair: Eithne Quinn**, American Studies, University of Manchester

**Participants:**

**Elsa Devienne** is lecturer in US history at Northumbria University and the author of *The Sand Rush: An Environmental History of the Los Angeles's Beaches in the 20th century* ((Sorbonne Editions, 2020; under contract with Oxford University Press). She specialises in environmental history, urban history and the history of the body, gender and sexuality.

**Christine Okoth** is a research fellow in the English and Comparative Literature Department at the University of Warwick and will be Assistant Professor of Contemporary Literature from September 2021. She is currently working on a book project called *Race and the Raw Material: Black Aesthetics as Extractive Form* and her essays have been published or are forthcoming in *Textual Practice*, *Cambridge Quarterly* and *White Review*.

**Eithne Quinn** teaches American Studies at the University of Manchester. She is an AHRC leadership fellow on the project *Prosecuting Rap: Criminal Justice and UK Black Youth Expressive Culture (2020-21)*, and her most recent book is *A Piece of the Action: Race and Labor in Post-Civil Rights Hollywood* (Columbia University Press, 2020). She teaches a third-year American Studies course titled *Climate Crisis & Culture Wars* and is the sustainability lead on the executive committee of BAAS.

**J.T. Roane** is assistant professor of African and African American Studies in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University where he also leads the Black Ecologies Initiative at the Institute for Humanities Research. Roane is also 2020-2021 National Endowment for the Humanities/Mellon Foundation Research Fellow at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library where he is completing a book manuscript "Dark Agoras: Insurgent Black Social Life and the Politics of Place in Philadelphia."

**John Wills** is reader in American History and Culture and Director of American Studies at the University of Kent, UK. He is the editor of the *European Journal of American Culture* (Intellect) and author of six books, his most recent *Gamer Nation* (Johns Hopkins University Press); he is currently working on a new monograph on Doom Town and Nevada Test Site for the University Press of Kansas.

**Frances Henderson** is an undergraduate student in the Department of English & American Studies at the University of Manchester. She is taking the American Studies class 'Climate Change & Culture Wars' and is a climate activist.

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7

SPECIAL EVENT: April 7, 11:00-12:00

## Green BAAS network meeting

You are warmly invited to the *Green BAAS* network meeting at our digital (nearly carbon neutral!) conference. This is forum to chat about environmental aspects of our research, teaching and activities, with a view to developing collaborations and green projects. All welcome.

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SESSION 4: April 7, 12:00-13:30

## 4A: Instapoetry and Hypercapitalism

**Abstract:** “Instapoem” is a term for short, simple poems, often with accompanying images, designed to be circulated primarily on the Instagram platform. It is undoubtedly the most popular movement in poetry for many years, with the success of writers such as Rupi Kaur being credited for a “trickle down” effect that has boosted sales of poetry more generally. Yet it is also a highly contested form. Many Instapoets reject the label as demeaning, while critics have dismissed the form as lacking in craft and appealing only to the lowest common denominator. In this panel, we concentrate on how Instapoetry reflects changing working conditions in the digital age. The movement is branded with the name of a private corporation, and, while there have been movements such as Twitter lit previously, there has been nothing like the market penetration of Instapoetry. The poet’s labour is casualized and constantly forced into competition for virtual currency (“likes”). Thanks to hashtags and reposts, the poet’s output is objectively measurable, and it is the most popular poets who are rewarded with a contract (usually with Andrews McMeel, the major Instapoetry publishers).

To account for the digital format of the conference, and to acknowledge that there has been until now very little discussion of Instapoetry in academia, we will collaborate in a prewritten round table, to include a collaboratively assembled visual element (Powerpoint presentation). The purpose will be to discuss Instapoetry as an artistic manifestation of 21st century hypercapitalism. Each of the presenters that we have invited has already produced conference papers on Instapoetry, and will present from their own theoretical standpoint.

### Position statements:

**JuEunhae Knox** (University of Glasgow): My research concentrates on the circulation of classic poems on the Instagram platform, a phenomenon I label “poet/m tagging.” In my contribution, I will explain the ways that we can read reposts and hashtags as pure flows of cultural capital.

**Millicent Lovelock** (University of Manchester): A pervasive neoliberal rationality shapes Instapoetry, producing a poetry that is aware of various inequalities, injustices, and traumas, but which centres the

self as a site of labour while often ignoring the broader societal conditions which produce injustice or trauma.

**James Mackay** (European University Cyprus): The frequent appeal to images of nature, both in the poems and their accompanying images, represents a repressed eco-anxiety that is the product of hypercapitalist society, exacerbated by the haptic experience of the screens on which Instapoetry is viewed.

**Laura Gallon** (University of Sussex): Instapoetry, and the online space more broadly, has offered commercial possibilities for women of 'minority' backgrounds who have traditionally been marginalised by the Western publishing industry. Bypassing the politics of literary production allows them to reshape the publishing world.

**Zak Bronson and Warren Steele** (Western University Canada): We focus on branding and authenticity, highlighting how Instapoets utilize the logics of the Instagram platform to create poems that exploit the experiences of neoliberal alienation fostered by social media applications such as Instagram.

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## 4B: Transnational Abolitionism and Racial Revolution in the Nineteenth Century (BrANCA Panel)

*This panel is sponsored by the **British Association of Nineteenth Century Americanists**, a UK-based network of researchers, teachers, writers, and cultural critics engaged in progressive, interdisciplinary scholarship concerning American writing in the long nineteenth century. Our mission is to foster a community of scholars interested in drawing on the vast potential of nineteenth-century American texts to intervene in a variety of discourses and pressing issues.*

**Abstract:** Reform or abolish? This is a question many social activists in the twenty-first century are increasingly asking of American social institutions such as the police force and the prison system that have been identified as being at the heart of the perpetuation of oppressive racial structures that have their roots in a deeper past. It is a question, as the historian Sasha Turner has recently pointed out in an essay entitled "Distinguishing Abolition from Reform," that might also be asked of the social institution that many scholars would see as the seed of these structures: nineteenth-century slavery. Is it time to dispense with the monolithic term "abolitionism" as a descriptor of the variegated social movements that constituted the campaign against slavery in the decades before the Civil War? How did these movements wrestle with the conflicting impulses to reform and revolution that flowed through them? To what extent did the Reconstruction-era see either the abolition or the reform of slavery's cultural, economic and ideological dimensions? And what lessons do the failures or successes of nineteenth-century "abolitionism" have for the present moment? This panel seeks to plot answers to these questions by tracing the transnational circulation of abolitionist ideas in the nineteenth century and the forms of resistance to racial oppression that they both allowed and evaded, as figures such as William Wells Brown, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Martin Delany, and W. E. B. Du Bois drew on examples ranging from the English Civil War to the Haitian Revolution in order to try to conceptualize the radical abolition of existing racial, social, and economic structures.

**Chair:** **Hannah Murray** (University of Liverpool)

*William Wells Brown, Fugitive Tourism, and the Revolutionary Turn of the Wheel*

**Charles Baraw** (Southern Connecticut State University)

When William Wells Brown arrived in Britain in 1849, he inadvertently commenced a new career as a literary tourist and author. Exiled by the Fugitive Slave Act, Brown began a course of travel that culminated in the London publication of his travelogue, *Three Years in Europe* (1852) and a novel, *Clotel; or, the President's Daughter* (1853), both firsts for an African American writer. In this paper, I argue that Brown's response to Britain is the transformation—through adaptation and appropriation—of Anglo-American modes of genteel tourism and the literary discourses, canonical and ephemeral, that sustain them. Written in the service of his anti-slavery agenda, Brown's representations of heritage sites and the homes and haunts of British authors are characterized by a paradoxical mix of tourist conventions (including much material plagiarized from British sources) and a subtle but insistent emphasis on scenes of revolutionary violence. Wherever he travels, Brown finds and occupies "the author's seat" and discovers or translates to a site (through appropriated texts) memorials of the English Civil War that anticipate the turn of fortune that will overthrow American slavery. With these two gestures, Brown assumes a new position as a fugitive American author and contributes a newly politicized mode of tourism to the available range of anti-slavery discourses. My paper looks at examples that include Brown's veneration of Liverpool's William Roscoe, his visit to Tintern Abbey, and the wedding tour in his revised novel, *Clotelle* (1860).

*Cardiovascular Experience: On Hypertensive Life Forms in Emerson's Writing*

**Ross Martin** (University of Michigan)

This paper takes a different look at resistance in Ralph Waldo Emerson's writing: forms of resistance which are not clearly social, political, or even personal. It explores Emerson's theory of hematological overpouring, a surging force that moves what is personal towards what is impersonal by serial expansions: the philosophical impetus for his anti-slavery rhetoric. I investigate Emerson's abolitionist thinking through his engagement with Emanuel Swedenborg—the Enlightenment scientist turned mystic—whose lost hematology theorizes personal organization and impersonal disorganization. Through an extensive reconstruction of Emerson's Swedenborgianism, the paper seeks to uncover and demonstrate a battle plan unfurled over the course of his career to infuse Swedenborgian science with an emerging strain of radical American thought. I then turn to the Haitian Revolution which for Emerson exemplifies the heart's emancipatory capacity by Toussaint Louverture and thereby situates revolutionary change in an overactive heartbeat, one at the center of a momentous movement. With Louverture, the embodiment of anti-slavery, Emerson at last identifies the dawning of a new age, promising to finally overcome cultural inertia, causing an upheaval in experience through the upmost affirmation.

*Enslavement, Indenture: The Belated Triangulation of Asianness Amid the (Failed) Unfolding of Abolition*

**Christine 'Xine' Yao** (University College London)

Near the end of his unfinished novel *Blake: Or the Huts of America*, Martin Delany imagines a vision of decolonial disaffection in the Caribbean involving “the Negroes, mulattoes and quadroons, Indians, and even Chinamen.” In this paper I consider the role of the Chinese in what I name as counterintimacies as the rebellion against what Lisa Lowe calls the intimacies of four continents which are the imbrications between Black enslavement, Indigenous settler colonial genocide, and Asian indentured servitude that made possible Western modernity. Produced by those entangled histories Liverpool was the site of vibrant Black and Chinese communities around the turn of the century which is when my great-grandfather arrived on a ship from Hong Kong. He landed without knowing English but in a year he learned so well that he then matriculated at Merton College at Oxford. Despite Lowe’s articulation of the intimacies of four continents, Asian indentured servitude is a belated triangulation in these histories emergent from 1492: in philosopher Sylvia Wynter’s foundational work about the vision of 1492 in the making of the world order Asians receive scant mention. I place my family history in relation to my discussion of early Black radical writers like Martin Delany and David Walker for how they envisioned the fraught role of Asians in their concepts of abolitionist decolonization. Both model minority whose cheap labour was meant to replace enslaved Black people as well as Yellow Peril threat to white society writ large, the Chinese occupy an uncertain position as potential co-conspirators or as complicit with colonizers. The afterlife of slavery begat Asian indentured servitude: through the convergences between the slave trade and the coolie trade I hope to sketch out the potential of counterintimacies for what the UK now calls the amalgamation of “BME.”

*“The Historic and Critical Failure of Abolition Democracy”*

**Stephen Shapiro** (University of Warwick)

This paper will argue that the distinction between “abolition” and “reform” is not coherent, since “abolition democracy,” in its actual historic practice and initial theorization by W. E. B. Du Bois, was still caught within a reformist horizon. Wallerstein argues that centrist liberalism sought to regulate the effects of transformational, popular sovereignty by controlling the acquisition of suffrage and education towards “passive” subjects formerly consigned to social death (non-whites, women, working class). In Black Reconstruction, Du Bois introduced the concept of abolition democracy, his argument explicitly stayed within the limits of suffrage and education for the newly emancipated. Cedric Robinson’s *Black Marxism* critiqued Du Bois’s failure to provide an alternative to industrial capitalist, even while Du Bois criticized its exploitation. Furthermore, the abolitionists’ children tended to marry into antebellum, property-owning elite Northern families, who were anxious to invent a status lineage against slavery in order to ensure their unchallenged accumulation through capitalism. Thus, “abolition democracy” failed in the North as equally as it had in the South. Angela Davis, however, in her interview entitled “abolition democracy” provides a non-reformist, yet still unfilled direction: “When equality is measured in terms of access to repressive institutions that remain unchanged or even become strengthened by the admission of those who were previously barred... we need to insist on different criteria for democracy: substantive as well as formal rights, the right to be free of violence, the right to employment, housing, healthcare, and quality education. In brief, socialist rather than capitalist conceptions of democracy.”

**Biographies:**



**Charles Baraw** teaches American Literature at Southern Connecticut State University. His essay “William Wells Brown, *Three Years in Europe*, and Fugitive Tourism” won the 2012 Darwin T. Turner Award for the Year’s Best Essay in *The African American Review*. His recent work on Nathaniel Hawthorne appears in the *Canadian Review of American Studies*, “Hawthorne, A Pilgrimage to Salem, and the Poetics of Literary Tourism”; in *Literary Imagination*, “Hawthorne’s Two Bodies: Politics and Aesthetics in *Our Old Home*”; and in the collection *Transatlantic Author Love in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Paul Westover and Ann Rowland.

**Ross Martin** is a Frederick Donald Sober Postdoctoral Fellow in English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. With publications in *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* and in *ESQ: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, he focuses on literature and culture in early nineteenth-century America, specializing in the comparative study of philosophical and scientific ideas as they appear in literary writing. His research emphasizes the interdisciplinary contexts in antebellum America as a means to ask questions about non-normative modes of thinking at the intersection of literature and ethics. His book project, *Ecstatic Empiricism: Demonology in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, uncovers an alternative demonological tradition that embraces what is irreducibly plural about sensuous life.

**Christine “Xine” Yao** is Lecturer in American Literature to 1900 at University College London. Her book *Disaffected: The Cultural Politics of Unfeeling in Nineteenth-Century America* is forthcoming with Duke University Press in fall 2021. Her scholarly essays have appeared in *J19*, *Occasion*, *American Quarterly*, and *American Gothic Culture: An Edinburgh Companion*. Xine is the co-host of PhDivas, a podcast about academia, culture, and social justice across the STEM/humanities divide, as well as the founding Chair of the C19 Podcast, a public platform for C19: the Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists. Her honours include the Yasuo Sakakibara Essay Prize from the American Studies Association and she has received grants from organizations such as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

**Stephen Shapiro** is a Professor in the Department of English and Comparative Studies at the University of Warwick. He has authored or edited 17 book-length projects. His most recent work includes the “Historical Essay” in the MLA-CSE approved edition of Charles Brockden Brown’s *Political Pamphlets*.

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#### 4C: Race and Memory in the Petrochemical South (Green BAAS panel)

*This panel is sponsored by the **British Association for American Studies Green BAAS initiative**. BAAS is committed to reflecting upon the environmental impact of our activities, and to making positive changes to combat climate catastrophe. This digital conference is part of this Green BAAS agenda.*

**Abstract:** This panel explores the racialisation of memory in the petrochemical South. Working at the intersections of American studies, critical race studies, the environmental humanities, and cultural memory studies, we analyse landscapes and sites, literary texts and theoretical discourses, assessing the limits and possibilities of their memorative capacities. The papers focus on commemorative practices in the American South: critiquing hegemonic constructions of history that have marginalized black

experiences and endangered African American life, and highlighting forms of cultural and environmental activism that aim to challenge institutionalized racism.

### *Hurricanes and Oil: Environmental Remembrance in the American South*

**Rick Crownshaw** (Goldsmiths)

Focusing on Richard Misrach and Kate Orff's phototext, *Petrochemical America* (2012) and the novels of Jesmyn Ward, this paper seeks to explore theories and aesthetic strategies for the cultural remembrance of lives, bodies and ecosystems in the American South rendered permeable, disposable and devastated by the interrelations of a fossil-fuelled economy, petrochemical contamination and extreme weather. The ongoing ecological consequences of the extraction, processing and consumption of oil, from contamination to climate change – characteristic of our new geological epoch, the Anthropocene – disproportionately affect the socio-economic precariat. The American South's inflection of the Anthropocene is continuous with a long history of the environmental mediation of disposability that originates in plantation slavery. *Petrochemical America's* architectural, photographic, stratigraphical, geological and cartographical illustrations (and corresponding verbal narratives) map the geographical and ecological spread of petroleum infrastructures, industries and (seen and unseen) pollution, the deep time of fossil fuel formation, and the heritage topography of antebellum plantations. While *Petrochemical America* tends to visualise landscapes rather than those that inhabit them, Ward's fiction represents a populated Mississippi geography of bodies porous to and constituted by environmental harms and so living monuments to the unfolding Anthropocene.

### *Civilizing Memory?: Industry, Heritage, and Environmental Racism in Alabama*

**Lucy Bond** (Westminster) and **Jessica Rapson** (King's)

This two-part paper will examine how Alabama's heritage and tourist industries are implicated in marginalising past and present forms of environmental racism. The first paper will outline the historical masternarratives and counternarratives adopted by museums and educational centres in Montgomery, Selma, and Birmingham. In each of these places, the framing of the past is problematically racialised: with the story of Civil Rights juxtaposed against a nostalgic retelling of 'white' histories, rooted in the Civil War and Alabama's industrial past, venerating the Confederacy and fetishising the extraction and production of coal and steel. The second paper will examine the way in which each of these masternarratives – the Civil War, Civil Rights, and the industrial past – is imbricated in contemporary environmental justice struggles, focusing on three case studies: Tallassee, 34 miles from Montgomery; Uniontown, 30 miles from Selma; and the Collegeville suburb of Birmingham. In recent years, each of these places has witnessed bitter struggles between African American residents and industrial corporations that have exposed residents to unacceptable levels of toxins and pollutants. These communities were born out of the injurious histories of slavery, segregation, and redlining, and, today, their inhabitants continue to experience disenfranchisement from regional and federal institutions.

### **Biographies:**

**Lucy Bond** is a principal lecturer in English at the University of Westminster. She is the author of *Frames of Memory after 9/11: Culture, Criticism, Politics and Law* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and co-author, with Stef Craps, of the Routledge New Critical Idiom guide to *Trauma* (2020). She is the co-editor of *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders* (de Gruyter, 2014), *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies* (Berghahn, 2017), and *Planetary Memory in Contemporary American Fiction* (Routledge, 2018). With Jessica Rapson, she is currently working on a BA/Leverhulme funded project, "Processing Memory: Heritage, Industry, and Environmental Racism in the American Gulf States."

**Rick Crownshaw** is a senior lecturer in the Department of English and Creative Writing, Goldsmiths, University of London. He is the author of *The Afterlife of Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Literature and Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan 2010), the editor of *Transcultural Memory* (Routledge 2014), and co-editor of *The Future of Memory* (Berghahn 2010, 2013). He is currently working on a monograph, *Remembering the Anthropocene in American Fiction*, which focuses on the potential of cultural memory and trauma studies in representing climate change, alongside narratives of extinction, the resourcing of war, American petrocultures and post-oil imaginaries, and climate change communication and cognition.

**Jessica Rapson** is a senior lecturer in the Department of Culture, Media, and Creative Industries at King's College London. She is the author of *Topographies of Suffering: Buchenwald, Babi Yar, Lidice* (Berghahn 2015), and co-editor of *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders* (de Gruyter, 2014) and *Planetary Memory in Contemporary American Fiction* (Routledge, 2017). With Lucy Bond, she is currently working on a BA/Leverhulme funded project, "Processing Memory: Heritage, Industry, and Environmental Racism in the American Gulf States."

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## SESSION 5: April 7, 14:00-15:30

### Plenary Roundtable: History in the Headlines

**Abstract:** This roundtable has three main aims:

- (1) To offer a critical discussion of contemporary events and media coverage on both sides of the Atlantic. Issues may include, but won't be limited to, the removal of Confederate monuments, voter suppression, Donald Trump's presidency, the recent insurrection at the US Capitol, Joe Biden's inauguration and first 100 days, UK-US relations, and any other events as they arise.
- (2) To assess the role and impact of historians in telling, contextualising, and fact-checking the news, and of the academy in public history more broadly. What are the aims of this kind of public engagement? How can historians (especially early career scholars) balance a duty to engage with the public with the innumerable other requirements of their employment and personal lives?
- (3) To offer insight into the process of writing for the print and online media. How can scholars write rapidly for media outlets? Is social media good for history?

**Biographies:**

### **Rebecca Brückmann**

Assistant Professor of North American history in its transcultural connections at Ruhr-University, Germany. Key publications include *Massive Resistance and Southern Womanhood* (2020); “Citizens’ Councils, Conservatism and White Supremacy in Louisiana, 1964-1972.” *European Journal of American Studies* (14:1) special issue “Race Matters: 1968 as a Living Legacy in the Black Freedom Movement”; and “‘Work Mostly Done By Men’: Cornelia Dabney Tucker and Female Grassroots Activism in Massive Resistance in Charleston, 1950-1963.” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* (117:2).

### **Karen L. Cox**

Professor of History at UNC Charlotte and founding director of the graduate public history programme. Key publications include *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (2003); *Dreaming of Dixie: How the South Was Created in American Popular Culture* (2011); and the forthcoming *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Equality* (2021). Cox has written op-eds for the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, *TIME* magazine, *Publishers Weekly*, and the *Huffington Post*, has been interviewed by countless media outlets, and appeared on *CNN* and *BBC Newshour* among many others.

### **Kevin M. Kruse**

Professor of History at Princeton University. Key publications include *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (2005); *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (2015); and, co-authored with Julian Zelizer, *Fault Lines: A History of America Since 1974* (2019). Kruse has written op-eds and essays for outlets including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Vanity Fair*, *USA Today*, *The Atlantic*, *TIME* magazine, the *Huffington Post*, and *Politico*. He has provided innumerable media interviews, recorded a series of podcasts, and has appeared on public and cable broadcasting networks including *MSNBC*, *C-SPAN*, *PBS*.

### **Clive Webb**

Professor of Modern American History at the University of Sussex. Key publications include *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (2001); *Rabble Rousers: The American Far Right in the Civil Rights Era* (2010); and, co-authored with William Carrigan, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence Against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (2013). Webb has published many journal articles on the historical relationship between Britain and the United States, and has made numerous appearances on radio and television to provide historical context and political commentary on events in the United States. Webb’s research has also featured in articles written for the *Guardian* and *The New York Times*.

### **Zoe Hyman (chair)**

Lecturer in American History at the UCL Institute of the Americas. Publications include ‘Transatlantic White Supremacy: American Segregationists and International Racism after Civil Rights’ in D. Geary et al, *Global White Nationalism: From Apartheid to Trump* (2020) and she is working on a monograph titled *Partnerships of Supremacy: American Segregationist Ideology and White Southern Africa, 1948-1975*.

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## SESSION 6: April 7, 16:00-17:30

### 6A: Trump's America

#### Format: Roundtable Discussion

**Abstract:** The Trump presidency delivered a seismic shock to the American political system and more broadly to political culture and the public sphere in the US - and beyond, given the influence of the US across the world. This roundtable discussion considers the ongoing shockwaves and the underlying paradigm shift signified by the advent of Trump. A core point of discussion is the challenge to understand the nature of this disruption, to identify and critically illuminate some of its key cultural and political facets. Another is the ongoing influence of Trump and Trumpism beyond the period of his presidency. Almost one hundred days into a Biden presidency this discussion will take stock of defining cultural and political struggles between the forces of an insurgent populist nationalism and those of a residual liberal democracy.

“Trump’s America” is another name for the ongoing crisis of a traumatised liberal order in the US and this roundtable will consider some of the challenges to constructing new forms of political conversation in the wake of Trump’s presidency. Reflecting on moral and intellectual challenges posed by Trump’s presidency, Russian-American writer Masha Gessen writes:

There will come a time after Trump, and we need to consider how we will enter it. What are we going to take with us into that time—what kind of politics, language, and culture? How will we recover from years of policy (if you can call it that) being made by tweet? How will we reclaim simple and essential words? Most important, how will we restart a political conversation?

These questions guide much of our critical reflections.

The participants in the roundtable are all authors of chapters in *Trump’s America: Political Culture and National Identity* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019), edited by Liam Kennedy.

#### Biographies:

**Frank Kelleter** is Chair of the Department of Culture and Einstein Professor of North American Cultural History at John F. Kennedy Institute, Freie Universität Berlin. He is the director of the Popular Seriality Research Unit (PSRU), a transdisciplinary group consisting of 13 projects, funded by the German Research Association (2010-2016). His monographs include: *David Bowie* (2016), *Serial Agencies: “The Wire” and Its Readers* (2014). His edited volumes include *Media of Serial Narrative* (Ohio State UP, 2017), *Populäre Serialität* (2012), and *American Studies as Media Studies* (2011).

**Liam Kennedy** is Professor of American Studies and Director of the Clinton Institute for American Studies at University College Dublin in Ireland. He has published widely on American culture, politics and foreign policy. Recent books include *Afterimages: Photography and US Foreign Policy* (2016), *Neoliberalism and American Literature* (2018, with Stephen Shapiro) and *Trump’s America* (2019). He is co-founder of the media platform America Unfiltered.

**Diane Negra** is Professor of Film Studies and Screen Culture at University College Dublin. A member of the Royal Irish Academy, she is the author, editor or co-editor of ten books, including *The Aesthetics*

*and Affects of Cuteness* (2016), *Extreme Weather and Global Media* (2015), *Gendering the Recession* (2014), *Old and New Media after Katrina* (2010), *What a Girl Wants?: Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism* (2008), *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (2007), and *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity and Popular Culture* (2006). She currently serves as Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Television and New Media*.

**Donald E. Pease Jr.** is the Ted and Helen Geisel Third Century Professor in the Humanities and chair of the Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies Program at Dartmouth College. He is the founder and director of the Futures of American Studies Institute at Dartmouth and editor of Duke University Press book series *The New Americanists*. He is author of *Visionary Compacts: American Renaissance Writing in Cultural Context* (1987), *The New American Exceptionalism* (2009) and *Theodor Seuss Geisel* (2010), and editor of several collections, among them *National Identities and Postnational Narratives* (1994), *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism* (1992), and *New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon* (1994).

**Stephen Shapiro** is Professor of English at Warwick University. He is author of *Pentecostal Modernisms: Lovecraft, Los Angeles and World-Systems Culture* (2017) and *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World-System* (2009) and co-author of *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World Literature* (2015). His edited books include *The Wire: Race, Class, and Genre* (2012), *How to Read Foucault's Discipline and Punish* (2000), *How to Read Marx's Capital* (2008), and *Revising Charles Brockden: Culture, Politics and Sexuality in the Early Republic* (2004).

**Penny von Eschen** is William R. Kennan Jr. Professor of American Studies and Professor of History at the University of Virginia. She is the author of *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (2004) and *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (1997) and editor of *Contested Democracy: Freedom, Race, and Power in American History* (2007) and *American Studies: An Anthology* (2009).

**Liam Kennedy** will act as moderator of the roundtable discussion.

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## 6B: 'All-Southern Issue': Progressive Small Presses and Magazines in the US South

Chair: **Jenny Woodley**

**Abstract:** While a rich body of literature exists about US print culture, the South continues to be understudied in spite of the production of a variety of relevant and high-profile journals, book publishers, and magazines. This panel addresses that lacuna and challenges misconceptions about the South's political tenor through an archive of previously unexamined material that extends from the 1930s through the 1980s. Progressive voices in the South contested dominant narratives and made leftist politics visible. Using an interdisciplinary lens and mixed methodologies, with both historical and literary sources, this panel explores progressive small presses and magazines in the South and their meanings for Southerners. Three case studies from scholars in divergent locations explore the vibrant history of Southern print culture. All three papers offer a close textual analysis of understudied material with meaningful resonances among the papers. A traditional format of three 20-minute papers followed by a lively discussion period, moderated by Dr Sarah Meer (University of Cambridge), lends itself to rich presentations of new archival sources with ample time for discussion and feedback.

*'Zanies, Tyros, Dilettantes, and Panjandrums': Controversy, Southern Canons, and The Scottsboro Trial in Contempo Magazine*

**Siân Round** (University of Cambridge)

Siân Round will speak about *Contempo*, a literary magazine based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina between 1931 and 1934. This paper will consider the magazine's socialist roots, with particular attention to its two issues on the Scottsboro Trial. She will examine how the magazine balanced its leftist politics with the publication of avant-garde modernist authors, arguing that the editors used their outsider position as Southerners to attract controversy. Looking particularly at the 1932 All-Southern Issue, this paper will argue that the magazine used early political controversies to establish a new Southern canon which co-existed with literary modernism.

*'We Are Indeed Subversive': Southern Identity and the Radical Press in Georgia, 1968-1976*

**Amanda Stafford** (University of Leeds)

Amanda Stafford will explore the role of the Georgia's New Left radical press in the articulation of a regional, radical identity. The paper will suggest that the persistent notion of southern 'difference' meant that a regionalised expression of the Movement was crucial in connecting to southern audiences and that the radical print culture which emerged during this period acted as a space in which an oppositional expression of southern identity could be articulated. This allowed for an authentic accommodation of leftist radicalism within the often-reactionary political culture of the deep South.

*'Running this old printing press / with a woman on my mind': Lesbian-Feminist Printing and Publishing in the US South*

**Julie R. Enszer** (University of Mississippi)

Julie R. Enszer discusses three small southern US presses, Sojourner Truth Press in Atlanta, Georgia, Night Heron Press in Durham, North Carolina, and Morningstar Media, in Florida. These presses illuminate the accessibility of publishing for lesbian-feminists in the 1970s and 1980s. Printing and publishing galvanized individual writers to sustain their work. The mechanics of print represented both a way to assert power in one's one life and also a mechanism to create the fertilizer for lesbian-feminist movements: books, chapbooks, magazines, newspapers, and journals.

### **Biographies:**

**Julie R. Enszer**, PhD, is a scholar and a poet. Her book manuscript, *A Fine Bind*, is a history of lesbian-feminist presses from 1969 until 2009. Her scholarly work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Southern Cultures*, *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, *American Periodicals*, *WSQ*, and *Frontiers*. She has her MFA and PhD from the University of Maryland.

**Amanda Stafford** is a postgraduate researcher in US History at the University of Leeds. Her research explores the role of the radical press in New Left activism in the state of Georgia between 1968 and 1976.



**Siân Round** is a PhD student in American Literature at Jesus College, Cambridge. Her research concerns the Southern literary magazine between 1920 and 1945 and the shaping and reshaping of Southern identities and canons. She also works as Book Reviews Editor for *United States Studies Online*.

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## 6C: Gaming American Studies: Video Games in Research and Teaching

**Abstract:** For decades, digital games and gaming culture have been grappling with and negotiating what it means to be American, and to represent both the past, present, and future of the United States in increasingly spectacular and sophisticated (if perhaps not wholly progressive) ways. Thus, academic work at the intersection of American Studies and Game Studies continues to develop as a rich field of scholarly work and critical reflection. As testament to this we find an increasing number of books, edited collections, journal special issues, and essay series that seek to examine and unpick the complex, seemingly-inextricable relationship that America has with the entertainment industry's newest medium. Similarly, it'll unlikely be a surprise to those of us who teach that many of our students come to University to learn about American politics, society, culture, and history with pre-existing understandings developed through their experience of and exposure to major video game franchises like Red Dead Redemption, Grand Theft Auto, Bioshock, Fallout, Assassin's Creed, and Call of Duty. Rather than dismissing their interests, it is increasingly imperative that, as scholars and teachers, we meet them where they come from to both encourage their interests and support them in developing a critical media literacy to approach the ways video games mediate America, perpetuating both truths and mistruths in the process. Moreover, many independent games offer different perspectives on key issues, themes and topics that we teach our students in American Studies, and may provide us with unique opportunities to engage with them in new ways. This panel therefore seeks to develop wider, ongoing conversations that bring together ideas about what American Studies can offer Game Studies, and vice versa. The panellists will speak to their own experiences of researching at the intersection of American Studies and Game Studies, as well as designing courses and teaching at University level. However, and importantly, this panel will also provide space for discussion from attendees who may be interested in or have questions about the practicalities of using digital technologies and video games in the classroom, in the remote and digital situation we find ourselves in at present as well as in the future.

### **Biographies:**

**Esther Wright** is Lecturer in Digital History at Cardiff University. Her research considers the representation of American History in the video games developed and published by Rockstar Games, and the way digital marketing materials negotiate expectations for 'historical authenticity'. Her first monograph is forthcoming from De Gruyter in 2022. She has taught U.S. History, the media industries, and digital games in the U.K.

**Dr John Wills** is Reader in American History and Culture and Director of American Studies at the University of Kent, UK. He is the author of six books, his most recent being *Disney Culture* (Rutgers University Press, 2017) and *Gamer Nation* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019). He is the editor of the *European Journal of American Culture* (Intellect) and contributor to the Film Registry at the U.S. Library of Congress.



**Mahshid Mayar** is an Assistant Professor at the chair of North American Literature and Culture. Her research and teaching interests lie broadly in late 19th -century US history, literature, and culture, and 21st -century poetry of protest. Mahshid's work with digital games has resulted in publications that focus on the contact zones between critical game studies and American studies. Mahshid's first book, *Citizens and Rulers of the World: American Children and World Geography at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* is forthcoming with the University of North Carolina Press. Mahshid has held fellowships at the University of Georgetown, Washington, D.C., and at Amherst College, Massachusetts.

**Stefan Schubert** is an Assistant Professor at the Institute for American Studies at Leipzig University, Germany. His main research interests include US popular culture and literature, narrativity, game studies, and gender studies. He has published a number of articles on the intersection of these topics as well as a monograph titled *Narrative Instability: Destabilizing Identities, Realities, and Textualities in Contemporary American Popular Culture* (2019). He is a member of the research network "Narrative Liminality and/in the Formation of American Modernities" and an associate member of the collaborative research center on "Invectivity: Constellations and Dynamics of Disparagement" in the subproject on "Pop-Cultural Poetics and Politics of the Invective."

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## THURSDAY, APRIL 8

### SESSION 7: April 8: 12:00-13:30

#### Plenary session: Future of the inclusive conference

The BAAS Executive Committee are aware that BAAS could do more to broaden our gender and racial diversity and ensure that all colleagues feel welcomed and are involved in our events; provide support for postgraduate students and early career academics; and make our events more accessible to scholars with disabilities or those with caring responsibilities. We are conscious of the significant challenge of meeting these goals whilst considering the sustainability of multi-day conferences that seek to include scholars from around the world, whether in-person or online.

This interactive workshop will be structured around the issues that participants consider to be of the utmost importance. This will include the sharing of good practice as well as the challenges we face. We will discuss issues of inclusion with a view to formulating strategies for how to improve our events to ensure that they are welcoming, accessible, inclusive and sustainable.

Lead: Dr **Lydia Plath**, University of Warwick (Chair of the BAAS Development and Education Subcommittee).

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### SESSION 8: April 8, 14:00-15:30

#### 8A: Revealing Cultures of Diplomacy: Brightening the Covenant Chain

**Abstract:** To the Cree of Saskatchewan, he is ‘Pisimwa Kamiwohkitahpamikohk’, meaning ‘The Sun looks at Him in a Good Way’. We know him as Prince Charles. To the Salish of British Columbia, she is ‘Mother of all people’. We know her as the Queen. This interdisciplinary project investigates the deep but unexplored connections embodied in these names, between the British Crown and the indigenous peoples of Canada and Northeastern America – one of the oldest diplomatic relationships in the world. It shaped the North America we know today and continues to be ‘brightened’ and renewed by the Royal family because of its vital role in addressing global challenges linked to the legal, environmental and territorial resurgence of indigenous rights.

2024 marks the 260th anniversary of a pivotal juncture in the first ‘special relationship’ between America and Britain, a massive and expensive diplomatic pageant known as the Treaty of Niagara, when the Indian ‘Magna Carta’ confirmed Native rights and sovereignty over vast lands and resources. This project uses this and other treaties as lenses to reveal cultures of diplomatic interaction between the Crown and indigenous peoples that are rooted in the 17th century but of increasing global significance today. The project is the first of its kind to examine this globally significant diplomatic relationship in depth and scope.

This panel will introduce this large international collaborative project, funded by an AHRC Standard Research Grant., its central aims, and its map of collaborations with the aim of engaging the broader American Studies community with its topic and programme of events.

<https://treatiedspaces.com/brightening-the-covenant-chain/>

### **Participants:**

**Joy Porter**, Professor of Indigenous History, University of Hull

**Charles Prior**, Senior Lecturer in Early Modern History, University of Hull

**Pekka Hämäläinen**, Rhodes Professor of American History, University of Oxford

**Mark Walters**, Dean of the Faculty of Law, Queen's University at Kingston

**Dale Turner**, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Toronto

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## **8B: Beat generation goddess ruth weiss (re)considered**

**Abstract:** This session brings together a selection of European Beat Studies Network members to redress, and in some cases introduce, the work produced by Beat-associated poet ruth weiss (1928-2020). Conceived as flash presentations (limited to 10 minutes followed by workshop-like discussions) the aim is to offer a wide selection of critical and aesthetic points of entrance into weiss's work.

**Chair:** Estíbaliz Encarnación-Pinedo

*ruth weiss: Transnationalism and Resistance*

**Benjamin J. Heal** resituates and recovers the work of weiss through a transnational context of poetic experimentalism, outlining the many liminalities in her life, art and writing, with a particular focus on her ongoing attack on the conventions of authorship and constructions of the singular literary genius through the use of contradiction, collaboration and various forms of multimedia expression.

*ruth weiss and the Poetics of the Desert*

**Polina Mackay** explores ruth weiss' depiction of the desert as a multifaceted symbol of contrasting values. She compares weiss's images of the desert as a local of both light and shadow or life and death to the socio political poems of poets like Sandra Osborne which write against America's wars beyond its border (e.g., invasion of Iraq). The aim is to encourage discussion on ruth weiss's relevance to current concerns in American poetry.

### *Gender and identity in ruth weiss*

**Estíbaliz Encarnación-Pinedo** explores ruth weiss's complication and blurring of established categorizations through which she documents both the struggle and the balance, the exclusion and the dissolution of the (de)gendered selves that inhabit her work. To study the ways in which weiss's resolves these tensions, she analyzes the thematic traits as well as the stylistic choices that allow weiss to write *beyond gender* in collections such as *Steps* (1958), *Desert Journal* (1977) or *Single Out* (1978).

### *The ruth weiss Papers*

**Thomas Antonic** delivers an overview and evaluation of the ruth weiss papers. The aim of it is to provide scholars with information about the content and extent of published and unpublished written and audiovisual material, as well as other documents such as photographs and correspondence. It is intended, for future analyses, to make scholarship aware of the vast amount of works ruth weiss has created over the past seven decades which go far beyond the scope of her published poetry collections that were the only subject of studies to date.

### *Place, Movement, and Identity in ruth weiss's Poetry*

**Stefanie Pointl** examines the representation of movement in ruth weiss's autobiographical poetry, arguing that weiss, as an Austrian American Beat writer and Holocaust survivor, provides an alternative perspective on the recurrent Beat theme of mobility. In her writing, she constructs a transnational identity founded on border-crossing movements and the resulting interpersonal connections. Through depictions of both physical and metaphorical journeys, weiss's poetry portrays movement as a unifying link between people from different cultural backgrounds that replaces national origins as a source of identification.

### *ruth weiss: a poetics grounded in intermediality and performance*

**Peggy Pacini** focuses on weiss's performance at the Summer of Love 2007 to examine how this sheds light on the essence of her poetry composing and performing practice. A series of micro-analysis of "the audiotext" and of contextual factors will contribute to comprehend how this performance releases what weiss herself defined as the "free flowing force moving outward from the unconscious towards self and other" (Grace 2004:58) that not only defines her poetic language, but a poetics grounded in intermediality and performance.

### *Reaching Towards the Light: Transitory Spaces and the Negated Material Body in Selected Texts by ruth weiss*

**Chad Weidner** focuses on what an environmental understanding can bring to many Beat-affiliated writers like ruth weiss. weiss contributed to the international flourishing of Beat poetics, but questions remain: To what extent can green criticism benefit by engaging unfamiliar and experimental transnational texts written by women? Can Beat studies be enhanced by environmental readings of

unfamiliar texts by historically neglected writers affiliated with the Beats? This presentation outlines ways selected texts by Ruth Weiss' explore transitory spaces and the material body.

*Ruth Weiss and Painted Haikus*

**Frida Forsgren** looks into Ruth Weiss's body of work to show how it is a characteristic example of a Beat oeuvre consisting of film, poetry, painting and music. Her decision to also paint her written, spoken and recorded haiku poems shows a willingness to experiment and to enhance the text's aesthetic possibilities. In this presentation, she looks into Weiss's painted haiku series *A Fool's Journey* and *Banzai!* to show that the concise way she paints "the thing" from her haikus mirrors Japanese Zen aesthetics.

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## 8C: Lineages of Black Activism

**Chair: Emily Brady**

*"Africa had no history, and neither did I": Communication, Education and Story-Telling in Murals of the Black Power Movement*

**Hannah Jeffery** (University of Edinburgh)

In 1967, a group of Black artists created something ground-breaking in the realm of public art. Birthed from the cauldron of the revolutionary 1960s, Black muralism emerged in the streets for the first time in US history. Standing as monuments to Blackness in Black communities, murals became subversive cultural forms operating as touchstones of communication in the streets of Black America. This paper examines how muralists transformed walls of Black communities into sites of communal information and learning. Murals became unofficial museums, newspapers and history books in the streets of the Black United States, working to counter the erasure of Black history and culture from the public mainstream. When school curriculums and mainstream presses failed to incorporate Black history, culture and news into their remit, Black murals lined the walls of Black enclaves to circumvent the politics of institutional white spaces, becoming powerful modes of communication and education for Black communities. Reframing the *Wall of Truth* (1969) in Chicago by Bill Walker and Eugene Eda Wade as a communal street newspaper, and *Education is Truth* (1971) and *The Fire Next Time I and II* (1977) in San Francisco by Dewey Crumpler as Black history books, this paper uncovers how murals were at the helm of teaching Black history, culture and news in grassroots communities throughout the era of Black Power.

*To Canada and Beyond: Samuel Ringgold Ward's Transborder Mobility and Activism*

**Astrid Haas** (University of Central Lancashire, UK, and Bielefeld University, Germany)

The paper discusses Samuel Ringgold Ward's mobility and activism in the US-Canada border region and from there extending to Europe as depicted in his memoir *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro* (1855). Since the 1830s, Canada held a reputation as a haven for fugitive black slaves from the USA. Many of those who escaped to the then-British colony, however, reported about the economic difficulties of establishing themselves in Canada, about struggles with systemic white racism, and conflicts within the growing black community there. A particularly rich source of black life in mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Canada is a

series of autobiographical narratives by former black slaves that depict their authors' escape from bondage in the USA and their escape to and life in Canada.

One of the best-known black voices speaking about Canada was Samuel Ringgold Ward, who edited one of the first black newspapers in Canada and lectured abroad on behalf of the Antislavery Society of Canada. The proposed paper examines Ward's portrayal of his mobility and activism in the US-Canada border region and the British Isles in his memoir *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro* (1855). Ward prominently addressed his role in the transnational abolitionist network that connected Canada to the USA and the British Isles in his autobiography. The paper therefore also discusses the contribution of this text to the international anti-slavery movement and its function as a testimony to African American/Canadian spatial and social mobility in this context.

### *The Freedom Rides at Sixty: A Grassroots Perspective*

Dr. **John A. Kirk** (University of Arkansas, Little Rock)

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the Freedom Rides, an iconic and much-celebrated landmark of civil rights protest. The contours of the national story are well-known: an interracial group of thirteen Riders set out from Washington, D.C. on May 4, 1961; mobs attacked the Riders in Alabama at Anniston and Birmingham; members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee vowed to continue the Ride when the Congress of Racial Equality abandoned the journey; more mob violence occurred in Montgomery, Alabama, prompting the Kennedy administration to intervene; and the Riders were eventually granted safe passage to their destination in Jackson, Mississippi, where they were arrested and jailed upon arrival. Subsequently, a number of civil rights organizations joined together to form a Freedom Rides Coordinating Committee to keep up the pressure across the South to end segregation on public carriers. More than 60 Freedom Rides involving over 450 people occurred over the summer. The follow-up campaign has received far less attention. This paper delves deeply into the Freedom Ride targeting Little Rock, Arkansas, in July 1961—already a site of civil rights notoriety after the Central High School desegregation crisis that took place there in 1957—to explore the complex politics involved in deploying direct action in the grassroots struggle for civil rights.

### **Biographies:**

Dr. **Hannah Jeffery** is an Leverhulme Early Careers Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh working on a project titled, *Beauty in the Struggle: Black Muralism from Slavery to the Cold War*. She completed her PhD, *A Monument to Blackness: Murals and the Black Freedom Movement from Harlem Renaissance to Black Lives Matter*, at the University of Nottingham, and recently won a Baird Scholar-in-Residence Research Fellowship at the Smithsonian American Art Portrait Gallery. She completed a BA Hons in American Studies at the University of Nottingham and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and completed an MRes in American Studies at the University of Nottingham where she wrote on the cultural memorialisation of Fred Hampton. She is the creator of 'Murals: Walls of Slavery, Walls of Freedom' ([www.antislavery.ac.uk/murals](http://www.antislavery.ac.uk/murals)) – a constantly growing digital archive that brings together, for the first time, U.S. murals connected to themes of abolition, slavery, Black Power, Black protest and resistance. She has written about murals of the Black Lives Matter movement, as well as contemporary slavery murals worldwide, and has recently had an exhibition of Frederick Douglass murals on display at the Boston Museum of African American History.

Dr. **Astrid Haas** is a Marie Curie Research Fellow at the Institute of Black Atlantic Research, University of Central Lancashire, and currently a Visiting Professor of American Studies at Bielefeld University, Germany. Her research interests include travel writing and autobiography of the Americas, African Diaspora and Latinx Studies, Gender and Science Studies. She has published the monograph *Stages of Agency: The Contributions of American Drama to the AIDS Discourse* (2011) and her second monograph, *Lone Star Vistas: Travel Writing on Texas, 1821-1861*, will appear with The University of Texas Press in April 2021.

Dr. **John A. Kirk** is the George W. Donaghey Distinguished Professor of History at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He taught at the University of Wales, Lampeter and at Royal Holloway, University of London before moving to UA Little Rock in the summer of 2010. Dr. Kirk's research focuses on the history of the civil rights movement. He has authored or edited nine books, five on the civil rights movement in Arkansas, including the award-winning *Redefining the Color Line: Black Activism in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1940-1970* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002), and four on Martin Luther King, Jr. and the national civil rights movement, including most recently as the editor of *The Civil Rights Movement: A Documentary Reader* (London and New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2020). He has also written in a wide variety of journals, edited book collections, newspapers and magazines. He has held a number of grants and fellowships in both Europe and in the United States.

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## SESSION 9: April 8, 16:00-17:30

### 9A: Race and Religion in America, Then and Now

**Chair: Michael Dennis** (Acadia University)

**Abstract:** White supremacy, during the Trump administration, returned to the front stage of American discourse and politics. Extremist groups like the Proud Boys, empowered by the president, rallied in American cities and white supremacists boldly marched causing destruction in cities like Charlottesville, VA. In the midst of escalating tensions around issues of race, conservative, American Protestants maintained their support for President Trump with approximately 80% of white evangelicals voting for Trump. "Race and Religion in America, Then and Now" argues that antecedents of systemic racism can be found embedded in American religious ideas and practices. This session demonstrates that adopted ideas embedded in religious understandings of time, colorblindness, marriage, and disability, in effect, perpetuate racism, use race to construct religious and national identities, and form critical aspects of American society today. Combined, the presentations supply a genealogy of religious racism in America providing a lens by which to understand contemporary social conditions in the United States.

*'Our Beloved Southland': Black Protest, White Ministers, and Law and Order in the Civil Rights Era*

**Brandon James Render** (Ph.D. Candidate, University of Texas at Austin)

In January 1963, a collection of Southern clergymen issued “The White Ministers’ Law and Order Statement: An Appeal to Law and Order and Common Sense.” Roughly three months later, eight of these ministers would pen an open letter to Southern Black civil rights protestors. According to these men, patience and American jurisprudence would, in due time, settle racial conflicts in their “beloved Southland.” In the meantime, these ministers, both in the “Law and

Order Statement” and the open letter, claimed that “the American way of life depends upon obedience” to federal law and the Christian tradition. King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” on the other hand, articulates the belief that justice, not law and order, is the motivation behind direct-action protest and an end to racial inequality.

The white ministers engaged with civil rights advocates through a combination of colorblind rhetoric, Christian values, and law and order. Despite the brevity of the two documents, these ministers incorporated references to Black criminality, white moderation, and spiritual beliefs in an effort to mediate racial conflict, but maintain white supremacy. King’s firm response indicates a subtle sense of race-consciousness to combat racist ideas and practices, both secular and religious. This is not, however, an issue confined to the years of the heroic civil rights era: the conflict between law and order and justice continues to reverberate into the twenty-first century. This presentation explores the role of Christianity in notions of law and order during the civil rights movement, along with the influence of colorblind responses to social conflict and the disproportionate impact of criminal justice policies on communities of color.

*Unequally Yoked: Marriage, Race, and Reformed Orthodoxy in the Christian Reformed Church, 1945-1985*

**Tamara Van Dyken** (Associate Professor, Western Kentucky University)

In July 1981, *The Banner*, the main denominational organ of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), published an issue dedicated to interracial marriage. The cover featured a black man and white woman embracing, and the issue included a discussion with four interracial Christian Reformed couples. Angry letters and subscription cancellations poured in to the editor for his (and the journal’s) seeming advocacy of such relationships. While there was a similar outpouring of support for *The Banner’s* position and that of interracial coupling, such knee-jerk responses reveal not only the significance of race in the church, they also indicate a particular understanding of family and community at the time, one rooted in ethnic, religious, and socio-economic status.

More specifically, this incident and the ensuing debate reveal the interconnectedness of religious and political authority in shaping the institution of marriage, an institution that, as historian Nancy Cott has shown, gave meaning to gender, race, and ethnicity. Marriage conferred the rights of citizenship and the social, economic, and moral capital accrued through citizenship. It also formed the basis of family and community, the foundation for neighborhoods and society as a whole. Using the CRC as a case study, my paper argues that religious constructions of marriage in the postwar era asserted the unchanging, natural, and sacred character of the suburban nuclear family—a family and community that was understood to be white. Understanding how marriage, race, and orthodoxy functioned in the CRC helps reveal how Americans of varying traditions negotiated the unique boundaries of their own communities while simultaneously choosing the ways in which they identified themselves as “American.”



## *Time and the Racialized Other in American Christianity*

**Terry Shoemaker** (Lecturer, Arizona State University)

The culture war in America has had profound effects on numerous Americans acculturated and trained in predominantly white, conservative Christian communities in the Bible Belt. The inundation of culture war ideologies, symbols, expectations, and rhetoric form rigid boundaries of insider/outsider group dynamics that maintain white supremacy in America. Yet few culture warriors will admit any racial bifurcation, choosing instead to argue that theological, religious differences, and family values are the central reasons for continued social ills and racial inequalities. The religio-political culture war then is a form of neutralizing race from entering into specific discourses through the mechanisms of religion.

This presentation, based on years of ethnographic research, examines ways in which the American culture war is built upon religious notions of time that are cultivated in white, conservative, American Protestantism. From creationism to apocalypticism, conservative Protestants herald an all encompassing chronology that places them in positions of privilege all the while championing a universality to their theological constructs. Analyzing how time is constructed in the Bible Belt region of the United States brings to relief how the present is built on notions of a racialized past and future informing current nationalistic tropes and support for the Trump administration's "Make America Great Again."

## *'We Just Need to Remain Faithful': Mormons and Disability, Race, and Sexuality in America*

**Alexandria Griffin** (Visiting Assistant Professor, New College of Florida)

A good deal of recent work in Mormon Studies has focused on the ways in which Mormons in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have had complicated relationships with race in the American context. W. Paul Reeve, in his 2015 book *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness*, argues that over two centuries, Mormons went from being racialized as non-white by most white Protestants, to being perceived as white in part through distancing themselves from various non-white groups. More recently, Peter Coviello in *Make Yourselves Gods: Mormons and the Unfinished Business of American Secularism* (2019) and Taylor Petrey in *Tabernacles of Clay: Sexuality and Gender in Modern Mormonism* (2020) have argued that Mormon relationships to race cannot be understood without attention to questions of sexuality, in particular non-normative sexualities.

I argue that disability is a hidden undercurrent that helps to make sense of contemporary Mormon debates over and experiences of race, gender, and sexuality. This is in part because Mormonism has a unique cosmology and eschatology, and questions of what happens post-mortally to people who have non-normative experiences of gender and sexuality have come into contact with Mormon ideas about what happens to people with disabilities post-mortally. Because of the entanglement of gender and sexuality in Mormonism's relationship to race in the American context, I argue that disability must be a part of discussions of Mormonism and race as well.

## **Biographies:**

**Brandon James Render** is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of History at the University of Texas at Austin. His broader research interests include Twentieth-Century U.S. Social and Intellectual history as well as Race and Public Policy. His dissertation, “Color-Blind University: Race and Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century,” traces the evolution and development of racial color-blindness within American colleges and universities through admissions policies, institution-building, and curriculum design. In addition to his research interests, he has served as a Graduate Research Fellow at the Center for the Study of Race and Democracy at UT-Austin.

Professor **Tamara Van Dyken** is an associate professor of history at Western Kentucky University, where she teaches courses on American history in secondary education and the history of religion in America. Her field of research focuses on evangelicalism and American culture—currently she is working on gender, sexuality, marriage and family in the postwar era.

**Terry Shoemaker** is an Americanist scholar focusing on religious change in contemporary life. This includes the ways that religion and religious people adapt, convert, deconvert, reform, and abandon aspects of their religiosity or spirituality. He has published studies regarding religious changes with nationalism, disabilities, popular culture, sports, public life, and deconversion. His first edited volume, *The Prophetic Dimension of Sport* was published in 2018 and investigates why sport is a prophetic space in the United States. Terry is currently a Lecturer at Arizona State University’s School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies.

**Alexandria Griffin** holds a PhD in Religious Studies from Arizona State University and is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion at New College of Florida. She studies race and American Catholicism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as disability, sexuality, and Mormonism. Alexandria is also at work on a project on baseball, race, and religion in the Israelite House of David, focusing on their baseball team's 1934 season.

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## 9B: Coming Full Circle: Environments and Embodiments of Trauma

**Chair: Jon Ward**

**Abstract:** In this session, Alice Patchett, Christine Okoth and Arya Thampuran discuss how the racialised body as a site of intersecting marginalities is implicated in a reproductive-capitalist matrix, paying particular attention to cycles of inherited trauma and images of circularity. A short opening discussion on Wangechi Mutu’s *The End of Carrying it All* visual artwork frames the key ideas explored in each twenty-minute paper. We will then engage in a ten-minute dialogue to synthesise our ideas, before leading into a general discussion/Q&A with the audience.

*The Extractive Form of Contemporary Black Writing: Dionne Brand and Yaa Gyasi*

**Christine Okoth**

This paper suggests that the epistemological and ecological rubric of extraction offers an additional way to conceptualise the formal composition of race in contemporary Black literature. Bringing together what Nathan Hensley and Philip Steer have called ‘ecological form,’ a term that seeks to acknowledge the extent to which literary writing acts as ‘a means of producing environmental and therefore political knowledge,’ and Colleen Lye’s theorisation of ‘racial form,’ this paper develops the concept of extractive form. It does so through readings of Yaa Gyasi’s novel *Homegoing* (2016) and Dionne Brand’s longform lyric poem *Inventory* (2006), two texts in which extractive regimes and their logics are acknowledged, reshaped, and appropriated. Though these texts are interested in the historic and contemporary links between the extraction of materials from the earth and the production of race, they also identify forms of extraction as aesthetically and politically generative. Extraction, alongside the ship and ocean, therefore functions as a central metaphor and formal strategy for the representation of global and transhistorical modes of racial subjection.

### *Investigating the Plantation: Trauma and the Louisiana Crime Narrative*

#### **Alice Patchett**

This paper reflects on the capacity of the detective novel to explore traumatic legacies of slavery, placing James Lee Burke’s *Last Car to Elysian Fields* (2004) and Attica Locke’s *The Cutting Season* (2012) into dialogue with each. Both novels encounter sugar cultivation in Louisiana as inherently connected with traumatic events ranging from the historic to the contemporary, including those related to Reconstruction-era sharecropping, 20<sup>th</sup>-century prison labour, and 21<sup>st</sup>-century exploitation of migrant workers. I focus on how imagery associated with agricultural production interacts with the tropes of the detective novel, with particular emphasis on the exhumation of formerly enslaved and exploited bodies. I frame these ideas using my wider research, which concerns the relationship between images of agricultural cycle and popular conceptions of compulsive repetition as ‘cultural shorthand for the consequences of traumatic events’ (Roger Luckhurst). Discussion on the relationship between racial injustice and environment in Louisiana is particularly relevant given contemporary discourse surrounding the petrochemical industry in the so-called ‘Cancer Alley’ region of the state, which provides vital context for my talk. I conclude by examining the extent to which the detective novel facilitates closure, discussing the modes of wellness which Burke and Locke imagine to be possible in the wake of intersecting environmental and racial traumas.

### *Healing Touch: Reconfiguring (Well)being in The Salt Eaters*

#### **Arya Thampuran**

‘Can you afford to be whole?’, fabled matriarch and healer Minnie Ransom asks her newest care, Velma Henry, a suicidal, burnt-out wife, mother, and activist in Toni Cade Bambara’s novel *The Salt Eaters*. This framing of recovery as something one can ‘afford’ curiously appropriates the discursive strains of neoliberal capitalism while flouting its very logic of wellbeing. The text is set against the backdrop of post-Civil War disillusionment, the Black Power Movement, as well as the burgeoning threat of a nuclear power industry and illness fuelled by its rampant environmental racism. Velma’s story is but one of many intersecting narratives that dramatise what Lauren Berlant usefully terms ‘slow death’ in the community: ‘the physical wearing out of a population’ under capitalist regimes. Slow death occupies the ‘temporalities of the endemic’; this is poignantly captured in the biological and ideological violence

enacted against the worn-down, doubly-marginalised black female body. This paper considers how Minnie’s sensory, somatic healing circle operates in both temporal and corporeal-spatial forms: in particular, as a formal rejection of a wellness narrative predicated on wholeness as autonomous integration. As Velma recovers disavowed ancestral connections with her matriarchal collective of healers, the narrative cosmology disrupts a linear, future-oriented telos of recovery; for Velma, a rejection of the ‘happy housewife’ embodiment, to borrow Sarah Ahmed’s term. The once-numb, ‘sealed’ off Velma must instead open herself to the healing touch – physical and spiritual – of Minnie and her community. My work is interested in how we might reconfigure a mode of (well)being that restores non-anthropocentric connections with the environment and community – one that challenges historically-violent logic of institutional time and bodily conditioning.

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## 9C: The Politics of Presidential Rollback (Presidential History Network panel)

**Abstract:** How does a U.S. president try to secure their policy legacy and what happens when a president’s successor is deeply hostile to their agenda? The papers in this panel take the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump as case studies to explore these issues of policy rollback. This panel is sponsored by the Presidential History Network (PHN).

**Chair: Michael Cullinane** (Roehampton University)

### *A Referendum on the Reagan Years? Exploring Reagan’s Role in Bush’s 1988 Presidential Campaign*

**Sarah Thomson** (University of Edinburgh)

When George H.W. Bush won the presidency in 1988, the press gave much of the credit to his predecessor, Ronald Reagan. Reporters claimed that Reagan had ‘la[id] out [his] coattails’ for his Vice President and turned the 1988 election into a ‘referendum’ on his presidency. This paper will explore how, and why, securing Bush’s election became central to Reagan’s final six months in office. Reagan’s legacy was vital political currency throughout the race, and the administration successfully threw its support behind their preferred candidate to secure Reagan’s key policy decisions. This paper will illuminate the extent to which fear of policy rollback resulted in the White House’s enthusiastic support of Bush’s candidacy.

### *Blowing Hot and Cold: Assessing the Durability of Barack Obama’s Climate Legacy*

**Clodagh Harrington** (De Montfort University)

It is clear that much of President Obama’s legacy depended on his successor, particularly so with regard to climate crisis management. So many of his painstaking achievements could be undermined, dismantled or overturned by a determined successor. Candidate Trump’s 2016 platform was pro-fossil fuel and disdained international agreements. This boded ill for the Paris Climate Deal and the Clean Power Plan. Both were rejected by President Trump in his first term, and a second term would likely have precluded any chance of reviving these environmental justice efforts. However, Biden’s 2020 win meant that

Obama's climate legacy could be reinforced, even extended. This paper considers the meaning and impact of presidential legacy in climate change policy, specifically how humanity's most challenging issue went from a presidential priority to dismissal as a 'Chinese hoax.'

### *Obama, Trump and Immigration Reform: A Slender Legacy Under Fire*

**Alex Waddan** (University of Leicester)

As Barack Obama arrived in office he promised a comprehensive immigration reform package that would include a path to legal status for many undocumented immigrants living in the US. In 2009, unified Democratic control in Washington D.C. made the prospect of major reform seem imminent. That turned out to be a mirage and after Republican victories in the 2010 mid-term elections the House became a veto point for reform, though Obama did take some steps through executive action. In 2016 candidate Trump derisively rejected liberalizing reform and made attacks on "illegal" immigrants a major theme of his successful presidential run. This paper examines these developments, investigating why Obama's legacy fell short of its initial promise and how Trump's actions intensified polarization on this key issue.

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## PLENARY 2: SARAH M.S. PEARSALL, April 8, 17:30-19:00

### *The "Dangerous Disorders" of Early America*

Dr. **Sarah M.S. Pearsall** (University of Cambridge)

"Alex got better, but his mother went quick" sings the chorus in the opening song of the hit musical *Hamilton*, about the contagious disease that killed Alexander Hamilton's mother and sole support. Disease and epidemics profoundly shaped individual lives and larger structures in early America. In the midst of a pandemic and novel vaccines, what can we learn by considering this long arc of disease, care, and prevention? This lecture will examine how epidemics and inoculation controversies reveal a great deal about the politics, tensions, and inequalities of early America—and our own times.

**Dr. Pearsall** is University Senior Lecturer in the History of Early America and the Atlantic World at the University of Cambridge. Her work probes the intersections of gender, households, and sexuality with the development, maintenance, and end of colonies in a North Atlantic world. She is the author of *Polygamy: An Early American History* (Yale UP, 2019) and *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2008), which won the Women's History Network Prize.

This plenary is sponsored by the [Eccles Centre for American Studies](#) at the British Library.

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**FRIDAY, APRIL 9**

**SPECIAL EVENT: April 9, 10:15-11:45**

### Women in American Studies Network (WASN) Meeting

The Women in American Studies Network is for, and welcoming to, all who identify as women and those marginalised along the gender spectrum. Join WASN at BAAS 2021 for an opportunity to network with colleagues in American Studies. This event is a chance to get to know, chat and share ideas with others in the discipline. We will use breakout rooms for informal discussions about our careers and research. There will also be opportunity to talk about relevant themes such as self-care, contemporary events and gendered labour, and what women's networks can and should do.

Register in advance for this meeting: [click here to register](#)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

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**SESSION 10: April 9, 12:00-13:30**

### 10A: “A stream cannot rise higher than its source”: African American Women’s Self-Representation, 1861-2018

**Chair: Lydia Plath**

**Abstract:** This panel will consist of interconnected Q&A sessions focussed upon three brief papers (<2000-words) written individually by the three panel members and pre-circulated to the attendees in advance of the conference, followed by a general discussion. Each paper will, in some way, be inspired by the logic of Anna Julia Cooper’s declaration that “A stream cannot rise higher than its source” in her centring of Black women as “the fundamental agency under God in the regeneration . . . of the race” (*A Voice from the South*, 28-29). Cooper’s approach in representing those women focussed upon the vital, and consistently devalued, biological, nurturing, and educational work of Black women in the “private sphere”. Following Cooper’s approach, the papers for this panel, which cover an extensive period of time and range of sources, will be joined together by the single theme of examining African American women’s representation of themselves and their work against a backdrop of sexist-racist ideological devaluation and misrepresentation.

*'All dressed in black': Autobiographical and Allegorical Representation in Maria Stewart's 'The First Stage of Life' (1861)*

**Kiefer Holland**

This paper will first examine liminal space between Stewart's autobiography and the life of Letitia, the protagonist of her short story. The paper will then explore how that liminality serves the larger allegorical messages contained within the text.

*'EVERYBODY READ THIS': African American Women's Self-Representation in 'Information Wanted' Advertisements, 1880-1900*

**Katherine Burns**

This paper will examine "Information Wanted" advertisements as vital spaces for the expression of Black female agency and authority. In considering the advertisements as intergenerational autobiographies, this paper will examine how African American women utilised the advertisements to remember and record their ancestry in the fight against white supremacy and for civil rights.

*From Abolitionist to Revolutionary Feminism: Embodying 20th Century Radical Foremothers*

**Aija Oksman**

This paper will explore black women's intersectional feminism that grew alongside and in contrast to white women's 'glass ceiling' feminism. The paper will examine the conflicting legacies of intersectionality and feminism through the works of Eslanda Goode Robeson, Claudia Jones and Angela Davis. These three women took a public stance against the superexploitation of the black woman in political economy and representation in the public sphere, and have built a political, social and cultural legacy of black womanhood that is in contrast to and in spite of the mainstream white feminism.

The three panel members are all PhD candidates at the University of Edinburgh.

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## I0B: Recent Work in Asian American Studies

**Chair: Eithne Quinn**

**Abstract:** Borne of the successful 1969 Bay Area student strikes that led to the creation of the USA's first Ethnic Studies departments, Asian American literary studies has developed since the publication of Elaine Kim's *Asian American Literature* (1982) into a dynamic, ever-growing field. Interest in Asian

American studies is steadily growing internationally, and this roundtable highlights some of the work currently being undertaken in Asian American literary studies in the UK.

Panellists will be speaking on a range of topics, texts and genres, including: an examination of the relationships between gender and genre in contemporary Asian American crime fiction; an ecocritical reading of Sui Sin Far's *Mrs Spring Fragrance*; an analysis of the politics of autobiographical 'truth' in Anchee Min's *Red Azalea* and Ping Fu's *Bend, Not Break*; and a reading of Karen Tei Yamashita's use of totality in *I Hotel*.

“*Your plum blossom*”: *sentimentalism and the environment in Mrs Spring Fragrance by Sui Sin Far (Edith Eaton)*’

Dr **Anna Maguire Elliott**

The very title of Sui Sin Far's collection of short stories, *Mrs Spring Fragrance* (1912), highlights an association of Asian American women with the natural world. From an environmentalist perspective, this closeness to nature might offer a model of a more integrated, respectful relationship to the American landscape. Her Asian American protagonists frequently display an intimacy with nature, heightened by their affective connection to their environments. However, as Joni Adamson warns in *Asian American Literature and the Environment*: “many scholars in the past have over-simplified Asian literatures as celebrating the beauties of nature and romanticizing Asians themselves as intimately connected with the natural world.” Clearly, the exotic birds, blossoms, and butterflies that pervade the text simultaneously represent both orientalist tropes and the language of white sentimentalism that functioned to perpetuate the disempowerment of Asian American women. This paper explores this tension, asking to what extent Sui Sin Far, as a female American author of Chinese ancestry, subverts the natural imagery of sentimentalism in order to explore an alternative relationship to the American landscape. More broadly, and like critics such as Min Hyoung Song, this paper examines the place of sentimentalism in Asian American and Asian American environmental literary studies.

*Contesting Gender and Genre in Contemporary Asian American Crime Fiction*

Dr **Harriet Stilley**

The succeeding decades of the Vietnam War saw a proliferation of Asian American literary production. With the arrival of such writers as Dale Furutani, Henry Chang, and Ed Lin, this involved the unprecedented entrance of Asian American authors into the crime genre. This entry is especially noteworthy as it was rooted in a departure from, if not a dismantling of, the invidiously white, male cultural bias through which the genre has traditionally been conceptualised.

This paper explores the intricate relationship between ethnicity, masculinity, and the crime novel, asking how and to what extent Asian American crime novelists exploit the complexities and ambiguities of the genre to problematize its conventional Orientalist vocabulary and the purported lack of a male-oriented Asian American heroic tradition. Firstly, by focusing on several Asian American novelists who have not yet received sufficient critical attention, I will discuss how my research at large aims to write an inclusive history of the relationship between masculinity and the crime genre during this period, bringing



marginalised racial identities to the forefront of literary enquiry. Secondly, I will outline how this project seeks to trouble disciplinary conventions; specifically, I will demonstrate the ways in which the project is characterised by a provocative redefinition of crime fiction as a white male medium, thereby challenging ideas of categorisation and genre. I will simultaneously take issue with the racial hierarchies that inform American cultural studies, particularly the historical reduction of Asian Americans to a singular ethnic group characterised by passivity.

Finally, my paper will expand upon the work done by a number of recent texts that explore how masculinities are codified, communicated, and challenged through American culture and literature, and interrogate how healthy formulations of masculinity can be promoted.

### *The Stakes of Autobiographical “Truth” in Chinese Migrant Life Writing*

#### **Joe Upton**

Chinese American migrant life writing has boomed over the past 30 years. This boom is indicative of an ideological and capitalist logic that simultaneously seeks to exploit a successful generic formula, and to maintain the separation of a milieu (the West/America) that is presented as superior to China precisely because it ostensibly offers the freedom to establish a self to express. Chinese migrant life writers must simultaneously negotiate readers’ expectations of the genre’s facticity; the authentication of verisimilitude in a Western patriarchal tradition of confession and a modern Chinese history of self-criticism; the Western market’s demand for sensational or dystopian accounts of life in China; and the political implications of these depictions.

Memoirs like Anchee Min’s *Red Azalea* lead us to questions of how the political stakes of oppression signify differently in distinct contexts and markets, whilst Ping Fu’s *Bend, Not Break*, which came under heavy criticism for its ‘falsehoods’, lead to questions about what the verifiability of life writing means for female, migrant writers in the ‘post-truth’ era. Fu’s assertion that “facts varied” maintains a claim to autobiographical truth as formed through memory and narrative, as a complement to historiography.

#### **Biographies:**

Dr **Anna Maguire Elliott** is an independent researcher, who holds a PhD in American Literature from the University of Sussex. Her research interests are in domesticity and the environment in American women’s writing. Most recently, she has completed a collaborative article on domestic space and dementia carers, to be published in *Home Cultures*, and an edited collection on Marilynne Robinson, to be published with Manchester University Press.

Dr **Harriet Stilley** teaches American and English literature at the University of Edinburgh, where she also currently holds a research fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities. From next January, she will be joining the Rothermere American Institute at the University of Oxford as a visiting research fellow, during which time she will conduct research for her forthcoming monograph on contemporary Asian American detective fiction.

Harriet’s main areas of teaching and research expertise lie in modern and contemporary American fiction, and specifically within masculinity studies. Her work has featured in a variety of American, British, and European Journals, including the *Cormac McCarthy Journal*, the *Journal of American Studies*, and

the *European Journal of American Studies*; and her first monograph (*From the Delivered to the Dispatched: Masculinity in Modern American Fiction, 1969-1977*) was published in late 2018 as part of *Routledge Studies in Contemporary Literature*. In it, she explores the development of masculinities in the American 1970s, and the post-sixties, post-Vietnam, and ultimately post-Fordist shocks that the United States experienced during that decade. Her wider research interests include twentieth-century feminist and Marxist theory, critiques of postmodernity and late capitalist commodity culture, as well as studies of American history, politics, and mythology.

**Joe Upton** is an independent researcher, having completed a PhD in American Literature with the University of Sussex. His research interests include migrant writing, Asian American literature, comparative American literature, space and spatiality in literature, and the politics of culture. He has published with the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* and is working on a monograph about post-1965 Chinese American migrant writing.

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## I0C: Affective Environmental Fictions from Literature to Photography

**Chair:** Molly Becker (University of Cambridge)

*From Cheechako to Koviashuvik and Shahóon: Wilderness and the Alaskan Sublime in Ken Ilgunas's Walden on Wheels and Ernestine Hayes's Blonde Indian*

**David Lombard** (KU Leuven)

As “America's last frontier”, Alaska provides an opportunity to revisit the pioneer past in a challenging and awe-inspiring landscape (Nash 2014). While the Alaskan *nature* illustrates the inhospitable and terrifying features of the Burkean sublime, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and air traffic exemplify the presence of *technology* in a state that has been perceived as “pure” or “untrammelled”, a view associated with the natural sublime. For these reasons, contemporary U.S. memoirs including descriptions of Alaska constitute suitable case studies for analyzing the rhetorical affordances and limits of the sublime for figuring (non-)human materiality and for questioning the nature/culture divide. While the Anthropocene and the sublime produce senses of excess, overwhelm, and disorientation (Purdy 2015), the memoir, as human-centered and referring to an “extra-textual reality” (Couser 2011), is a privileged genre to investigate the Anthropocene sublime and these related affects. Through a rhetorical and narratological—mainly informed by recent insights from econarratology, which study the place and function of materiality and (non-)human agency in literary texts while rhetorically alerting readers to an ethics of care for (non-)human otherness (James and Morel 2020)—analysis of Ken Ilgunas's *Walden on Wheels* (2013) and Ernestine Hayes's *Blonde Indian* (2006) as well as of their uses of the notions of *koviashuvik* and *shahóon*, this paper will argue that the natural sublime and the American concept of

wilderness are still problematic and divisive, and will present the “haptic sublime” (McNee 2016) and “stuplime” (Ngai 2005) as contributing to imagining a more participative and “ecological sublime” (Hitt 1999).

### *The American Adrenaline Narrative: Testing the Limits of the Contemporary Environmental Imagination*

**Kristin Jacobson** (Stockton University)

Extreme cultures help define contemporary America: the past fifty years mark the rise in the popularity of all things extreme—including sports, makeovers, beverages, and even the environmental movement itself. By the late twentieth century perilous adventure stories—what I term adrenaline narratives—go mainstream in ways they arguably never had before. While still—for all practical purposes—an elite sport, extreme adventure narratives flood American culture. I argue these extreme narratives distill, for better and worse, how to negotiate environmental risks, a key skill for living in the Anthropocene and the current pandemic. I begin by briefly defining the American adrenaline narrative. Then, I will focus on what these narratives teach us about and how they encourage us to view environmental risk. We see a “schizophrenic” narrative playing out in the extreme plotlines: adrenaline narratives simultaneously promote and hinder ecological sustainability. As Jon Krakauer writes in *Into the Wild*, “it is easy, when you are young, to believe that what you desire is no less than what you deserve, to assume that if you want something badly enough, it is your God-given right to have it.” Yet, Krakauer discovers in *Into Thin Air* that “boyhood dreams die hard...and good sense be damned.” What shapes the contemporary American environmental imagination and Krakauer—“good sense be damned”—is an American dream of rugged individualism and freedom. As our collective desiring natures collide, we would do well to remember the origins and risky lessons embedded in our tragic and triumphant adrenaline narratives

### *The Nature of Nostalgia: Anthropocene Nostalgia in the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century US American Photography*

**Alicja Relidzyńska** (American Studies Center, University of Warsaw)

Latest widespread acknowledgment of the Anthropocene and its severe effects has prompted social and cultural consequences (Autin; Jagodzinski), ultimately obliterating the nature/culture division (Latour; Chakrabarty). Thus, the negative changes to the environment have led to the reinterpretation and alteration of the existing cultural notions, the example of which is the emergence of the novel type of nostalgia, as observed in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century US American culture. The “new nostalgia,” unlike its previous and other embodiments, does not entail restoration of the past, nor does it sentimentally reflect upon it (cf. Boym). Instead, it plays with the simulacra of the aesthetics of the previous decades, offering a critical commentary on the time when the biosphere was being systematically destroyed, but it was not yet fully realized (e.g., in the 1980s). To achieve its objective, nostalgia in question employs meticulous yet ironic reproduction of past imagery with the use of synthetic colors and overt aestheticization.

The proposed paper will then analyze the intersection of nostalgia and the Anthropocene as cultural category, covering contemporary American photography (Emmanuel Monzon’s *Urban Sprawl* [2019], Christopher Soukup’s *Movies Never Made* [2019], Troy Paiva’s *Lost America* [2013], and Hayley Eichenbaum’s *Mother Road* [2017]). The discussed materials “anesthetize” the contemporary sceneries (Mirzoeff) and demythologize the past with a spectrum of aestheticizing methods to display the loss of both nature itself and the pre-Anthropocene perception (Žižek), evoking “a continual tension between

longing and disavowal” (Dove-Viebahn).

**David Lombard** is a research fellow at the Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research (F.R.S.-FNRS) and a Ph.D. candidate in literary studies at the ULiège and KU Leuven (joint degree), where he is an active member of the Interdisciplinary Center for Applied Poetics ([CIPA](#)), [Intersections](#), and the [English Literature Research Group](#). His main fields of interests are American studies, environmental humanities, narrative theory, rhetoric and aesthetics. He is the author of the book [Techno-Thoreau: Aesthetics, Ecology and the Capitalocene](#) (2019) which served as an extended pilot study for his broader Ph.D. project consisting in a rhetorical and narratological analysis of the sublime in contemporary U.S. literature (2020-2024). His favorite places to do research are as much the bustling centers of Liège and Leuven as the wooded south of Belgium, which both enrich his reflections on the techno-nature of the Anthropocene.

**Alicja Relidzyńska** is a PhD candidate and a teaching associate at the American Studies Center of the University of Warsaw. Currently, she teaches BA-level courses and works on her dissertation about new forms of the 21st -century nostalgia. Her research interests include visual studies with an emphasis on film, photography, and popular culture, as well as cultural responses to social and environmental changes.

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## SESSION 11: April 9, 14:00-15:30

### 11A: Conservative Radicalism: Race and the Remaking of Social Traditions in Nineteenth Century America (BrANCA Panel)

*This panel is sponsored by the British Association of Nineteenth Century Americanists, a UK-based network of researchers, teachers, writers, and cultural critics engaged in progressive, interdisciplinary scholarship concerning American writing in the long nineteenth century. Our mission is to foster a community of scholars interested in drawing on the vast potential of nineteenth-century American texts to intervene in a variety of discourses and pressing issues.*

**Abstract:** The idea of a “conservative revolution” that took hold in the 1970s has proven so successful in injecting an emphasis on traditionalist social values into America’s political mainstream that the paradoxical nature of this concept is now often overlooked. But in a sense the question of how exactly a conservative ideology in the Burkean vein can predicate itself on radically restructuring existing social and economic conventions is one that American conservatives have always had to wrestle with, given the degree to which the nation’s identity has been tied up since its origins with ideas of radical egalitarianism and constant self-renewal. Contrary to the consensus school of mid-twentieth century historians who maintained that the US has always been a nation of liberal idealists in which an organized conservative movement was contradictory or aberrational, the dominance and influence of conservative thought over recent decades has prompted scholars on both the left and the right to recover a canon of conservative writings from earlier periods in American literary and intellectual history. In regard to the

nineteenth century these histories of conservatism have inevitably focused much attention on the debates over race and slavery that led to the Civil War – debates that seem to neatly lay out long-standing fissures in American thought between democracy and paternalism, progress and tradition, and citizenship and subjection. Yet in mapping these debates so neatly along a conservative/non-conservative binary these histories often overlook the degree to which nineteenth-century social conservatism, in both its Northern and Southern varieties, found itself engaged in a conflicted negotiation with ideas of revolutionary change. Tracing how conservative politicians and writers such as William Jay, John Randolph, and Nathaniel Beverly Tucker variously embraced, embodied and imagined conceptions of history and identity that radically conflicted with or compromised the status quo, this panel seeks to establish a more nuanced reading of the nineteenth century's investment in racial hierarchies.

**Chair: Matthew Pethers** (University of Nottingham)

### *Conservative Radicalism: William Jay's Embrace of Immediate Abolition*

**David N. Gellman** (De Pauw University)

Under the unassuming header “Hon. William Jay,” William Lloyd Garrison’s radical abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* announced on June 29, 1833, “that this highly distinguished gentleman, the worthy son of the illustrious JOHN JAY, has avowed himself a decided ABOLITIONIST.” Garrison’s newspaper continued: “The taunting appellation of ‘fanatics’ and ‘madmen’ has no longer power to injure us.” Garrison exaggerated. William Jay had not yet formally joined the movement, and opponents would continue to label immediatists as fanatics for years to come. Even so, the emerging prominence of the conservative son of a distinguished founding father in a radical movement that threatened to tear apart the nation’s economic and political fabric required explanation then—and still does now. Reform and paternalistic social discipline appealed to this prolific antislavery advocate in other realms, but not when it came to slavery. To explain how, when, and why William Jay embraced immediatism, this paper closely examines personal changes, intellectual currents, and political events that propelled him toward his new abolitionist identity. After John Jay died in 1829, William threw himself into compiling a laudatory biography, which discussed the founder’s gradualist approach to emancipation uncritically. Yet William’s encounter with new currents of antislavery thought, the spectacle of the South Carolina nullification crisis, and the harassment of Connecticut schoolteacher Prudence Crandall’s experiment in interracial education pulled him toward immediatism. So too did his son John Jay II’s budding antislavery activism. Breaching the establishment was, is, and will be a precursor to profound social change.

### *‘Rara Avis’ – John Randolph of Roanoke, Gender Fluidity and the Two-Spirit Concept*

**Olga Akroyd** (Independent Scholar)

The enigmatic figure of John Randolph of Roanoke (1733-1833) has been somewhat overlooked in the present-day scholarship, as a highly antiquated presence whose philosophy seemed to be mainly connected with the Southern agrarian politics. And yet, in this proposed paper, I argue that in terms of his personality (rather than his political beliefs per se), Randolph offers a particularly fascinating case to be considered against the backdrop of notions such as gender fluidity. Widely held by many to be a “rara avis” or an eccentric of the highest degree during his lifetime, and transcending the boundaries of conventional masculinity, Randolph stood at odds with the Virginian aristocracy just as much as with

everything else. Randolph's reputed Native American ancestry had been referred to by his contemporaries as well as present-day biographers. In this paper, I attempt to pinpoint the connections between the plight of "the man endowed with two souls" as Randolph's cousin, Theodore Dudley, described him, and the concept of the Two-Spirit as an umbrella term recurring throughout various Native American cultures to describe an individual whose gender identity and subsequent societal interactions remain fluid rather than fixed in a certain stereotypical mould. I seek to show that John Randolph of Roanoke, fusing the masculine and the feminine, and the aristocratic and the outsider characteristics in one body, is a crucially important case study for modern scholars to consider, both as a unique phenomenon and "rara avis" of the antebellum world, and the victim of stereotypical perceptions of masculinity prevalent at the time.

### *No Future?: The Narrative Poetics of Proslavery Speculation*

**Tomos Hughes** (University of Warwick)

"No history is so hard to write as that of our own times": the opening words of William Walker's vanguardist ode to slaveholding imperialism - *The War in Nicaragua* (1860) - articulate an important contradiction in the historical (and historicizing) aspirations of an emergent positive-good proslavery argument in the mid-nineteenth century. The combined expression of slavery's history-making, hegemonic force and a quotidian realization that *writing* such a history coherently is hard, triggers a fundamental inability to narrate, or to move time forward in series. This paper locates this vexed (non-)narrative impulse as central to the speculative dimensions of proslavery print culture after 1830: a form which attempted to shape a vision of progressive modernity unbound by liberal accounts of national futurity. To do so, I trace the speculative attempt to move the locus of modernity in a southerly direction through Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838) and two lesser-studied proslavery literary hoaxes: Nathaniel Beverly Tucker's *The Partisan Leader* (1836) and Edmund Ruffin's *Anticipations of the Future* (1860). In these texts, imagining the arc of history bending towards slavery - and "still farther south" (in Poe's words) - combines with a loss of temporal seriality in which narrative time is reduced more or less explicitly to a literary mechanism: a desire for historicity which the texts themselves cannot produce as anything other than a con. This contradiction, which is also central to proslavery accounts of political economy and social reproduction, raises challenging questions about two key (linked) narratives in recent nineteenth-century Americanist scholarship: the location of emancipatory potential in non-teleological literary temporalities and the belief that slavery's afterlives are best reconstructed by positioning slavery's relationship to capitalism in terms of its centrality rather than peripherality.

### **Biographies:**

**David N. Gellman** is Andrew Wallace Crandall Professor and Chair of the History Department at DePauw University in Indiana. His book *Liberty's Chain: The Jay Family, Slavery, and Emancipation, 1685-1912* is slated for publication by Cornell University Press in Spring 2022.

**Olga Akroyd** recently attained a PhD in American Studies from the University of Kent, defending a thesis on Herman Melville and Dostoevsky as viewed through the prism of the exceptionalist discourse. Currently, I am liaising with GIREs Institute based at University of Amsterdam, running a series of workshops on gender fluidity and identity in landmark American texts, and developing a larger project

on the life and times of John Randolph of Roanoke, and the lessons that it can teach the modern-day scholar. In my spare time, I also manage a Dostoevsky Reading Group online (open to scholars and literary aficionados of all levels), where we look at Dostoevsky's shorter and less well-known texts.

**Tomos Hughes** is a Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellow in the department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick. His work has appeared, or is forthcoming, in *ELH* and in the edited collection, *Crossings: Nineteenth-Century American Culture at a Juncture*. He is currently working on a monograph about Reconstruction and a project that traces the long relationship between proslavery print culture and black radical thought.

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## I | B: American Studies in the Twenty-First Century (Roundtable)

**Abstract:** What is American Studies in the twenty-first century? How should we explain what the field now is to those with little prior knowledge of it? While such stock-taking exercises can seem like ornamental acts, for those on the front-lines—presenting the subject to young people in schools and sixth forms, and their parents—such explanations are critical to exciting, and enrolling, the next generation of undergraduate students. Are the boilerplate descriptions of what American Studies is—many composed a generation ago—still fit for purpose? What makes an American Studies degree distinctive in a landscape where study abroad, and the study of the US, is increasingly available through competing degree programmes? The aim of the roundtable is three-fold: to register our collective need to take undergraduate recruitment seriously; to demonstrate that part of the work of recruiting future generations requires intellectual work, to clarify and re-pattern how we explain what the field is and does; and, finally, to start to build a resource which admissions tutors and programme leaders can draw on to craft a more invigorating pitch for this field in the twenty-first century.

**Format:** This session is structured as a roundtable, with the six contributors each offering five-minute responses to our guiding question, followed by an open discussion between panelists and audience.  
Format: 6 x 5 minute papers, + 30mins Q&A

**Roundtable organizers:** **Hilary Emmett** (UEA) and **Andrew Fearnley** (Manchester).

### **Biographies:**

**Patrick Andelic** is a lecturer in American History at the University of Northumbria. His research focuses on U.S. party politics and liberalism in the late twentieth century. He is the author of *Donkey Work: Congressional Democrats in Conservative America, 1974-1994* (University Press of Kansas, 2019). Scholars of the U.S. have been at the forefront of the development of the 'new political history,' drawing insights from subfields in history and political science to revitalise one of the most traditional branches of the discipline. This paper will reflect on these conceptual and methodological innovations and on their implications for political history, the stuffy cousin in the dynamic American Studies family.

**Hilary Emmett** teaches American Studies (Literature and Culture) at the University of East Anglia. Her essays on transnational Area Studies have appeared in *Journal of American Studies*, *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, *Common-place*, and in collections published by Oxford University Press,

Palgrave, and the Modern Languages Association. Her paper will consider the role of transnational American Studies in decolonising the curriculum beyond the Atlantic world, arguing that the analysis of contemporary American literature and culture in comparison with that of the Pacific affords American Studies students direct engagement with the entanglements of Empire and a rich understanding of the challenges facing iconic national institutions like the British Museum, National Trust and others.

**Andrew Fearnley** is an historian of the twentieth-century United States at the University of Manchester, and was the programme's UG admissions tutor from 2014 until 2020. He co-edited with Daniel Matlin, *Race Capital? Harlem as Setting and Symbol* (Columbia University Press, 2018), and his essays on the Black Panther Party and African American intellectual have appeared in the *Historical Journal*, and *Modern Intellectual History*. When future histories of British American Studies are written will they pause on the irony that this field's greatest successes in the 1990s and early 2000s—offering opportunities for undergraduates to study in the US, entrenching interest in US history and literature, and advancing the study of race—proved its undoing in the 2010s and 2020s, as each of these elements was claimed and colonized by other corners of the humanities? What now remains distinctive about this field? In my comments I will try out two related arguments. Firstly that we need an alternative understanding of where American Studies came from, retiring the worn sense of it as “a way to bridge history and literature”, and working harder to recover its original formation—in the US and UK—as an ‘ad hoc movement’, of ‘coalitions and collaborations’, flowing, as Marcus Cunliffe tells us it did at Manchester in the 1950s, from tributaries in “History, Government, English and Geography departments”. Secondly, we also need to think harder about—and do more to support, celebrate, and entrench—the unique creative and imaginative possibilities that our programmes offer to undergraduates, to become researchers, critical thinkers, translators of scholarship for wider audiences, and competent practitioners of new (digital, mapping, database) tools.

**Nicole King** lectures in African American, Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic literatures at Goldsmith's, University of London. Her work focuses on the literary representations of children, young adults, blackness and modernity in the United States and the Americas. She is the author of *C.L.R. James and Creolization: Circles of Influence* (University Press of Mississippi, 2001) and is currently writing a monograph *Black Childhood in Modern African American Fiction* (Edinburgh UP, 2022). Nicole will discuss her research on youth, race, and racialisation in modern African American writing in order to reflect on our shared enterprise of teaching African American literature in UK higher education. She will suggest the necessity of engaging the intersection of youth and race alongside other more well-trodden analytical categories, not only in teaching and research but also in university outreach activities. Fictions of black childhood illuminate contemporary and historical aspects of U.S. culture and society and thus offer an excellent introduction to American Studies.

**Stephanie Lewthwaite** is Associate Professor of American History in the Department of American and Canadian Studies and Admissions Director for the School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies at the University of Nottingham. Stephanie will discuss her interdisciplinary research interests in the fields of Latinx studies, visual culture studies, memory and trauma studies, and more recent forays into the environmental humanities. By suggesting that American Studies involves a commitment to looking across different disciplinary, chronological and geographic borders, Stephanie will argue for the timeliness and relevance of the field for engaging students in contemporary debates about cultural and political activism, environmental justice, citizenship and wellbeing.

**Ben Marsh** is Reader in American History at the University of Kent, and formerly director of public



engagement for the Faculty of Humanities. He is the author of *Georgia's Frontier Women* (2012), and *Unravelling Dreams: Silk and the Atlantic World, c1500-1840* (2020). In his comments, Ben will argue that American Studies now needs to position itself as an integrated degree, placing less emphasis than it used to on the opportunities for travel, and more on the skills and range of media, sources, and archival work that is possible within this field.

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## IIC: Spectacular Dissent: Race in the Public Image

**Chair: E. James West**

*The Sight and Site of the Struggle: Civil Rights on Screen and the Colour Line Behind the Scenes in the 1960s Television Newsroom*

**Sage Goodwin** (University of Oxford)

In the mid-twentieth century two revolutions took place, one in communications technology with the dawn of television, and one in race relations with the advent of the Civil Rights Movement. The dominant narrative about the relationship between the two holds that, by shining a spotlight on Southern racial brutality, the new medium converted a previously indifferent national audience to the cause of the Civil Rights Movement. In recent years, historians of civil rights, employing an interdisciplinary approach, have begun to draw upon the insights of communications studies to move beyond technological determinism and question who aimed the spotlight and how. Revisionist Movement scholars have argued that the predominately white, male, and northern newsmen who covered it, created a distorted narrative of the struggle.

This paper will reveal, however, that in the 1960s not all television newsmen were white. It will explore the previously overlooked role of African American television reporters in the coverage of civil rights. A close reading of prime-time television news texts reveals the unique perspectives that African American newsmen brought to the civil rights story on television. In addition, using the private papers of network executives, producers, and broadcasters this paper will uncover the difficulties these African American newsmen faced in trying to break the colour bar in electronic journalism. By exploring the troubled history of desegregation behind the scenes of television news it will shed light on how the limitations of colour-blind hiring policies played out on the ground.

*The Noble Negro and the Early Career of Sidney Poitier*

**William R. Glass** (University of Warsaw)

The paper explores the way the roles of Sidney Poitier in his early films, through 1967, exemplified a stereotype I call "the Noble Negro." This trope was particularly evident in many Hollywood movies during the two decades after World War II, not just those with Poitier. Certain common characteristics combine to form the Noble Negro stereotype for the 1950s and 1960s. The Noble Negro is a dark-skinned, asexual male who is morally upright and/or skillful and competent in his work. Most important,

the Noble Negro must stoically endure injustice. That injustice must be so blatant that no one in the audience could not see the unfairness of the circumstances and so be moved to join the fight to right the wrongs suffered by the black character. In terms of plot, the transformation of a white character from indifference or outright racism served as an audience's surrogate, compelling the audience to join in that journey. Furthermore, this character seemed intended to force white audiences to abandon the stereotype of the black brute; in fact, the Noble Negro was the direct inverse of the brute. The Noble Negro was intended to demonstrate the abilities, talents, and manhood of African American men, but it was a creation of white directors, screenwriters, and novelists intended to reassure white America that the integrationist dream could be realized with little cost to the white majority.

### *Colin Kaepernick as an American folk hero*

**Sabra J. Webber** (The Ohio State University)

Americans are not unique in drawing on sporting venues to agitate for change. Consider reformist strategies played out in the context of the "turbulent world of Middle East soccer" (James M. Dorsey) or the act of Peter O'Connor, silver medalist representing the Irish long jump team in the 1906 Olympics who, during the flag raising ceremony, scaled an alternate flagpole to wave the Irish flag in lieu of the Union flag.

In America, pre-Kaepernick sports activists' protests are numerous. Recall boxer Mohammed Ali's poetic refusal to be drafted to Vietnam or Smith's and Carlos' affecting human rights tableau at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. This paper considers other performative strategies, both pre- and post-Kaepernick, enacted by players in various American big money sports to push back against top-down sports culture or discompose a larger status quo.

Addressing the deployment of folk elements in non-folk games I contemplate why these dramatic moves are perceived as threatening to the American big sports model. What has provoked some spectators and many sports owners and politicians to nigh hysterical responses to acts from Kaepernick's kneel to LeBron's step over, to "excessive" celebration, to dramatic dunks?

Consideration in sports contexts of Thoreau's civil disobedience, Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak," McCain's and Flake's "Paid Patriotism," and Hymes' "Breakthrough into Performance," shed light on why, how, and to what effect player displays evade expected sports performances--powerfully flipping the game day script.

### *"Racism ain't cowboy" Cowboy Activism, Black Urban Cowboydom, and the Yeehaw Agenda*

**Stefan "Steve" Rabitsch** (University of Graz/University of Klagenfurt)

The main title of this paper is taken from a placard that a young, female African American equestrian carried on her horse at the Compton Peace Ride organized by the Compton Cowboys on June 7, 2020. The Compton Cowboys are but one of many African American trail riding and/or rodeo associations which are often but not exclusively based in urban environs. These outfits have recently been gaining more and more attention since their activities cross-fertilized with the Yeehaw Agenda. In the fall of 2018, Bri Malandro retweeted a Ciara photoshoot—for which the R&B singer-songwriter donned fine cowboy hats and western apparel—stating that "the yee haw agenda is in full effect." She thus gave a

name to creative forces and artistic impulses that had already been percolating for a little while in African American art, fashion, and literary circles, spiking late that year and continuing throughout the spring of 2019. By now, the Yeehaw Agenda has coalesced into a multi-platform, intermedial, social activist ecology of cultural production which most recently also merged with the Black Lives Matter movement. (Re)claiming and recoding what is often mistakenly seen as an exclusively white domain, the Yeehaw Agenda seeks to seize and democratize western ephemera, icons, and narratives— especially western wear—in an effort to make more visible the long-standing contributions of African Americans to the multicultural fabric of the American West, and livestock raising and horsemanship economies in particular. Growing out of a larger project dedicated to the cultural history of cowboy hats, this paper will deploy the most iconic piece of cowboy dress along with its embodied material mobility as focal points for accessing and mapping the Yeehaw Agenda’s significance. More specifically, the goal of this paper is to showcase how black urban cowboy communities like the Compton Cowboys deploy and then recode the mainstream historiographic and popular culture erasure of the African American cowboy experience in an effort to both expose the vulnerability of the heteronormative, white cowboy myth and subsequently assume the culturally privileged role of the cowboy for themselves; after all, historically they also co-own that role. They then deploy that role by way of their own and their horses’ bodies with a view to counteracting their own systemic vulnerabilities, lending a hand and a hoof to activist interventions such as #BlackLivesMatter “peace rides” and, more recently, “getting-the-voteout” rides. A series of social activist/protest rides (e.g. the Compton Peace Ride, Brianna Noble’s #HeelsDownFistsUp ride in Oakland, the solidarity rides of the Non-Stop Riderz in Houston and the Dirty Southern Ryderz in New Orleans, respectively) will serve as showcase for thinking through and reading the Yeehaw Agenda and BLM energies vis-à-vis critical whiteness studies.

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## SESSION 12: April 9, 16:00-17:30

### I2A: African-American Women Orators and their Nineteenth Century Audiences

Chair: **Nicole Willson**

**Abstract:** What role did the eloquence of black women play in the social movements of the nineteenth century? What can the tangled reception of such oratory tell us? How does placing these performances back at the heart of rhetorical history reshape our view of the period?

This panel answers these questions by bringing together new work on the worlds of black female performers of the long nineteenth century.

Taking us from the preaching of the Second Great Awakening, through the anti-slavery activist culture of the 1830s, to the Chautauqua circuit of the Gilded Age, these three papers ask a series of overlapping questions about the agency, reception, and cultural significance of overlooked female speakers in male-dominated rhetorical worlds. Drawing upon the latest scholarship on religious history, education and politics, and informed by insights from performance, media and communication studies, this panel will offer a vivid window into nineteenth century cultural history.

## *Audience in Early Black Oratory*

**Laura Mielke** (University of Kansas)

This paper considers how early Black orators used their audiences. More specifically, I trace how African American public speakers in the first half of the nineteenth century countered the White gaze—actual and ideological—by reading and recasting the people who gathered to hear them. Black orators troubled the distinction between spectacle and spectator and exercised political agency through transformative uses of apostrophe and ethos. I will turn specifically to the example of Maria W. Stewart (1803-1879), the first American woman to give political orations before a mixed audience of men and women whose work has survived. Explicitly directed to African Americans in the northeast, Stewart’s religious and anti-slavery speech in the 1830s summoned audiences in both senses of the term: prompting right action and calling forth (new) assemblies—even in other places and times. My paper draws on foundational studies of Black women’s oratory by Carla Peterson and Shirley Logan, as well as more recent considerations of sympathy in Stewart’s work. By approaching Stewart in the broader context of early Black oratory’s framing of audience, I offer a new understanding of her foundational place in African American rhetoric.

## *“An able platform woman”: Mary Church Terrell’s Public Work*

**Cecily Proctor** (University of Sussex)

This paper uncovers how Mary Church Terrell (1863-1954) navigated the gendered and racialized platforms of the Chautauquas of the West at the turn of the twentieth century. These rural platforms were characterised as quintessentially American, mainstream venues for edifying entertainment. Building on Brittney C. Cooper’s work on the True Race Woman, I demonstrate how the Chautauqua represented a site in which Terrell was able to personify True Race Womanhood as an educator of public opinion and as a mediator between White and Black America. Elizabeth McHenry and Martha Solomon Watson have indicated the barriers that Terrell faced in educating the wider public through the white-owned press. I show how the platform offered a more receptive setting for Terrell’s public work during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Using the speeches that Terrell delivered on her Chautauqua tour, the surrounding publicity, and her own reflections, I emphasise Terrell’s strategic use of rhetoric, embodiment and magnetism to simultaneously placate and confront Chautauqua audiences.

## *Influencers: Women, Flow and Black Charisma*

**Tom F. Wright** (University of Sussex)

This paper explores the complex role played by the word *influence* in discussions of the antebellum African-American religious orators Jarena Lee and Sojourner Truth. As Ann Douglas, Barbara Welter and Elaine Showalter have all shown, *influence* was a lightning rod concept in the rhetoric of nineteenth century anti-feminism, at once underpinning separate spheres and true womanhood ideologies, whilst generating its own spirited pushback from female reformers. However, by reconnecting ‘influence’ to its etymological roots in bodily and astrological concepts of flow, I show how it expressed particularly complex bodily and gender politics in depictions of African-American orators and preachers. Taking the examples of Jarena Lee (1783-1864) and Sojourner Truth (c.1797-1883), I reveal how we can use the place of *influence* in their writings and writing about them to re-read the mediated impact and symbolic reception of black religious performance.

## Biographies:

**Laura L. Mielke** is Dean's Professor of English at the University of Kansas. She is the author of *Provocative Eloquence: Theater, Violence, and Antislavery Speech in the Antebellum US* (2019) and *Moving Encounters: Sympathy and the Indian Question in Antebellum Literature* (2008), and co-editor of *Native Acts: Indian Performance, 1603-1832* (2011). She is currently working on a book concerning nineteenth-century African American orators and their audiences and serving as one of the general editors for the *Broadview Anthology of American Literature* (anticipated 2022).

**Cecily Proctor** is a PhD student in the School of Media, Arts and Humanities at the University of Sussex. She is researching the reception of radical voices on the mainstream Chautauqua platform during the early twentieth century.

**Tom F. Wright** is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Sussex. He is the author of *Lecturing the Atlantic: Speech, Print and an Anglo-American Commons* (2007), and editor of *Transatlantic Rhetoric: Speeches from the American Revolution to the Suffragettes* (2020) and *The Cosmopolitan Lyceum: Lecture Culture and the Globe in Nineteenth Century America* (2013). He is completing a book on the history of 'charisma' and leading an AHRC project called 'Speaking Citizens'.

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## I2B: Government Imaginaries: The Environment and the State

Chair: **Cara Rodway**

*Land Preservation and Indigenous Erasure: The Dual Nature of Settler Colonial National Parks*

**Sara M Gray** (Swansea University)

The preservation of American landscapes in the form of national parks has been a popular policy with settler populations since the 19th century. Not only were national parks carved from lands reserved for Indigenous governments, but they are also imbued with a settler colonial ideology that justified further land transfers. National parks are owned and operated by settler governments, impose a particular view of 'wilderness,' defined by erected boundaries, and patrolled by government agents to ensure visitors followed the proper scripts. With the National Parks Service belief that these lands are fixed in time and provide a snapshot of America prior to settlement, I analyse how national parks create a positive narrative of settler colonial progress. The US could then rationalise this land had purpose, as a tourist destination, in contrast to Indigenous land which was merely 'empty.' I argue that there are dangerous ideological consequences of normalising this settler view of national parks.

One of the most controversial national parks is Mount Rushmore, located in the contested Black Hills. The Oglala Sioux never ceded these lands in the Black Hills to the US government and have also refused compensation, demanding they be returned to the tribe. In a divisive 4th of July speech in 2020, Donald Trump spoke at Mt Rushmore to defend the legacies of all 'American heroes' and condemn anyone who desecrates these monuments. His speech embodied the settler perspective: the settler

memorial erases the existence and influence of the Oglala Sioux, obscures the irony that Mt Rushmore amounts to a desecration, and encourages Trump's audience to believe in their exceptionalism. My paper suggests that national parks are not apolitical sites, preserved for the good of the American public; rather, they are tools that uphold a settler colonial narrative of Indigenous control and American progress.

*Reptilian State: Florida at the American Museum of Natural History 100 Years Ago*

**Henry Knight Lozano** (Exeter)

Using archival photographs and records, this paper explores the American Museum of Natural History's (AMNH) Florida Group display that first appeared in 1917 and provides insight into evolving U.S. conceptions of Florida as a reptilian state on the eve of modernity. Scholars of the AMNH's historic animal groups and dioramas – what one calls the museum's "windows on nature" – point to their importance within the institution's educational agenda; at a time when film and wildlife photography were fledgling technologies, these three-dimensional dioramas offered a form of "virtual reality," aided by the museum's claims to the authentic reproduction of flora and fauna. The Florida Reptile Group, however, has been overlooked by historians, despite being a major display for nearly a decade; moreover, its existence coincided with a period of rapid change in South Florida, which was transformed from a relative backwater to the site of massive real estate, tourism, and population booms, including the reclamation of waterlogged environs that inspired the exhibit. Visitor perceptions of the display are unfortunately absent from the historical record; yet we can glimpse the diorama for ourselves. Photographs survive in the AMNH archive, allowing us to contemplate its physical representation, but also *interpretation* of South Florida. Building upon older ideas of the region as a primeval wetland, but crucially one being "conquered" by the inroads of drainage and development, the AMNH diorama and its descriptions highlight the fraught significance of reptiles and amphibians to how Florida has been popularly imagined, often in deeply ambivalent ways.

*"A Medico-Moral Uplift": Healthy Environments and American Colonial Governance of the Philippines, 1898-1946*

**Eva Ward** (University of Strathclyde)

American victory in the Spanish-American War in 1898 marked the beginning of a colonial project in the Philippines spanning nearly five decades. The US consciously sought to remake the Philippines in their own image in an environment they deemed unsanitary and dangerous to their health. In addition to diseases and lethargy believed to be induced by the unfamiliar tropical environment, Americans perceived themselves at risk from moral degradation from their cultural surroundings. Concern for the moral health of Americans in the Philippines manifested itself in the construction of YMCA facilities intended to be a refuge for young American men from the "temptations of the East" as well as the creation of a new summer capital in the mountains at Baguio, physically separating themselves not only from the miasmas of Manila but the Filipino population Americans sought to reform. As the US extended its control over the Philippines, this philosophy conflating the moral and physical environmental health was applied to Filipinos' surroundings as well. In Commissioner of Public Health Victor Heiser's words, "America was literally washing up the Orient." In addition to improved ventilation in buildings and a renovated sanitation and water system, the US sought to root out

environments considered morally unhealthy, including destruction of gambling dens and opium dens posing a 'threat' to Filipinos' moral well being. An understanding of American perceptions of a healthy environment is therefore crucial in evaluating American governance in the Philippines, the impacts of which are felt today.

### **Biographies:**

**Sara M Gray** is an early career scholar currently teaching at Swansea University. Her research examines how settler colonialism is created, perpetuated, and obscured by cultural productions of the Western frontier. She analyses contemporary Westerns, such as *Westworld* (2016-present), as a continuation of the settling process, indefinitely extending the Frontier experience in American fantasy. Sara also explores the relationships between settler governments and Indigenous nations.

**Henry Knight Lozano** is a Senior Lecturer in American History and Liberal Arts at the University of Exeter. His first book, *Tropic of Hopes*, explored the promotional reinvention of California and Florida as sun-kissed frontiers from 1869 to 1929. In 2021, his monograph, *California and Hawai'i Bound: U.S. Settler Colonialism and the Pacific West, 1848-1959*, is being published by the University of Nebraska Press. His current research projects include an interdisciplinary history of Florida and its reptiles, in particular crocodilians.

**Eva Ward** is a PhD candidate at the Centre for the Social History of Health and Healthcare, University of Strathclyde. Her doctoral research is part of the Wellcome Trust-funded project The Asian Cocaine Crisis: Pharmaceuticals, consumers & control in South and East Asia, focusing on the case study of the American Philippines. Her particular areas of interest in researching drug history in the American colonial era of the Philippines are the demographics of illicit distribution and consumption, international diplomacy, and state-building. She is also a graduate teaching assistant for undergraduate courses relating to U.S. history, drugs history, and the history of medicine.

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## I2C: The Work of Childhood Fictions

**Chair:** Felicia Bevel, University of North Florida

*Imagining Communities in Trading Cards: The Case of Topps Scoop*

**Harrie Kevill Davies** (Northwestern University)

In 1954, Topps Chewing Gum released a set of trading cards entitled Scoop, which covers a wide variety of momentous events in American and world history. The fronts of the cards feature scratch off panels revealing vivid illustrations, while the backs carry reports emulating the front pages of fictional newspapers. The cards combined the affective excitement of revelation and vivid artwork with the administrative aspects of trading card play such as ordering and counting, and the community-building features of newspapers.

Trading cards were primarily sold to young boys, and were often deemed educational. Producers frequently relied on news reporting for card content. However, Scoop makes this overt, taking the format of a newspaper page. Moreover, the set slogan: “Scratch it, peel it, see it now!,” recalls the title of Edward Murrow’s flagship contemporary news program, See It Now, bringing young audiences into wider American news networks.

As Benedict Anderson argues, newspapers are marked by an essential fictiveness and a simultaneity; readers can consume the same arbitrarily organized information at the same time, thus locating themselves in the wider world. Although trading cards lose some of the simultaneity of real newspapers, they were released in batches, allowing children across the nation to consume their arbitrarily concocted narratives at approximately the same time. I analyze these cards in light of the concept of Imagined Communities, suggesting that they perform similar work to real newspapers, inculcating children as members of the United States of America.

### *Serial Characterization in Ann M. Martin’s The Baby-Sitters Club*

**Ya’ara Notea** (King’s College London)

According to backlash narratives, the 1980s brought boundless possibilities for American women of all classes and races—while consistent messaging and policy counteracted and sabotaged possibilities for real equality. The workplace, specifically, became a key battleground upon which the fight for equal opportunities was (and, arguably still is) held. The Baby-Sitters Club, Ann M. Martin’s long-lasting series (1986 to 2000), is widely perceived as an example of the ceiling-breaking prospects that opened to girls in the eighties, offering an encouraging depiction of a diverse group of girls growing a successful neighbourhood babysitting business. Yet this talk will suggest that The Baby-Sitters Club, despite its genuinely progressive depiction of previously unrepresented voices and its commitment to female community and innovation, in fact reproduces the paradoxes that have come to define girls’ and women’s lives under American capitalism. Displacing these tensions onto serial girlhood, this talk will suggest, is at the heart of The Baby-Sitters Club’s ongoing popularity and its rejuvenation in recent years (including graphic novel adaptations, Audible versions of all 131 titles, and a much-awaited Netflix TV show). By harnessing the time-bending qualities of series fiction and employing what I identify as serial characterization of both the club and its members, The Baby-Sitters Club mediates the (im)possibilities of female entrepreneurship, racial equality and diversity in contemporary U.S, simultaneously celebrating and undermining young female success, opening and restricting definitions of American girlhood, and basing diversity on solid national, class, and sexual homogeneity.

### *Strange and Peculiar: Double Consciousness, Nature, and the Black Child in The Brownies’ Book*

**Katie Taylor** (Liverpool John Moores)

This paper discusses how representations of nature, particularly birds, functioned as allies to the black child in W.E.B DuBois and Jessie Fauset’s magazine for black children, *The Brownies’ Book* (1920-1921). Birds and bird characters feature in the magazine as simultaneously beautiful, strange, and sometimes troubled creatures, who highlight the magazine’s attempts to defy negative stereotypes and empower black children with a sense of pride and resilience.



I will examine DuBois's column 'As The Crow Flies' and the nature writing of Effie Lee Newsome, building on DuBois's theory of double consciousness, the experience of internalised racism that emerges in childhood whilst living in a racist society. I consider how DuBois and Newsome's birds give voice to the 'strange' and 'peculiar' experience of those who navigated the world, as DuBois wrote in 1903, knowing how it feels 'to be a problem.'

As Kimberley N. Ruffin writes in *Black on Earth: African American Ecoliterary Traditions* (2010) the 'coupling of racism and ecological alienation' has a long history in the United States. Ruffin writes of a 'burden-and-beauty paradox'; trying to reconcile the environmental suffering of black Americans with the experience of finding solace in nature. An examination of DuBois's and Newsome's nature writing will illuminate *The Brownies' Book's* efforts to connect black children to versions of the natural world that spoke both to their experiences of alienation, not just from the natural world but from American citizenship, and to the beauty of their own lives and heritage.

### **Biographies:**

**Harrie Kevill Davies:** I am a PhD candidate in Rhetoric and Public Culture at Northwestern University. In my dissertation, I investigate early Cold War trading cards that were sold alongside bubblegum purchases, interrogating how they appealed to and educated American children. I argue that, despite often portraying content that would be seen as exciting by their target audience, young boys, trading cards in fact propagated messages of systems and information management, and the rational control of (military) technology, encouraging an administrative form of citizenship. I consider how the content of the cards themselves invoked prevalent discourses of the period, as well as how the act of collecting cards brought children into a sensorial engagement with logics of order, taxonomy, and discipline. I locate my analysis within discourses of technology and military power, and scientification of childhood, suggesting that these trading cards encouraged children to embody a military-technological subjectivity.

**Ya'ara Notea** is a third-year PhD student at King's College London, researching popular American girls' fiction in the twentieth century. Her thesis examines how texts read and popularized by girls play on literary convention, genre and form to negotiate the evolving definitions of girlhood in the United States. She's previously published on flapperhood and socialization in F. Scott Fitzgerald.

**Katie Taylor** is a second year PhD student in English at Liverpool John Moores University. Her thesis examines race, citizenship, place, and childhood in *The Brownies' Book*. She completed both her undergraduate and MRes degrees in English, writing dissertations on Angelina Weld Grimké's antilynching literature, and race and marriage in the magazine fiction of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Jessie Fauset.

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## SATURDAY, APRIL 10

### SESSION 13: April 10, 12:00-13:30

#### I3A: Queer Narratives

Chair: **Jon Ward**

*The Queer Science of Edgar Allan Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*

**Kyle J Campbell** (University of Vermont)

Natural history, in the long eighteenth-century, was a scientific discourse that sought to normalize the natural world, producing order out of a disorderly world. The influence of this genre of writing on Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838) has been well documented as it informs the ways in which the novel engages with issues of race and colonization; however, these historicist readings have yet to consider the ways in which the normative modes of description of natural history fail to produce a believable narrative and, in fact, become a source of gothic terror within the text.

Turning to the resources provided by queer theory, this paper interrogates Pym's "failures" in order to consider how a white racist epistemology is at the heart of natural history, which the protagonist, Pym, uses as a means to maintain a fantasy of mastery over nature, which is ultimately denied by queerness. It is by paying attention to Pym's queerness that a counter-narrative to normative futurity produced by natural history, a future in whiteness is proven to be an impossibility. Terror springs forth in Pym then not in the narrative's moments of contact with the paradoxes of the Arctic circle, but rather from the "whiteness" itself as this epistemological blind spot forces Pym to recognize alternative narrative trajectories that present the destruction of the white racist power structures, despite his best effort to erase such horrific possibilities.

*Pass It On: American Lesbian Writing and the Sexual Politics of Information Management*

**Ben Nichols** (ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry)

Where queer thinkers have dwelled on information management systems, it has often been to critique them. Recent queer scholarship in library studies, for example, has critiqued the Library of Congress classification system for the particular version of social reality that it inscribes (Adler 2017). This critique embodies queer thought's much broader suspicion of all structure, standards, and categories as unwelcome aspects of a Foucauldian governmentality. This paper will use the history of queer culture to read against these dominant tendencies in scholarship. Specifically, it will bring to light a strand in lesbian writing that returns repeatedly to the centrality of information management standards to lesbian lives, particularly as these standards are embodied in the apparatus of the library. I will address a range of material: from landmark anthologies of coming out stories such as *The Coming Out Stories* (1980; 1989),

*The Lesbian Path* (1980; 1985) and *Testimonies* (1988; 1994; 2002), to Audre Lorde's *Zami* (1982), to Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* (2006). As lifeline, workplace and source of precious information, libraries thread through these particularly prominent versions of American lesbian life. Taken together, the texts help us understand something about the place of formal information standards in lesbian lives. The formality, structure and durability of what libraries offer remains central to these imaginations and highlights access to reliable information as a central problematic of queer lives. The texts therefore also point beyond themselves to help question deep-seated assumptions that have guided queer scholarship, which, still, prefers "wildness" over order (Halberstam 2020).

### *Disorientation and Queer Objects in Eudora Welty's 'The Optimist's Daughter'*

**Kewei Chen** (University of Leeds)

This paper examines the motif of queer disorientation, its perceptual/ spatial/ temporal aesthetics, and its entanglement with everyday objects in Eudora Welty's *The Optimist's Daughter* (1972). The novel tells about the childless middle-aged widow Laurel McKelva's return to her provincial hometown Mount Salus for her father's funeral. After multiple agitated encounters with a myriad of small-town characters, Laurel grapples with her complex family history and comes to a changed understanding of herself and the surrounding world. The narrative is filtered through Laurel's intensely-disorienting point-of-view, and it ends with the collapse of the protagonist's once persistent heteronormative vision. Welty's use of landscapes has traditionally been associated with the grotesque, the incongruous or the surrealistic. I argue, disorientation in this novel is more often invoked by distorted visions than fantastical spatial settings. Through close reading, I show how the slipping-away of elusive everyday objects— such as misarranged furniture, disused utensils, forgotten family heirlooms— imbricates queer traces into the texture of the narrative by evoking minoritarian temporalities and existences. I eclectically reference Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology, Heather Love's 'backward-looking' reading strategy, Lee Edelman's 'reproductive futurity', and Carolyn Dinshaw's work on the queerness of time. My central claim accentuates disorientation as both Welty's queer politics and aesthetics to critique and renegotiate heteronormativity.

**Ben Nichols.** I am a Fellow at the ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry, where I am working on projects on "standardization" and on the frameworks of gender and sexuality studies. Before this, I was a postdoctoral fellow at IASH, University of Edinburgh and also completed a PhD in English at King's College London. My first book *Same Old: Queer Theory, Literature, and the Politics of Sameness* (2020) has recently been published: it traces a history of queer investments in "sameness"—focusing on ideas of the status quo, reproduction, normativity, and reductionism— through fin-de-siecle aestheticism, lesbian middlebrow writing, feminist speculative fiction, and the tradition of the 'stud file' (accounts of sexual seriality), in order to question aspects of the field's self-understanding. Other publications have appeared in, amongst others, *GLQ* and the *Henry James Review*.

**Kewei Chen** is a PhD candidate at the School of English, University of Leeds. She is currently writing her dissertation on spatial-temporal disorientation and gender representations in the mid-twentieth-century American fictions, particularly on writers ranging from Eudora Welty, Shirley Jackson, Truman Capote to Carson McCullers. She is broadly interested in the intersections of the body and objects, gender theories and narrative theories.

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## I3B: Ecofeminism: Gender, Race, and the Environmental Imagination (Green BAAS panel)

This panel is sponsored by the **British Association for American Studies Green BAAS initiative**. BAAS is committed to reflecting upon the environmental impact of our activities, and to making positive changes to combat climate catastrophe. This digital conference is part of the Green BAAS agenda.

### **Chair: Mélanie Meunier (Sciences Po Strasbourg)**

*Poisoned Grounds: Toxic Discourse in Selected Works of Barbara Kingsolver*

**Abhra Paul** (Indian Institute of Technology, Jodhpur, India)

Humans are agents of massive environmental changes in the Anthropocene, such as global climate disruption, species extinction, pollution, and growing toxicity of land, air, water, etc. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) has diverted the general readers' attention towards the literature of toxicity. Following Carson's book, a range of new fictional and non-fictional narratives have emerged to frame what Lawrence Buell designates as "toxic discourse" (Buell, 1998, 657). These toxic narratives portray realistic and more crisis-oriented images of environmental hazards and disruption. Barbara Kingsolver is a scientist and a novelist. Her literary texts evidence how literature and science come together to address specific environmental issues. Her literary and journalistic writings significantly contribute to contemporary literature on toxicity that started with Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962). In her works, namely *Animal Dreams* (1990), *Prodigal Summer* (2000), and *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983*, she presents how human-induced chemical toxicity is destroying the planetary ecosystem. She directly deals with toxic problems related to metal (copper) mining, tobacco farming, and the use of chemicals in agriculture. She shows that tobacco cultivation and toxicity of metal mining waste have severe consequences on the environment and humans. This paper attempts to discuss the literature of toxicity and study these selected works as "Anthropocenic toxic narratives," foregrounding a convergence of literature of toxicity and the Anthropocene. Keywords: toxic discourse, Anthropocene, ecocriticism, American nature-oriented literature

*Ecofeminism and the Revolt from the Village in Mary Austin's A Woman of Genius and Sinclair Lewis's Main Street*

Dr. **Stephanie Palmer** (Nottingham Trent University)

The 'Revolt from the Village' literary movement, from Van Doren's coinage of the term to the classic study by Hilfer (1969) and recent analyses by Duclos-Orsello (2018) and Ehrhardt (2004), has been associated predominately with male writers like Sinclair Lewis, Edgar Lee Masters, and Sherwood Anderson. Yet historians show that women fled rural and small-town life in greater numbers than men

(Garvey 2009). Women writers rebelled against small towns or farms in texts like Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark* (1915), Mary Austin's *A Woman of Genius* (1912), Susan Glaspell's 'A Jury of Her Peers' (1917), Edna Ferber's *Fanny Herself* (1917) or Edith Summers Kelley's *Weeds* (1923). This paper compares *A Woman of Genius* to *Main Street* (1920) to demonstrate how many of Lewis's tropes and themes were initiated by women writers. The novels' shared use of satire and ironic capitalisation have already been noted by Witschi (1997). What this presentation adds is an ecofeminist perspective. Ecofeminism has many branches, including radical and social constructionist, but scholars from both branches agree that women often focus environmental justice activities on human health and habitat rather than the preservation of wilderness (Seager 1993). There is an analogy to be made between ecofeminist activism and these novels. In both novels, capitalist development is criticised for a single-minded pursuit of economic gain that at once squelches the female protagonists, exploits the farm life surrounding the small towns, and uses up whatever raw nature is allowed to seep into the respectability of middle-class America.

### *"Focus in Real Time": June Jordan's Global Sustainable Vision*

Dr. **Julia Sattler** (TU Dortmund University, Germany)

June Millicent Jordan (1936-2002) was a Civil Rights activist, editor, educator and writer of Caribbean-American descent. Throughout her life, her work in all these different roles focused on central issues 20th century America struggled with: social justice, gender equality, LGBTQ+-Rights, immigration. She also interfered in contexts beyond the United States and saw her responsibility to speak up whenever human rights were abused and people were oppressed – from Nicaragua to Lebanon to Northern Ireland. Shaped by her experience as a Black bisexual woman and by her belief in the urgency of the word, Jordan's concept of "life as activism" is based on inclusiveness, consistency, honesty and identification with the oppressed. What is less known is Jordan's engagement with urban communities via her project "Poetry for the People", and her effort for creating a more sustainable and equitable city, as becomes evident, for example, in the work she undertook in New York together with Buckminster Fuller in the 1960s.

My paper will try to integrate all these different dimensions of June Jordan's writing and focus on her vision of a bottom-up transformation for a more sustainable world – shaped by social and environmental justice, equality and peace.

### *Is There any Climate Justice without Racial Justice?—Environmental Justice in US-Muslim Women's Fiction*

**Hasnul Insani Djohar** (Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta)

Bronx Climate Justice North (BCJN), a grassroots movement, declares on its website: "Without a focus on correcting injustice, work on climate change addresses only symptoms, and not root causes" (BCJN). This declaration inspires me to investigate further how Shaila Abdullah's 9/11 novel *Saffron Dreams* (2009) explores the ideas of racial and environmental justice, including anti-Muslim racism to question the exclusion of marginal groups, such as Muslim diaspora and disabled people from white dominant society. Abdullah's text depicts her protagonist, Arissa, as struggling to live in the US as she faces some extremist Americans who attack her in an underground railway when she is pregnant. By engaging with

racial and postcolonial studies as discipline, this paper explores the ways in which Abdullah's novel highlights how the "Other" lives in the era of global climate change. In doing so, Abdullah's text critiques US racial blindness and US individuality by representing Arissa as living independently and raising her disabled son with the support of her parents' in law. In this sense, the narrator reveals how the familial bound is important for Pakistani-Muslim diaspora to survive in the era of global racial and environmental justice. Thus, this text challenges both anti-Muslim racism and US individualism practiced by Anglo-American dominant society, which tends to exclude US Muslim women and the disabled from American belonging.

### **Biographies:**

**Abhra Paul** is a literary scholar based at the Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur in the Department of Humanities and Social Science.

A Senior Lecturer of English at Nottingham Trent University, **Stephanie Palmer** is the author of *Together by Accident: American Local Color Literature and the Middle Class* (Lexington Books, 2009) and *Transatlantic Footholds: Turn-of-the-Century American Women Writers and British Reviewers* (Routledge, 2020). She specialises in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American literature and women writers.

Dr. **Julia Sattler** teaches American Studies at TU Dortmund University, Germany. Between April 2012 and March 2015, she was the academic director of the UAR project "Spaces - Communities - Representations: Urban Transformations in the USA" in the framework of the MERCUR program of the Mercator Foundation. She is the editor of *Urban Transformations in the USA: Spaces — Communities — Representations* (Bielefeld: Transcript 2016).

**Hasnul Insani Djohar** researches various genres, such as poems, memoirs, and fiction on Contemporary Women's Literature of the Ummah by focusing on ethnicity, migration, and globalization. As a Fulbright recipient, she completed her MA Degree in English from Central Michigan University in 2013. She also completed her PhD studies in English from the University of Exeter for an Indonesian Endowment (LPDP) in 2019. She is Head of Department and senior lecturer in English at Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta in Indonesia.

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## I3C: Captivity and Flight

Chair: **Rachel Williams**

*"Run away a long time": Enslaved and Self-Emancipated People's Movement in the Southern Lowcountry, 1778-1782*

**James Mackay** (Edinburgh)

This paper explores enslaved and self-emancipated people's movements in the Southern lowcountry between 1778-1782. It assesses these movements' multiple meanings during the British occupation of

Savannah (1778-1782) and Charleston (1780-1782). Historians have long recognized that freedom-seeking people drew on well-travelled pathways both on land and water to escape bondage. Movement, in the form of flight, both before and after the Revolutionary War, was central to enslaved people's resistance. However, the destabilizing effects of war in a slave society changed the nature, pattern, and extent of enslaved and self-emancipated people's movements.

I contend that, in addition to flight, enslaved and freedom-seeking people also experienced movement in three other important and intersecting ways: through forced removal and migration; movement with the British army; and displacement to sustain sites of British occupation. This paper forms part of my work for my dissertation, which traces these voluntary and enforced movements during the American Revolutionary War, 1775-1783. By foregrounding movement, I assess how refugees navigated sites of sanctuary and sites of containment to carve out what Damian Alan Pargas described as "spaces of formal, semiformal, and informal freedom." This paper is in conversation with scholarship which has foregrounded the Black refugee experience in conflicts throughout United States history, especially the Civil War. My dissertation uses a variety of sources to reconstruct these histories, including refugees' testimony, enslavers' records, and British colonial archives. Inspired by historians of slavery and other refugee crises, I aim to make visible the Black refugee experience by interrogating the archives' silences.

*"A Slave in a Captive Society": Captivity and Flight from Frederick Douglass's Slave Narrative to George Jackson's Prison Letters*

**Paula von Gleich, MA** (University of Bremen)

*The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) shares Douglass's experiences of how he escaped chattel slavery in Maryland as a young man to become a famous orator, editor, and writer in the US North. In the narrative and his autobiographies (1855, 1881), Douglass expressed and rethought his striving for unconfined freedom. While the escape plot successfully removes the protagonist from places of enslavement, the narratives show that the formerly enslaved reaches only what he calls "comparative freedom," remaining in the grip of the time and laws of slavery even in the 'Free North.' George Jackson's letter collection *Soledad Brother* (1970) rewrites tropes of captivity, fugitivity, and social death established in the slave narrative tradition to show how criminalization and racialized mass incarceration of African-descended people superseded enslavement after Emancipation in North America. Letters to his family and friends document not only his life in 1950s-Chicago but also his changing political consciousness during his incarceration in the 1960s. His letters garner a critical analysis of imprisonment as a form of "neoslavery" (Jackson) that "possesses" (Dillon) the twentieth-century United States, while propagating the need for an anti-racist and anti-capitalist revolution. Juxtaposing Douglass's and Jackson's critiques of American society through the lens of captivity reveal how – just as Jim Crow segregation and lynch law followed the abolition of slavery – police violence and racialized mass incarceration arose as a backlash to the gains of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements in the late twentieth century and continue to do so today.

*Explosive Mixtures: "Redbones" and the Racialization of a White Working Class*

**Kendall Artz** (The College of William & Mary)

In Southeastern Louisiana, locals whisper of the "Redbones," a supposedly mixed-race population made up of the descendants of colonists, Choctaw and Cherokee Indians, and—depending who you ask—

escaped African slaves. In the late 1800s, the Redbones were blamed for a number of violent labor disputes, but in the years following, most of those called Redbones successfully assimilated into white society. For decades, there was no mention of the Redbones in newspapers or legal proceedings, and it appeared that Louisiana's color line had been firmly established. But when a labor strike broke out at the Calcasieu Paper Plant in 1952, familiar rumors sprung up once again. As more than 180 instances of dynamiting, arson, and sabotage rocked the small company town of Elizabeth, Louisiana, the police proved incapable of identifying the culprits and turned to an old scapegoat. In the eyes of officials, only one thing was clear: the Redbones were back. Utilizing a variety of methodological approaches including archival research, historiography, and oral testimony, this paper seeks to examine how the catalyst of labor unrest was used by local law enforcement, an interstate capitalist class, and even the national press in order to call into question the racial integrity of a group of workers who appear phenotypically white. This explosive and largely unstudied strike provides an opportunity to better understand the ways race is applied as a technology of control (Sheth 2009), even to individuals who are phenotypically white. By understanding race as a selective process rather than a stagnant category, we can see that race is not something that is held in the skin but is assigned in everyday contexts. Drawing upon scholars of Critical Race Theory (Fields and Fields 2012, Mitchell 2012, Molina 2013), anthropology (Hartigan 2005, Thandaka 1999), and whiteness studies (Alcoff 2019, Ahmed 2007, Roediger 1999), this paper points to a new understanding of the ways race is selectively assigned in moments of unrest and civil disorder in order to create and surveil newly vulnerable populations.

*'Getting to the root of the matter: what Frederick Douglass can tell us about material ecologies'*

**Jennifer Lewis** (Bath Spa University)

Douglass's autobiographies are, generally speaking, masterful. They shape and present Douglass's experiences through rhetoric that is authoritative and self-aware. A partial exception to this mastery is Douglass's representation of the root Sandy Jenkins argues him into carrying as protection against Covey. In all of his narratives Douglass expresses ambivalence over, both what the root represents, and what part it had played in his transformation from a slave to 'a man'. In fact Douglass seems troubled by the root; though he gives it room in all three of his autobiographies, he cannot seem fully to account for it. Consequently he tinkers with it, effectively muddying, rather than clarifying the waters.

Most critics read Douglass's root as symbolic; a figure that represents the African cultural practices that circulated among slaves on plantations. This work is important and revealing, but in this paper I shall take a different view and develop an argument that retains a sense of the root's physicality, seeing the troubling significance of the root as its material presence, in Douglass's pocket. I shall argue that, unlike almost every other trace of the physical world in Douglass's work--a world which becomes grist to his rhetorical mill and material ready to be transformed into symbolic text--the root resists easy transition to a symbolic realm. It remains, in Douglass's memory and in his narratives, stubbornly material; insignificant, yet unforgettable; slight, yet pressing. Using the work of Don Ihde, Linda Martín Alcoff, and Tim Ingold, I shall argue that Douglass's root reveals something important about materiality and corporeality: about the push and pull of extrasomatic objects on an always emerging sense of self.

**Biographies:**



**James Mackay:** I am a third-year PhD candidate in History at the University of Edinburgh. My dissertation is provisionally titled “What They Call Free in This Country”: Refugees from Slavery in Revolutionary America, 1775-1783. It traces the movement, both voluntary and enforced, of enslaved and self-emancipated people during the Revolutionary War. I did my undergraduate degree in History and Spanish at the University of Oxford (BA Hons. 2:1, 2012), before completing an MSc in American History at the University of Edinburgh (Distinction, 2017). I currently hold research fellowships from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, the International Center for Jefferson Studies, and the University of Michigan.

**Paula von Gleich** is a researcher and lecturer of North American Literature at the department of Linguistics and Literary Studies, University of Bremen, Germany. She is the executive director of the Bremen Institute of Canada and Québec Studies and co-editor of the open access journal *Current Objectives of Postgraduate American Studies*. She received a doctoral fellowship from Evangelisches Studienwerk e.V. and was visiting scholar at the Barnard Center for Research on Women at Barnard College and the Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality at Columbia University. She recently defended her dissertation “The Black Border and Fugitive Narration in Black American Literature” which analyzes concepts of fugitivity and captivity in Black North American narratives and theory. Her research appeared, among others, in *Atlantic Studies*, *COPAS*, and edited volumes.

**Kendall Artz** is an American Studies PhD student at The College of William & Mary, and received their MA in Anthropology at Queen's University Belfast.

**Jenni Lewis** is Senior Lecturer in English (Part-time) Bath Spa University.

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## SESSION 14: April 10, 14:00-15:30

### 14A: Books Crisscrossing the Atlantic: A Roundtable on Publishing with US Presses

**Abstract:** For many British based historians of the Americas, publishing with US university and academic presses is a desirable goal, but there are many differences between US and UK dissertations as well as the way that publishers (university presses, commercial academic publishers, and trade presses) operate. This panel is intended as a professional development roundtable. It will be particularly useful for graduates, postgraduates, and early career scholars who are seeking to publish their first books but the panelists will also address their experiences with subsequent books and trade publishing in the US. A significant portion of the panel will be audience Q & A. There will not be individual presentations by panelists; instead, the group will have a moderated discussion of such questions as:

- How should you go about choosing a press(es) to submit to?
- What stage should proposals be submitted?
- What expectations do US presses have for revision of UK PhD theses and dissertations?

- What does the peer review timetable and process consist of?
- What questions should you ask about marketing and distribution?
- How do US presses partner with publishers for UK and European distribution?
- How do US presses work with REF requirements?
- What role did conferences and other forms of networking play in your publishing choices?
- What should you know about Open Access requirements and how should you discuss them with potential publishers?
- What advice do you have about edited volumes/ conference proceedings?
- How are articles and edited volumes treated
- What do you wish you had known before you published your first book?
- What have your experiences with commercial publishing houses in the US been like and how has this differed from academic presses?

**Chair/ moderator: Susan Ferber**, Executive Editor, Oxford University Press. Ferber edits academic and trade books in American and World history at OUP in New York, where she has worked since 1997 with first-time and senior scholars in the UK and US, as well as other parts of the world.

#### **Biographies:**

**Christienna Fryar**, Lecturer in History, Goldsmiths, University of London. Dr. Fryar, educated at Duke University and Princeton University, is convenor of the new MA in Black British History and a 2020 AHRC/BBC Radio 3 New Generation Thinker. She is a specialist in Caribbean history and the history of slavery and is working on a book about disasters in Jamaica after the end of slavery.

**Sarah Miller-Davenport**, Senior Lecturer in 20<sup>th</sup> Century US History. Dr. Miller-Davenport was educated at Oberlin College and the University of Chicago. She is the author of *Gateway State: Hawai'i and the Cultural Transformation of American Empire* (Princeton University Press), which received honourable mention for the British Association of American Studies book prize.

**David Milne**, Professor of Modern History, University of East Anglia. Professor Milne was educated at the London School of Economics and the University of Cambridge and has held fellowships at Yale University and the American Philosophical Society, among others. He is the author of *America's Rasputin: Walt Rostow and the Vietnam War* and *Worldmaking: The Art and Science of American Diplomacy* (both Farrar, Straus, and Giroux) and is working on a biography of American reporter and war correspondent Sigrid Schultz for Oxford University Press.

**Andrew Preston**, Professor of American History, University of Cambridge. Professor Preston was educated at the University of Toronto, the London School of Economics, and the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam* (Harvard University Press), *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (Knopf), and *American Foreign Relations: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press) and has edited numerous volumes with Princeton University Press, the University of Pennsylvania Press, Cambridge University Press, and Oxford University Press. He is currently writing a book on the idea of “national security” in

American history, to be published by Harvard University Press. He is also co-editor of a book series with Cambridge University Press on Military, War, and Society in Modern American History.

**Clive Webb**, Professor of Modern American History, University of Sussex. Professor Webb was educated at the University of Warwick, the University of Sheffield, and the University of Cambridge. A specialist on race and ethnicity in America, he is the author of *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (University of Georgia Press) and *Rabble Rousers: The American Far Right in the Civil Rights Era* (University of Georgia Press), and the co-author of *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (Oxford University Press). His current research focuses on the historical relationship between Britain and the United States. He has served as Head of the School of History, Art History, and Philosophy.

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## I4B: Historicizing Feminist Interventions

**Chair: Elizabeth Tanner (University College Cork)**

*Inspiration, co-option, survival: the erased feminist roots and forgotten women thinkers of the Bureau of International Research at Harvard 1924-42*

**Joanna Wood** (University of Oxford)

Between 1921-23, Fannie Fern Andrews, an established international educationalist and peace activist, began “formulating a plan for establishing a foundation for instruction in international affairs at Radcliffe”, the women’s college linked with Harvard. It asserted that women were particularly committed to, equipped for and in need of the study of international relations within the academy - a radical departure for both women internationalists and the male-dominated study of international affairs in the US. The President and Council of Radcliffe submitted the proposal in November 1923 and were rejected. They were given one option: hand over the project to Harvard. Over the next year, the re-worked version systematically stripped out women, teaching and Radcliffe to replace them with male faculty, research and Harvard. By November of 1924, the Bureau of International Research was born but Andrews and her feminist educationalist vision were erased. However, through Radcliffe’s involvement, a remnant of those roots remained. From 1924-42, the Bureau provided a space for over two dozen women graduates and early career scholars in international relations at Harvard, fostered their careers inside and outside the academy, published volumes of their work, and gave rise to the first generation of women international relations scholars in the academy. Though not the feminist project envisioned by Andrews, by 1942 it had built a world of women’s international thought in the academy and bequeathed a generation whose careers would shape the field and last until the 1980s.

*Romantic love and uncontrolled passions in Louisa Medina Hamblin’s short stories*

Dr **Milagros López-Peláez Casellas** (University of Granada)

In 1831, the writer Louisa Medina Hamblin (1813-1838) left Liverpool for New York on the largest passenger ship in the world, the *Thames*. She would spend the following seven years in New York until her early death, aged 25. By then, she had already written a total of 34 plays as well as several poems

and five short stories. The lack of critical studies of her vast literary output is a surprise especially when we consider the reach and impact of her work in the literary circles of 19th century New York. She was one of the leading female American dramatists of the era – and the first to earn a living exclusively through writing plays – having had her work regularly performed at the New York Bowery Theatre. This paper will be discussing the representation of murderous heroines in Medina’s Gothic stories and to echo the approach of Adriana Cracium (2009), we will challenge the false dichotomy of the hyperfeminine femme fatale and the masculinized violent woman. Moreover, by engaging with Gilbert Herdt’s concept of the “third term”, we will examine how the trope of the fatal women enabled the author to successfully subvert the construct of women as passive. We shall also explore the function of feminine passion, love, madness and self-controlled emotions in these stories. Ultimately, we seek to underline the pervasive proto-feminist and transgressive quality of Medina’s literary work.

*Yearning bodies; disruption of narratives of abuse and reclamation of the selfhood of the black female body in Gayl Jones’s Corregidora*

**Marietta Kosma** (Oxford)

In Gayl Jones’s *Corregidora* the black female body is situated in a discourse of socio-political, cultural, economic and historical forces. Jones deals with the issue of the black female body and black female sexuality as the locus of oppression. Race, class and gender intersect and influence the formation of female sexuality. I examine the multiple vectors of identity and how they impact the formation of black female sexuality. In this paper, I explore the gender narratives of sexual traumatization of the black female body and it is rendered as a locus for the displacement of the desires of others, as multiple persons try to lay claim on it. I expose the struggles that Ursa goes through to define her sexual identity since she has lost the ability to fulfill her family’s mandate to make generations. I examine the question of how a woman that comes from a lineage of abuse can renegotiate her sexual desires and disrupt the narratives of self-objectification to establish a stable identity. I show how Ursa reclaims her identity, escaping liminality through the trope of sexuality and attains radical subjectivity. Through the performance of the blues, she manages to assert herself and escape marginality.

### **Biographies:**

**Joanna Wood:** A doctoral candidate at the University of Oxford, funded by the Leverhulme Trust and the Department of Politics and International Relations, my research recovers and evaluates the international thinking of historical women in the United States academy from 1919 to 1959. Focused on the interconnected, critical mass of largely Eastern institutions, especially women’s colleges and historically black colleges and universities, it uses extensive archival research in the US to find thinkers and analyse their work, both published and unpublished. In 2019-20 I held the Joan Challinor Award at the Schlesinger Library, Harvard.

Dr **Milagros López-Peláez Casellas** has been lecturing in English Studies at the University of Granada since 2018. Previously, she was a Senior Lecturer and Designated Researcher at Coventry University (UK) where she taught courses on Chicana/o, (post)colonial and multi-ethnic American literature (2012-2018). She has also worked at the University of Leeds (UK), where she was acting Deputy Director of the Colonial and Postcolonial Institute, and at Arizona State University (USA),

where she obtained her MA and PhD in Chicana/o literature. She specializes in Chicana Literature, 19th century women's literature and transcultural studies. She has a single-authored monograph, *What about the girls?: estrategias narrativas de resistencia en la primera literatura chicana* (Oxford: Peter Lang), and has articles and book chapters published in national and international peer-reviewed journals. Among her most recent publication is a book chapter for *The Cambridge History of Latina/o Literature* (CUP, 2018).

**Marietta Kosma** is a first year PhD student in English at the University of Oxford at Lady Margaret Hall. Her research interests lie in the twentieth-century American literature, gender studies and queer studies. Her research lies on the construction of black female identity in transnational neo-slave narratives. Her educational background includes a Master in English from JSU and a Master in Ancient Greek theater from the Aegean University. She is a contributing writer in *Cherwell* and a book reviewer for the *H-Atlantic*.

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## 14C: Pop Cultural Interventions

**Chair: Dr. James Peacock** (Keele University)

*O Captain! My Captain!': Reimagining American Masculinities in the Captain America Fandom*

Dr. **Lyndsay Miller** (University of Glasgow)

The *Captain America* franchise is the foundation stone of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). The franchise is comprised of 3 films, *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011), *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (2014) and *Captain America: Civil War* (2016), which introduce and follow Steve Rogers from his origins as a Brooklyn orphan to the super-soldier leader of the Avengers. As such, Steve Rogers/Captain America is the lynchpin of the *Avengers* films, which aggregate the MCU's component franchises, and they thus culminate in the character travelling back through time to reunite with Peggy Carter and altering the ending of *Captain America: The First Avenger*. While this provides a closed loop to the MCU's 4th phase, it has been challenged by social media dominant *Captain America* fandoms. This faction of the fandom termed the ending of *Avengers: Endgame* uncanonical, and responded by providing 'fanon' responses to the Steve/Peggy canon ending. The resultant 'Stucky' (Steve and Bucky) slash fiction (a prominent genre of fanfiction that places two male characters into romantic and homoerotic relationships) is based on the homosocial codes in the relationship between Steve Rogers and his childhood best friend, Bucky Barnes, a brainwashed Soviet super-soldier, in *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* and its sequel, *Captain America: Civil War*. This paper reads Stucky slash fiction against the socio-political backdrop of the Trump-era and proposes that it offers a reimagining of American masculinities, which oppose the era's narrow definitions of masculinity, while amplifying marginalised voices and communities.

*Keeping Up with Lost Time: On Kim Kardashian and Lost Time Incidents*

**Oline Eaton**

On 2 October 2016, Kim Kardashian West posted a photograph of herself on Instagram. In the wee hours of the following morning, she was assaulted and robbed in a Paris apartment. She did not appear

on social media again until 3 January 2017. This three-month public/social media silence was imbricated with media reports, public speculation and, retroactively, coverage on *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. However, despite a frenzy of contemporary media reporting, the episode has subsequently been culturally minimized and largely forgotten. This episode and the collective forgetting of it illuminates how we grapple with biographical and historical facts, making sense of them as best we can when the outcomes remain unknown, only to culturally cut and paste them later, streamlining the story and narratively shedding the messiness of lived life. But how does history look when we unpick the layer of inevitability that has settled upon it? When, in our analysis and writing, we account for how it felt and how messily the story was told when those living through it did not know what would happen next?

Situated within the “lost time” of the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper uses autoethnography in combination with media, cultural, and historical analysis to examine this incident of lost time in Kardashian’s life. This analysis illuminates the connections between time, memory, celebrities, and individuals in moments of historical trauma and argues for greater inclusion of the persistent negative spaces—dead spaces, empty spaces, inaccessible spaces, closed spaces, sites of absence, pause, embarrassment, failure, silence, grief, withdrawal—within our historical analysis and writing.

*Mountains in Musicals: American Identities, Ecologies, and the Spectacle of Landscape in the American Mountain Film Musical*

**Nitya Koch** (Freie Universität Berlin)

My paper addresses representations of mountains in American film musicals. Film musicals tell stories of romance, community and artistic ambition, and they do this through music, singing and dancing, and in the space of the musical number. Musical characters “climb every mountain,” conveying their struggles and achievements through embodied musical performance. And in some musicals, like the iconic *The Sound of Music* (1965), the emotional intensity produced by direct bodily expression is highlighted by the spatial and ecological intensity of a mountain setting. *Sun Valley Serenade* (1941) is set in a ski resort in the Rockies and brings together urban entertainment and musicalized winter sports, while in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954), snowy peaks serve as backdrop to the building of a white pioneering community. And in *Paint Your Wagon* (1969), mountains constitute a space of both hardship and economic promise in a story of the California Gold Rush. In my paper, I examine how different American film musicals mediate mountains and construct them visually, narratively, and emotionally. Do mountains appear as sites of adventure, athletic self-assertion or escape, and how do they connect with the specific expressive forms of the musical genre? Which environmental issues do the films’ mountain settings bring to the fore, and how? I investigate how the films construct mountains as gendered and racialized spaces, as sites of nation-building, economic hope and exploitation, and I trace how the changing meanings and affective spaces of the mountainscapes contribute to the musical’s playful negotiations of American identities.

*Manifest Extinction: Geological Time, Vanishing Species, and the De-Nationalized West in Red Dead Redemption*

**Michael Fuchs** (Oldenburg)

When the American nation was defining its national past during the Revolutionary period, naturalists, historians, and illustrators were starting to sketch pre-human pasts. As a collector of ancient bones and relics, Thomas Jefferson embodied the nation's double-bind. The mastodon, in particular, fascinated the public and Jefferson (Semonin 2000). Jefferson hoped to disprove the “degeneracy hypothesis” by demonstrating that the American mammoth was still roaming the western wilderness. Although settlers discovered more and more species as the frontier moved westward, Jefferson's hope of finding mastodons was in vain. Nevertheless, the American incognitum testified to the heritage of the American continent. Importantly, since deep time was not an established fact at that time, it had to be invented and turned into a usable past for the nation in becoming. The video games *Red Dead Redemption* (Rockstar, 2010) and *Red Dead Redemption II* (Rockstar, 2018) point at the significance of deep time by featuring side-quests which address the topic of extinction. In RDR2, a female paleontologist tries to complete a “Totalisaurus” fossil, while RDR confronts players with the impact of anthropogenic activities on the planet. In my proposed paper, I will suggest that the female paleontologist's enterprise reflects both the fantastic nature of “the West” and the fluidity of history, while killing the last American buffalo raises the specter of the “first extermination event” (McBrien 2019). In combination, the two missions, framed by the most American of genres, point at a “denationalized space” (Dimock 2006)—a pre-human past and a post-human future.

### Biographies:

**Lyndsay Miller** is Research Assistant in English Literature at the University of Glasgow. Her research focuses on theories of revision, transmedia storytelling and fandoms. She is currently completing her first monograph, *The Art of Revision*, for which she was awarded a Visiting Postdoctoral Fellowship at Columbia University, and has begun work on a subsequent project on transmedia oeuvres, tentatively titled *The Transmedia Supertext*.

**Oline Eaton** (@oline\_eaton; www.FindingJackie.com) teaches writing and rhetoric at Howard University and NYU. Her research examines celebrity life-narratives as trans-medially constructed, trans-historically contested, ideologically saturated affective spaces.

**Nitya Koch** (John-F.-Kennedy Institut für Nordamerikastudien, Freie Universität Berlin) studied North American Literature and Cultural Studies, Cinema Studies and Comparative Literature, and has just completed her doctoral dissertation about dance and constructions of femininity in the Hollywood musical. Her research interests span American dance cultures, musicals, Hollywood cinema, and feminist theory, and she has presented her work on dance, musicals, bodily performance and gender construction at several international conferences.

**Michael Fuchs** is a postdoc in the project “Fiction Meets Science” at the University of Oldenburg in Germany. He has co-edited seven collections—including *ConFiguring America: Iconic Figures, Visuality, and the American Identity* (Intellect, 2013), *Intermedia Games—Games Inter Media: Video Games and Intermediality* (Bloomsbury, 2019), and *Fantastic Cities: American Urban Space in Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror* (University Press of Mississippi, fall 2021)—and authored and coauthored more than a dozen journal articles and forty-plus book chapters. For additional information, see [www.michael-fuchs.info](http://www.michael-fuchs.info).

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## SESSION 15: April 10, 16:00-17:30

### I5A: Radical Geographies and Nineteenth-Century American Literature (BrANCA Panel)

*This panel is sponsored by the British Association of Nineteenth Century Americanists, a UK-based network of researchers, teachers, writers, and cultural critics engaged in progressive, interdisciplinary scholarship concerning American writing in the long nineteenth century. Our mission is to foster a community of scholars interested in drawing on the vast potential of nineteenth-century American texts to intervene in a variety of discourses and pressing issues.*

**Abstract:** Although the United States was born out of a moment of anti-imperial revolution its self-definition as a republic was haunted from the beginning by its drive toward territorial expansion and its ongoing cultural and economic entanglement with the burgeoning British Empire. Literary historians from the 1990s onward have worked assiduously to develop post-national and transatlantic theoretical frameworks that help to expose the nineteenth-century U.S.'s often disavowed position within a global network of imperial actors and colonialist attitudes toward nature, but as Paul Giles argues in "The Deterritorialization of American Literature" (2008) there remains a need for scholars "to reconsider American literature specifically in the context of geographical materialism [and] to think through the variegated forms of its imaginary relations to the real dimensions of physical space." Tracing the growth and significance of the American geographical imagination and its intersections with imperialistic cartographies and historiographies from the Revolution to the end of the nineteenth century, through its material inspirations and philosophical ramifications in the work of canonical writers such as Charles Brockden Brown, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, this session specifically aims to consider the forms of knowledge and identity generated through and by nineteenth-century American literature's encounter with new modes of geographical imagining.

**Chair:** Matthew Pethers (University of Nottingham)

#### *Charles Brockden Brown's Magazines and the Birth of Critical Geography*

**Grant Rosson** (University of California, Los Angeles)

There is no better way to get a critical overview of the state of American geography around the turn of the nineteenth century than by reading the three magazines founded and edited by early American novelist Charles Brockden Brown. Although Brown is now best known as a gothic novelist, he dedicated far more of his life to the study of geography than he dedicated to the writing of novels. This paper shows how Brown's dedication to geography unfolded across the pages of his magazines. As a periodical editor, Brown was in a position to become intimately familiar with the potentialities and vicissitudes of knowledge production and dissemination in the early American republic. His magazines not only offered him a regular forum in which to comment on the many problems he saw in the contemporary knowledge-economy (in such essays as "On Almanacks" and "On the Prevailing Ignorance of Geography"), but they also presented a ready vehicle in which to address those problems, through the publication of critical reviews and essays, frequently on the subject of geography. By placing Brown's magazines in the context of the history of geographic knowledge-production, this paper argues that



Brown was a vanguard of critical thought in the field of geography, a fact that has yet to be fully assimilated by literature and geography scholars alike for the simple reason that Brown and his magazines operated in between and across the modern disciplinary distinctions that have, so far, organized, and therefore distorted, our perceptions (and receptions) of his work.

### *Thoreau's Arboreal Encounters: A Transatlantic Re-Vision*

**Thomas W. Howard** (Washington University in St. Louis)

This paper argues that Henry David Thoreau's nature writing, particularly in *Walden* and his *Journal*, models an encounter with trees that moves beyond metaphor and suggests a new way of envisioning writing *with* nature rather than writing *about* nature. Thoreau builds on transatlantic work by European naturalists like Goethe and Alexander von Humboldt, but I contend that something much more radical takes place as Thoreau approaches nature both empirically as a naturalist and philosophically as a Transcendentalist. As a poet, he does not make poetry out of trees, but instead sees the poetry that trees themselves create. Thoreau does not generate something new out of the raw arboreal material, but he instead tunes his sensitivity toward the meaning already present in the twisting roots and stretching branches. The argument here builds on recent scholarship reevaluating the importance of the cognitive life of trees. Donna Haraway has called the "thinking forest" more than metaphor, and work by Eduardo Kohn, Michael Marder, and Peter Wohlleben all suggest an arboreal cognition that we have yet to comprehend. The paper argues that Thoreau's writing, being so heavily influenced by his daily encounters with trees, resembles an early anthropic translation of this arboreal poetic philosophy. For Thoreau, trees exist *as* writing and *as* poems. They are hieroglyphic, demanding attention and observation, but also speculation and experimentation. Ultimately, Thoreau's arboreal practice of thinking *with* the forest models a more sustainable speculative practice for radical thinking in the Anthropocene, one already occurring in the nineteenth century.

### *'I am terrified at the earth!': Land, Leaves, and Legacy in Walt Whitman's Poetic Ecologies*

**Becca Hamilton** (University of Cambridge)

Walt Whitman's poetry demands new critical attention in light of recent research into the environmental impact of the American Civil War. Critics have long affirmed Whitman as an ebullient celebrant of the natural world, yet the conflict manipulated an already-interwoven relationship between humans and the natural environment. Rarely do Whitman's critics acknowledge this. As such, this presentation illuminates correlations between Whitman's poetry the complex vulnerabilities of the American landscape. Beyond celebratory, there is a cautiousness to Whitman's work. Evidenced by Whitman's recently published *Cultural Geography Scrapbook*, other notebooks, and early journalism, we see poetry motivated by dirt, death, and danger. He is not only aware of the perils of the natural world, but the dangers of the damage wrought upon the land itself. Furthermore, there is a relationship between Whitman's ecological poetry and the very outgrowths of revisions his work and *Scrapbook* yield. The study also looks to a wider span of nineteenth-century American poets, finding similarities in their depiction of the land and its occupants, and indicating a wealth of understudied environmental discourse, particularly in light of new historicising work and current ecological and cultural significance.

## *People of Note”: Bennett’s Scrapbook of Celebrities and Writing Longfellow in England*

**Mashaël I. Alhammad** (University of Leeds)

The inclusion of the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s bust into Poets’ Corner at Westminster Abbey in 1884 came after a prolonged campaign and much controversy, given the significance of Poets’ Corner as a British national literary memorial site. This significant event shaped a model of transatlantic English literature at a time when many thinkers were seeking to establish a distinctive American literature. The debate that the Longfellow’s bust campaign generated in the British and American press is not the primary concern of this paper, although it will inform my argument. Instead, I am more interested in a scrapbook that the organiser of the campaign, the patriotic poet William Cox Bennett, compiled. It was the product of his frustrations when the decision to include the bust in Poets’ Corner had not yet been taken. This scrapbook is not simply a materialisation of his literary enthusiasm toward Longfellow; it has a practical function. The eccentricities and idiosyncrasies embedded in the generic form of the scrapbook permitted Bennett to craft a transatlantic community of like-minded individuals of British and American celebrities. He was cultivating his cultural capital through affiliating himself with past and present celebrities and simultaneously expressing and promoting Anglo-Saxon ideals. I examine this scrapbook through a comparison with his published books, such as *A Ballad History of England* (1868), to argue that the transnationalism expressed in Bennett’s commemoration(s) of Longfellow cast the United States as the natural outgrowth of British Empire. Consequently, American national literature was at once the chief opponent to a transatlantic model of English literature and a force enshrining it as a possibility.

### **Biographies:**

**Grant Rosson** is a Ph.D. candidate in English at University of California, Los Angeles. His dissertation argues that nineteenth-century American geography, both as a field of study and as a body of knowledge, was a product of the era’s vital and varied literary culture. Chapters uncover the geographical undertakings of Charles Brockden Brown, Margaret Fuller, and Emily Dickinson. A portion of his chapter on Dickinson’s geographic poetics was recently published in *The New Emily Dickinson Studies* (Cambridge UP, 2019).

**Thomas W. Howard** is a doctoral candidate in English and American Literature at Washington University in St. Louis. His dissertation examines aphoristic language in the nineteenth-century United States, particularly with the Transcendentalists and pragmatists. He is currently on a Fulbright research grant at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.

**Becca Hamilton** (she/her) is a recent MPhil American Literature graduate from the University of Cambridge. Her thesis looked to the ecological significance of Whitman’s postbellum revisions, and her doctoral research will look to the vital materialism of nineteenth-century American trash. She has a background in maritime draughtsmanship, and her research interests often intersect in petrofictions, crisis, and the Anthropocene.

**Mashaël I. Alhammad** is a third-year PhD candidate at the University of Leeds, whose thesis examines the reception of American literary celebrities by their British readers during the second half of the nineteenth century.

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## I5B: New Perspectives on Folk, Jazz, and Race

Chair: **Chris Parkes**

*“Ev’y man have some principle ter stan’ on:” Resounding Calls of Self-Fashioning in African American Folk Songs*

**Ellie Armon Azoulay** (University of Kent)

During my research on collectors of African American folk music in the first half of the twentieth century, I was struck by the performers’ radical utterance. In their calls expressed in song and speech, these performers were drawing the line, refusing to sing (striking) or asserting one’s independence, pride and the right to self-fashioning. These calls expressed in song and speech stand out because of their creativity and the persistence of their makers. These moments of radical utterance were not often encouraged by most collectors. Far from it, some collectors were intentionally denying such possibilities of self-fashioning. This prevented the African American people they met from articulating and designing their inscription into the archives.

These calls uttered by the performers emerged from a variety of contexts and geographies. In many of the cases, the calls were associated with the context of the work and the possibility of financially supporting oneself – whether self-employed like a coal miner from Atlanta or a fishmonger from Jacksonville, or employees of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company (TCI) living and working in small mining towns outside Birmingham. Other calls for protest were concerned with the right to organise – as in the case of the longshoremen union from Savannah, Georgia, who often sang about their working conditions, the mistreatment and violence enacted by their white employers, the importance of union work and the right for equal pay. Focusing on these calls for action, this paper will echo the agency expressed in them. By shifting the focus of the research from the collectors back to the sources – the performers – this paper highlights how individuals and communities negotiated their place through song. This negotiation can be broken down into three major stages: first, negotiating their place in a segregated world; second, negotiating exchange with the collectors; last, negotiating with the future generation of listeners and users.

*Out of Place: African-American hobos in Folk and Blues Music*

**Owen Clayton** (University of Lincoln)

Early twentieth-century American transients created one of America’s earliest subcultures, known as ‘hobohemia’. This subculture produced around 80 autobiographies written by hobos, along with works of poetry, novels, newspaper articles, songs, and sociology. However, as several historians have noted, hobohemia was racially segregated. There is not a single book-length autobiography by a black transient author published before World War II, even though African-Americans represented about 10% of transients. The absence of autobiographies written by black transients has made the popular historical image of the hobo seem entirely white.

While African-Americans were prevented from publishing their experiences as transients in the interwar years, this prohibition did not apply to music: pre-WW2 folk and blues music frequently describes life

on the road. Though this a well-known aspect of the blues, it has been little studied. As this paper will show, paying serious attention to blues lyrics undermines the inherent whiteness of American hobo narratives.

Examining songs by Willard Thomas, Sleepy John Estes, Memphis Minnie and others, I argue that re-racialising transiency changes the meaning of hoboing because black accounts of transiency emphasize violence in a way that white accounts do not. Affected by structural and state violence, including segregation and white vigilantism, black hobos sing about violence permeating their everyday existence. This shatters the romanticised image of the hobo as perpetuated within American popular culture.

*"Us Whole Voices": Orality and its Undermining in Mosquito by Gayl Jones and "Ruby My Dear" by Thelonious Monk*

**Emily Moore** (UCL)

The thematic content of African-American author Gayl Jones's early work troubled critics, and thus, attention to her stylistic innovations and revolutionary musical-textual register has been neglected. Engaging with studies of oral tradition, I seek to disrupt the narrative of a linear development from oral to literate culture, attending instead to the cross-pollination that occurs between the two registers. Suggesting that Jones exploits and revels in the permeable nature of this border, I endeavour to determine the political currency of this transgression, as Jones uses her hybrid register to democratic ends. In this way, I overcome the barrier between critical engagement with the formal and with the thematic aspects of her work that has stymied Jones criticism. Drawing original comparisons between Jones's hybrid register and that of the jazz pianist Thelonious Monk, I suggest that both alert their audience to the supremacy of the voice – Jones with techniques such as antiphony, Monk with the speed and range of his melodies – while simultaneously undermining this vocality. They do so by engaging, adapting, and exploiting traditional western non-oral forms; using the master's tools to remodel the master's house. The result is a hybrid register that facilitates communication and potentially healing, destabilising notions of hierarchy. Exploring Jones's work in this way not only provides a fresh account of the work of a much-neglected author, but also redresses narratives of top-down cultural influence, providing fresh insight into the ways in which African-American artist's manage the legacy of slavery and confront enduring endemic racism in America.

### **Biographies:**

**Ellie Armon Azoulay** is a 3rd year PhD candidate in American Studies. After a career as an art critic and an art correspondent for daily newspapers as well as international art magazines, she completed an MRes in Exhibition Studies at Central Saint Martins, UAL and received a Vice-Chancellor Scholarship from the University of Kent to pursue her PhD on collectors of African American folk music in the U. S. South in the first half of the twentieth century. She is a recipient of the Ian and Christine Bolt Scholarship that supported an extensive research trip to Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee (2018-2019). Her interdisciplinary research involves a study of the collectors' archives, using both music and photographs to critically examine questions of exchange, self-fashioning, resistance, and intimacy. She is interested in the implications of race, class, and gender and how they defined and shaped how black voices and people were inscribed into the archives.

**Owen Clayton** is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Lincoln.

**Emily Moore** is a first-year PhD student at UCL in the SELCS Department. She is working on jazz and blues in the work of Gayl Jones.

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## I5C: Activist Lineages Against the Grain

Chair: **Martin Halliwell**

*Writing the River: Oceti Sakowin ways of knowing & #NoDAPL*

**Laura De Vos** (U Washington)

In *This Stretch of the River* (2006), the Oak Lake Writers' Society writes back to the settler narratives of the Lewis and Clark bicentennial, centering Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota (Oceti Sakowin) ways of knowing and relating. The river that helped give Lewis and Clark their identity as great explorers, is the same river that Oceti Sakowin peoples developed and continue to draw their identities and worldviews from, as reflected in *This Stretch of the River* as well as in the radical relationality of the #NoDAPL camps at Standing Rock. Writing from and about the same lands and waters the #NoDAPL camps were built on to protect, the Oceti Sakowin authors collection of poems, stories, essays, and conversation shows how the Oceti Sakowin have a genealogy of relationships to the waters and the lands that Lewis and Clark sought to "discover" going back to when time began. *This Stretch of the River* evidences how sacred tribal stories are taken up, transformed for the contemporary moment, and shared, so that its teachings can inspire the struggle for a healthy river and strong tribal nations. Because, in Gabrielle Wynde Tateyuskaskan's words in her "Isanti River Poem" (included in the volume): "An attentive heart knows a river's well-being / is a measure of our humanity." The texts from *This Stretch of the River* do similar consciousness raising work as the #NoDAPL camps, in the sense that they provide stories of old and new relations connected across time, space, and nations, inviting the reader into these relationships.

*The Meat Boycott of 1910: exploring intersections between food activism and radical politics*

**Alice Béja** (Sciences Po Lille)

Preoccupations with food safety, price and quality, have often been portrayed as going against the possibility of a radical transformation of the US capitalist system. Upton Sinclair famously wrote about *The Jungle* (1906): "I aimed for the public's heart and by accident hit it in the stomach." Similarly, Werner Sombart contended that in the United States, "all socialist utopias came to nothing on roast beef and apple pie" (1906). Yet the rise of consumer movements in the early 20th century went hand in hand with the growing popularity of socialism and other radical movements such as the I.W.W., numerous organizations were created to oppose the trusts that monopolized the production of foodstuffs; they often borrowed their methods from the world of labour, and identified consumer and producer as members of the working class.

The 1910 meat strike that spread throughout the nation (with thousands of participants in cities like Cleveland, Chicago or New York) to demand lower prices is an example of this intersection between nascent consumer movements, the labor movement, radicalism and the politics of food. It led to citizens, labor unions and consumer organizations pledging they would not eat food for thirty days, and exposed

both convergence and conflict in the defense of the working class, between those who advocated lowering the price of meat and other basic goods and those who stressed the impact it would have on the workers in those industries. This paper aims to explore these strategies and discussions, to examine whether this particular action resulted in a strengthening of the common cause of producer and consumer (both being identified with the working class) or with a parting of ways.

### *Soldiers Writing War and Environment*

**Sara Abdullah Alzahrani** (University of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia)

The negative impact of war on stable environments has always received academic attention. However, Brauer Jurgen's *War and Nature: The Environmental Consequences of War in a Globalized World* (2009) has revealed that wars have environmental benefits and the efforts to stop wars will not likely lead to less environmental destruction. While such scholarship argues that wars are not as environmentally damaging as peace-related forms of productions and consumptions, it risks creating an attitude that is at best apathetic or at worst apolitical, particularly for soldiers witnessing first-hand acts of destruction. This is exacerbated in the context of the postmodern warfare where war damage remains local in scale and goes largely unchecked. The paper has a twofold purpose: it first reviews the ways in which U.S. soldiers from recent wars write about the destruction their army has inflicted on lands not their own. It then explores an exceptional example of an emerging ecological consciousness in the writings of Brian Turner, a U.S. infantry team leader served a year in the Iraq War, 2003. Framed in an ecocritical theory, the paper aims to identify sites of conscious/unconscious invocations of Iraqi landscapes devoid of natural forms of life in Turner's two poetry collections: *Here, Bullet* (2005) and *Phantom Noise* (2010), and a memoir entitled *My Life as a Foreign Country* (2014). While the paper reveals the continuity of the long tradition of soldiers' narratives being predominantly insensitive to the environment of the *other*, it also shows burgeoning sites of politicized witnessing and war-related ecopoetics.

### *Marking Migration: Graffiti at Ellis Island immigration station, New York c.1900-1924*

**Katherine Reed** (Independent Scholar)

When the derelict immigration station at Ellis Island, New York, was redeveloped as a museum in the 1980s, historic graffiti were discovered in former dormitories and detention rooms. These messages and drawings are personal testimony of people held in the limbo of immigration detention. Ellis Island was highly bureaucratic, suffused with the material culture and performance of official writing and mark-making. This paper will explore the entanglements of the detained migrants' graffiti with this institutional environment. In the action of creating graffiti, there is a sense of bricolage with Ellis Island: its materiality, symbols and gestures. The paper will examine how scribbles and symbols on the walls may have been a reaction to the inspection process which was embodied and visceral, rather than verbal and articulate. It will argue that creating graffiti was a way of 'thinking through' Ellis Island.

### **Biographies:**

**Dr. Laura De Vos** is a lecturer in the Departments of American Indian Studies, American & Ethnic Studies, and English at the University of Washington. They graduated from the University of Washington

English Department in Seattle with the dissertation *Spirals of Transformation: Turtle Island Indigenous Social Movements and Literatures*. They received their MA in English Literature and Linguistics and their MBA in Cultural Management from the University of Antwerp, Belgium. They also did selected graduate course work in Gender Studies at the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands. Laura initiated and was the Research Assistant for the interdisciplinary research cluster "Developing a Graduate Certificate in American Indian and Indigenous Studies"; the resulting Graduate Certificate is now being offered (starting January 2020). They are also an Assistant Editor for *Process: Journal for Multidisciplinary Undergraduate Scholarship* ([processjmus.org](http://processjmus.org)). They have forthcoming articles in the Indigenous Studies journal *Transmotion* and the 2021 *Settler Colonial Studies* journal special issue on Gender.

**Alice Béja** is Assistant Professor in US American Studies at Sciences Po Lille (Lille Institute for Political Science) and is affiliated with the CERAPS-CNRS research group. Her research focuses on US-American radicalism, the intellectual history of anarchism, the relationship between politics and literature and the socio-cultural history of food. A former Visiting Scholar at Harvard and Boston University, she has also worked for two years as Higher Education Attaché for the French Embassy in the United Kingdom.

**Sara Alzahrani** is an Assistant Professor of American Studies in the Department of Languages and Translation at the University of Jeddah. She completed her MA in 2010 at the University of Sussex, England. In 2020, she graduated from the University of Leicester with a dissertation entitled *Dialectics of Humanism: Thematic Readings of the Literature of the Vietnam and Iraq Wars*. Her research interests focus on representations, memories and narratives of wars and cultures of protest.

**Katherine Reed** completed a History PhD at the University of Manchester in 2020. Her research on historic graffiti has been published in the *Journal of American Ethnic History*, *American Nineteenth Century History* and the *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*. She won the BAAS Postgraduate Essay Prize in 2020.

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### PLENARY 3: SAMI SCHALK, April 10, 17:30-19:00

## “Articulating and Enacting Black Disability Politics in the National Black Women's Health Project”

This talk provides a brief history of the National Black Women's Health Project and analyzes how the organization articulated and enacted Black disability politics within the Black feminist health activism. This talk is part of a larger book project which explores Black activist and cultural worker engagement with disability as a political and social issue.

**Sami Schalk** is an associate professor of Gender & Women's Studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research focuses on disability, race, and gender in contemporary American literature and culture. Schalk's first book, *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, & Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction* (Duke UP 2018), explores how black women writers use non-realist genres to reimagine the possibilities and limits of bodyminds, challenging our understanding of the meanings of disability, race,

and gender. Schalk's next project focuses on disability politics in black activism in the post-Civil Rights era. She identifies as a fat, black, queer, femme, disabled cis-gendered woman. She can be found on Twitter as @drsamischalk and on her website, samischalk.com.

*This plenary is sponsored by the Journal of American Studies.*

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## SUNDAY, APRIL 11

### SESSION 16: April 11, 12:00-13:30

#### Academic Speed Dating

Join the Zoom room and come meet some strangers! You will be paired at random in groups of 3-4, switching every 10 minutes. This will be an opportunity to network outside your regular circle.

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### SESSION 17: April 11, 14:00-15:30

#### Teaching American Studies Network Event: Developing a Signature Pedagogy for American Studies in the UK

**Abstract:** What comes to mind if we ask “what does it mean to teach American Studies in the UK?” We teach (North) American content in our classes, modules and courses, but do we also conduct our teaching in ways specific to American Studies? This might be in how we approach our materials, how we work with our students and think about our classroom dynamics, how we engage with our multi- and inter-disciplinary forms, and/or how we impart our professional values. Shulman (2005) describes a “signature pedagogy” as “the forms of instruction that leap to mind when we first think about the preparation of members of particular professions” – not just what we teach, but *\*how\** we teach it. In this workshop, we will discuss what we think are the signature elements our pedagogies, with a view to developing a publication (or series of publications) that begin to define a Signature Pedagogy for American Studies in the UK.



Lead: **Dr Lydia Plath**, University of Warwick (Chair of the BAAS Development and Education Subcommittee).

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## SPECIAL EVENT: April 11, 16:00-17.00

### Awards Ceremony & Closing

This ceremony will be the occasion to reveal the winners of the 2021 BAAS awards and celebrate their accomplishments. The award subcommittee will also take this opportunity to update the BAAS community on changes that have been done to the awards in line with BAAS' ongoing commitment to fostering greater inclusivity and diversity in the field, as well as its ambition to lead the field in reducing its contribution to carbon emissions and the climate crisis.

The awards ceremony will be followed by closing remarks by **Dr. Cara Rodway**, Chair of BAAS, and a look ahead to next year's conference, hosted by the **University of Hull**.

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