

# Society of Early Americanists Newsletter

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## From the SEA President

Greetings, fellow SEA members!

It has been a busy transition since our last conference in Philadelphia. While we are eagerly anticipating this year's off-year conference, "Triumph in My Song" in Maryland, plans are also underway for our 2013 Biennial conference, to be held in Savannah. Our venue will be the Hyatt Regency Savannah, right on the riverfront of the historic district.

After nearly a decade at the University of Minnesota at Moorhead, our website has returned to its original home at the University of California Irvine, through the generous support of Michael Clark and the School of Humanities. We are grateful for the tech support we received for so many years from Moorhead, and are looking forward to many more years at our new-old home in Irvine. Susan Imbarrato has graciously agreed to stay on as webmaster, and we invite you to contact her at <simbarra@mnstate.edu> with any questions or suggestions for our website.

Welcome to Mary Balkun as the newest editor of the newsletter, replacing Ritch Frohock who served for 5 years in that capacity. Discussions are underway to consider an electronic format for the newsletter, and we are eager to hear your thoughts on this matter. You can direct any e-mails to me at <wysshil@auburn.edu> or to Mary at <mary.balkun@shu.edu>.

In other SEA news, several members have pointed out that although our bylaws mandate that our annual business meeting be held at the ALA conference, it is probably more appropriate for us to hold our business meeting at our own, thriving conference. Look for more information about a petition to revise our bylaws on this matter.

While we have been busy with the various activities of our organization, clearly our members have been busy as well. Our own Joanna Brooks was recently featured on the American Public Media radio show "On Being" in an interview with host Krista Tippett; in that interview she talks eloquently and thoughtfully about Mormonism past and present, drawing from her early Americanist training to explore the current moment. You can hear this interview at <<http://being.publicradio.org/>> or you can follow her "Ask Mormon Girl" blog. We were further delighted to see David Shields featured in "True Grits" an article on Southern heritage cooking in the October 31, 2011 *New Yorker* magazine. David's website on heritage cooking is at <<http://research.cdh.sc.edu/vegetable/index>>.

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php>. Thanks go to Scotti Parish and Sandra Gustafson for posting these notices to the EARAM list, and we are always happy to see our colleagues featured in the national press in such thoughtful ways. Most recently we have learned that Phil Round has been awarded the James Russell Lowell Prize for *Removable Type: Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663-1880*. So wonderful to have early Americanists featured so prominently. Please let us know of any and all such successes so that we can celebrate together!

Let me just conclude by saying that we are in an exciting moment in our organization, and I am deeply honored to be president right now. Our membership is growing, and we are finding our way as a thriving, well-established decades-old organization. As the 10<sup>th</sup> President, I am indebted to those presidents who have served before me, and I am most grateful to my fellow-officers, Kristina Bross and Laura Stevens, who have made our shared work a real pleasure. As always, though, it is you, our current members, who make us such a vibrant community, and I hope that you will let me know if you have ideas about how our organization can best represent you.

*Hilary Wyss, President, Society of Early Americanists*



**Professor Joanna Brooks**, who was featured in “On Being,” the American Public Media radio show.

### **From the SEA Vice President**

It’s a pleasure to be reporting from the in-between office of the vice-president, which includes the “off-year” conferences and affiliated organizations among its duties. Our tradition of meeting in the years between the general conferences continues to grow and deepen. The SEA has sponsored thematic meetings every other year since 2002 when Ralph Bauer and David Shields brought us together for the first Ibero-Anglo summit, and I’m happy to confirm that we have several exciting possibilities in the offing. I hope you are already planning to attend the spring 2012 meeting “Triumph in My Song”: 18th & 19th Century African Atlantic Culture, History, & Performance” to be held at the University of Maryland, May 31-June 2. The program is shaping up with traditional and innovative presentations, including live performances. The SEA extends its thanks to Heather Nathans, who conceived of the topic along with the late Jeffrey Richards, and who will chair the meeting. Our next off-year event will be a meeting hosted by Kingston University in the United Kingdom. Brychan

Carey will be our local host, working together with Tom Krise, Laura Stevens (and me) to pull together an early July 2014 meeting focused on early America and transatlantic studies. Watch for announcements about discount housing (dorm-room comfort!) and special events (cruising to Hampton Court!) as plans coalesce. Plans for the next Ibero-Anglo summit are underway as well, so stay tuned. If you have an idea for a smaller, thematic meeting that might be held in the years between our general conferences, please contact me to talk about the proposal process.

In addition to our own meetings, the SEA and its members are active in a large number of other organizations, both informally and through liaison agreements; you are likely familiar with the various calls for papers that come through the listserv. During this academic year, we will sponsor several sessions at ASECS, the call has been issued for presentations at the American Literature Association, and we have been approved for an SEA-sponsored panel at the upcoming C19 meeting. Our thanks to Kathleen Donegan for serving as a liaison to the ALA and to Christopher Lukasik for coordinating our C19 involvement. Thanks as well to Melissa Antonucci and Manushag (Nush) Powell for chairing the panels at ASECS.

*Kristina Bross, Vice President, Society of Early Americanists*

### **From the SEA Executive Coordinator**

Before I took on the role of Executive Coordinator, former officers told me that this is the position where one truly learns the Society’s workings from the ground up. That’s indeed been the case for me, and the process has been a gratifying one. As I’ve climbed the learning curve of this position I’ve been delighted to see how the good will and sociability that characterize the SEA’s conferences and listserv conversations also pervade its most minute transactions. The past summer was a time of significant operational transition, as the passing on of financial and membership records from Kristina Bross to myself coincided with the transfer of our web site to a new home. I am grateful to my fellow officers, especially to the indefatigable and generous Susan Imbarrato, for the patience and expertise they brought to this process. Thanks also to the SEA members who good-naturedly endured temporary glitches with their membership renewals during this process.

In collaboration with Hilary Wyss and Kristina Bross, I’ve taken on two initiatives for my term as EC. First, the Society’s records, which are passed on from one EC to another, have grown significantly (seeing them, one might think organically) since its founding. This 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the SEA seemed an appropriate time for us to create a system for record keeping that will facilitate the long-term preservation of these documents. The Executive Committee, in consultation with the Archivists or Directors of Special Collections at our universities, therefore wrote a “Policy Regarding Records Acquisition and Retention.” It has been approved by the Executive and Advisory Committees and is now posted online at <http://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/archive.html>. We

have begun looking for a permanent home for our records, so that they will be accessible to future researchers. In keeping with this new policy I also have started the process of creating a digital backup for many SEA documents. PDFs of scanned texts are being placed online in a password-protected Dropbox folder. I owe particular thanks to my doctoral student Jacob Ball, who has been organizing our records in keeping with the new policy while overseeing the digital project, and to the work-study undergraduates in the University of Tulsa's English Department office who have been scanning the documents: Tiffany Giles, Christopher Hollingsworth, Haley Johnson, Sarah LeBoeuf, and Jenny Remy. They also have been helping me maintain the membership database, and Sandy Vice, the Department's Administrative Assistant, has played a significant role in overseeing the students' work. I am grateful to all of them for their contributions to this project.

Second, as the lively presence of a twitter feed at the last conference indicates, we obviously are in an era of rapidly proliferating forms of communication, with opportunities offered by a wide range of technologies for the fostering of connections among our own members as well as the promotion of early American studies beyond the bounds of our organization. With these opportunities come questions and potential pitfalls. The Executive Committee officers have concluded that it is imperative for us to be well informed about the potential that new technologies offer for the continued flourishing of the SEA. At the center of our considerations is our desire to make sure that the SEA remains the welcoming, collaborative organization it always has been, even as our membership grows and even as we foster stronger ties with early Americanists in an international arena. I therefore am excited to report that we have appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on New Media and Technologies, which I am chairing. Its members are: Mary Balkun, Raymond Craig, Jeremy Dibbell, Jonathan Field, Lisa Gordis, Tamara Harvey, Jonathan Senchyne, and Bryan Waterman. The charge of this committee is to evaluate the usefulness of social networking sites and other technologies for communication among the Society's members and with the general public. The committee will present a report at the 2013 conference's business meeting, but it also has been, and will be, sending recommendations to the Executive Committee in advance of that meeting. In response to an initial recommendation, stay tuned for an upcoming announcement about an SEA Facebook page. Finally, I will remind you all, if you have not already, to renew your memberships. I look forward to working with all of you over the next few years.

Laura Stevens, Executive Coordinator, Society of Early Americanists



**Phillip H. Round**, whose *Removable Type: Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663-1880*, has been awarded the Modern Language Association's forty-second annual James Russell Lowell Prize.



**David S. Shields**, who was featured in the article "True Grits" in *The New Yorker*.

### Professional Opportunities

*While every effort has been made to present information accurately, interested persons should always verify submission dates and criteria directly with the sponsoring institutions.*

### NEMLA-Sponsored Newberry Library Fellowships

This short-term fellowship offers up to one month's support for work in residence at the Newberry. Preference will be given to projects focusing on materials written in French, German, Italian, or Spanish. The stipend is \$2,000 per month. **Deadline is Feb. 6, 2012.** Application requirements: <http://www.newberry.org/apply-fellowship>.

### NEA Workshops

The National Endowment for the Humanities, through American History and Culture Program, will support two week-long workshops celebrating the heritage of the Mississippi Delta. ***The Most Southern Place on Earth: Music, Culture, and History in the Mississippi Delta*** will explore the region's impact on America's music, foodways, civil rights, literary heritage, and political landscape. Workshops will be offered to forty participants each between June 24 and 30, and July 8 and 14, 2012. They are open to K-12 teachers, including public, private, and home schools, and librarians. Up to 5 graduate credit hours may be earned. Stipends of \$1200 are available. Complete information and application materials are available from the Delta Center for Culture and Learning at [www.blueshighway.org](http://www.blueshighway.org) and additional information concerning Landmarks workshops is provided by NEH at <http://www.neh.gov/projects/landmarks-school.html>The Director of the workshop is Dr. Luther Brown ([lbrown@deltastate.edu](mailto:lbrown@deltastate.edu)).



## SEA@. . .ALA and ASA

Scholars presenting in SEA-sponsored sessions at the 2011 meeting of the American Literature Association Conference in Boston, MA, and the early American related organization, the Early American Matters Caucus-sponsored sessions at the American Studies Association Conference in Baltimore, MD, kindly provided abstracts of their papers. If you present at a future conference on an SEA panel, we invite you to submit a 100-200 word abstract of your work, so members can know more about the latest research represented on panels the society sponsors.



**Standing Left to Right:** Steven W. Thomas, College of St. Benedict | St. John's University (Chair); Beth Boyens, University of South Dakota; Helen Knight, Purdue University; Jacob Crane, Tufts University

### **Panel One: Early American Narratives: Transatlantic Tales and Idealized**

Chair: Steven W. Thomas, College of St. Benedict | St. John's University

### **Jacob Crane, Tufts University: "Barbary(an) Invasions: The Muslim Mask in Republican Print Culture"**

As Michael Warner argues, during the ratification crisis classical pseudonyms such as "Cato" and "Publius" posited a transhistorical republican print ideology that established the legitimacy of a national constitution. I argue that in Peter Markoe's *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania* (1787), the circulating mask of the Muslim spy worked to mediate the relationship between competing claims of the local and the national identity by way of the transatlantic. Markoe redefines the debate through punctuated temporality of transatlantic politics and tensions, mediated by fictive schemes of translation that articulate dialectically the national borders between early American and the Muslim Other.

### **Helen Knight, Purdue University: "Conjuring Columbia: Female Utopian Constellations in Susanna Rowson's *Reuben and Rachel*"**

In this novel, Susanna Rowson systematically replaces traditional family structures with clusters of women fending for themselves. I argue that Rowson presents a radical alternative to patriarchal lineage, scattering constellations of united women across her sweeping epic. Volume II, despite its tame reputation, revolves around female adventures motivated by queer desire. Though the domestic dream towards which the novel moves may seem like a stable, confining end, the first volume shows that time must alter Mt. Pleasant as well. In the end, Rowson's novel destabilizes American patriarchal control and replaces it with an epic view of female survival, ingeniousness, and powerful female relationships which structure women's lives.

### **Beth Boyens, University of South Dakota: "'Regions of Fancy': Mapping Melancholic Space in Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette*"**

This paper examines the space between marriage and freedom that Hannah Webster Foster creates for the heroine of her 1797 novel, *The Coquette*, and re-frames this social space in terms of Eliza's affective state of melancholy. I use melancholy, with its particular possibilities

of encompassing both the desired object and desire itself, to rethink gendered conceptions of space, mobility, and enjoyment in the federalist era and to demonstrate Foster's vision for an external, social space in which women could maintain a melancholic gap that might free them from the inevitable choices and limitations of their time.



**Sitting Left to Right:** Lisa Logan, University of Central Florida (Chair); Steven W. Thomas, College of St. Benedict | St. John's University; Danielle Skeeahan, Northeastern University

### **Panel Two: Early American Literary Progeny and the Commodity of Self**

Chair: Lisa Logan, University of Central Florida

### **Danielle Skeeahan, Northeastern University: "'How Came I to be His Property?': Reproducing *Pamela* in the New World"**

This paper examines *Pamela*'s North American circulation alongside the business of bourgeois domesticity from 1750-1760. Often listed for sale alongside imported women's clothing and dry goods, women shopkeepers marketed Richardson's *Pamela* as both a "fashionable" commodity and as a guide to social mobility. In this setting, shops emerge as sites of gendered sociality that challenge the authority of husbands and fathers. Contemporary critics in turn rewrote what was an example of increased feminine agency into a seduction narrative: like seduction tales, shops threatened both traditional kinship ties and emerging understandings of the private and familial nature of the "ideal" Republican woman.

### **Steven W. Thomas, College of St. Benedict | St. John's University: "The Poetry of Cash Crops and the New Economic Criticism"**

Steven W. Thomas's paper "The Poetry of Cash Crops and the New Economic Criticism" comparatively analyzed eighteenth-century literature about the Tidewater, Lowcountry, and Caribbean colonies and critically engaged with what some scholars call the new economic criticism by emphasizing labor by drawing attention to the different economies of tobacco, rice, and sugar production. Focusing on Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Ebenezer Cooke's *Sotweed Redivivus*, George Ogilvie's *Carolina: Or, the Planter*, and James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane*, he argued that these texts were ideologically symptomatic of very different organizations of slave labor in each of these economies.

**LuElla Putnam, Oklahoma State University: “Lucy Temple: Mother of the American Sequel”**

Scholars now accept Susanna Rowson’s bestselling seduction narrative, *Charlotte Temple*, as a staple of the American literary canon. Yet Rowson’s bestselling sequel, *Lucy Temple*, has generally been dismissed as a footnote in America’s literary past. *Lucy Temple* should be appreciated because it achieved popularity as the first successful American sequel, creating tropes that would later become stock sequences within the nineteenth-century sequel form. It was the first profitable sequel committed to an audience of women and children, and its recurrent theme of upward mobility linked to a Franklinian-style sense of industry set the standard for future American guidebooks and series.



**Standing Left to Right:** Michael Hoberman, Fitchburg State University (Chair); Zach Hutchins, Brigham Young University; Christopher Allan Black, Oklahoma State University; Lisa Schilz, University of California, Santa Cruz

**Panel Three: Early American Literature: Forces of Change**

Chair: Michael Hoberman, Fitchburg State University

**Lisa Schilz, University of California, Santa Cruz: “The Bradford Manuscript and the Disruption of the Plimoth Plantation Narrative”**

Seventeenth-century Plimoth Governor William Bradford’s velum-bound journal has been acclaimed as a seminal early American text since its 1897 return to Massachusetts. Interestingly, printed editions present a single book object published under the name *Of Plimoth Plantation*. Yet there exists no singular and separate text entitled this, since items such as dictionaries, lists, quotations, commentary, and corrections accompany the manuscript. *Of Plimoth Plantation* is written on the recto side of the pages and intermixed with items on the verso, thereby embedding the section entitled *Of Plimoth Plantation* amongst a myriad of other texts. I focus on recuperating the multiplicity of the Bradford manuscript as such analysis reveals uncontrollable excess, both within the text and the Pilgrim community at large.

**Christopher Allan Black, Oklahoma State University: “Capital Punishment, Enlightenment Absolutism, and Republican Justice in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* and Benjamin Rush’s “An Enquiry into the Effects of Public Punishments” ”**

This paper analyzes the early American novel as a gothic criminal narrative preoccupied with the Republican concepts of trial by gal scholars maintained that the novel and the criminal reform tract functioned as pedagogical texts educating readers as to proper

moral judgment. Brown’s novel *Wieland* (1798) and Rush’s tract “An Enquiry into the effects of Public Punishments” (1787) assert that capital punishment is incompatible with the post revolutionary Republican legal system. The central conflict in *Wieland* occurs between Clara and the Mettingen community as to how to effectively punish Carwin’s transgressive behavior. Brown’s novel and Rush’s anti gal-lows tract stress the need for the enforcement of Republican justice and private punishment for criminal acts.

**Zach Hutchins, Brigham Young University: “Rattlesnakes in the Garden: The Fascinating Serpents of the Early, Edenic Republic”**

Between the French and Indian War and the Civil War writers and visual artists deployed the rattlesnake to advance and, later, destabilize nationalist agendas. The rattlesnake, with its powers of fascination, evolved into a multifaceted symbol representing a wide range of ideas: British colonial unity; American national identity; white fears of interracial conflict and miscegenation; and the belief that original sin represented a serious threat to a republic relying on the virtuous behavior of its citizens. Between 1751 and 1861 the rattlesnake became a symbol of the national transition from imported art to endogenous culture, from indigenous inhabitants to European emigrants, from innocence to experience.



**Standing Left to Right:** Michael Hoberman, Fitchburg State University; Lisa Logan, University of Central Florida; Tim Lanzendoerfer, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Main; Anne Roth-Reinhardt, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

**Panel Four: Teaching Early American Topics: Expanding Cultural and Digital Horizons**

Chair: Susan Imbarrato, Minnesota State University Moorhead

**Michael Hoberman, Fitchburg State University: “Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Teaching Early American Literature: A Comparison of Dutch and American Students’ Reception of Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Religious Discourse”**

During my Fulbright appointment Utrecht University in the Netherlands I designed and taught a M.A. level course on religious diversity in early America. I would not offer such a course at my own institution because my students here tend to label any concentration on theological matters as abstract and out of keeping with contemporary experience. Dutch students, on the other hand, considered colonial America’s history of religious pluralism in the context of their own country’s debates over Muslim immigration. Moreover, their understanding of literature was not bound by the sorts of genre expectations that American students bring to bear.

**Lisa Logan, University of Central Florida: “Technologies of Extrapolation: A Twenty-first Century Commonplace Book”**

How can our students, who compose on email, cell phone, Facebook, and Twitter, connect with early American women’s words and stories? What do *Glee*, Pink, and Judith Sargent Murray have in common? I describe a commonplace book final assignment for 21<sup>st</sup> century undergraduates. In teams, students choose and compile passages based on themes and issues they deem most important. Students organize and connect their book and the ideas of the course via visual, audio, written, and other cues. They choose the forum (word processing program, wiki, blog, social networking site, hand-bound paper text) and create their own books.

**Anne Roth-Reinhardt, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities: “It’s Complicated: Reading *The Coquette* in the Age of Facebook”**

Undergraduates often deem the so-called sentimental novel of the early Republic to be predictable and overly didactic. Through its epistolary form, *The Coquette* (1797) offers an alternative to the perceived heavy-handedness of other novels. Students, however, often overlook the “letters” comprising Foster’s novel and fail to sympathize with Eliza. Reading *The Coquette* through the lens of Facebook encourages a different, and I argue, more accurate construction of Eliza Wharton. The communication between Eliza and her social network, when translated into status updates on a Facebook-style “wall,” illustrates the struggle for autonomy within the unfamiliar landscape of the United States.

**Tim Lanzendoerfer, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz: “Teaching Periodicals of the Early Republic: An Anthology for the Era of the Digital Archive”**

What is the role of the anthology in the age of the digital archive? The paper presented one answer to this question: as a teaching tool, the anthology is still decisive in shaping the field. It can no longer just present primary material now available online. Rather, it must shape the overwhelming mass of material and respond to the gaps still left by the digital archive. The forthcoming anthology *Periodical Biography in the Early Republic*, presented in the paper, will do exactly that: provide essays that situate primary texts in their historical context, offer archival material not available digitally, and pre-sort the digital material for teaching.

**Early American Matters Caucus-Sponsored Sessions**

**“Early American Biopolitics”**

Chair / Comment: Susan Scott Parrish, University of Michigan

**Kelly Wisecup, University of North Texas: “The ‘power of medicine’: Obeah, Slaves’ Health, and Biopolitics in the British West Indies”**

This paper will examine the techniques that colonial planters in the British West Indies developed in order to heal and discipline simultaneously the bodies of enslaved Africans. It employs an interdisciplinary approach that engages medical, political, and literary discourses in order to show how eighteenth-century medical treatises participated in a key revision of attitudes regarding Africans’ minds and bodies. Guides on plantation medicine proliferated following a 1760 slave rebellion in Jamaica that was inspired by African medical practices, called obeah. While scholars have argued that obeah was

“remote from” colonial medical and religious practices and consequently “decline[d] into magic,” this paper shows that plantation physicians medicalized Africans’ practice of obeah and belief in its powers, such that using obeah became signs of a mental disease requiring surveillance and treatment. As it investigates physicians’ articulation of Africans as a population requiring medical care and colonists’ corresponding defense of colonial plantation society, this paper will consider the connections between eighteenth-century New World medical discourses and modern theories of biopolitics. In doing so, it aims to draw attention to the means by which colonists solidified categories of difference between White colonists and Africans and thereby to show that theories of racial difference in the Atlantic World emerged as a defensive strategy with which colonists sought to counteract metropolitan biases.

**James O’Neil Spady, Soka University of America: “Reimagining the Vesey Conspiracy: Confession and the Biopolitics of Life and Death in a Colonial Society”**

In 2001 historian Michael Johnson argued that the Denmark Vesey antislavery conspiracy of 1822 was a white racist panic and not an insurrectionary event. In this essay, I imagine the events again, toward a new book project. I engage a conversation among American Studies scholars about “biopolitics.” I argue that factions of early nineteenth century Charleston’s AME Church understood the mechanisms of resistance and power differently, and in terms embedded in power discourses and practices comparable to Michel Foucault’s “power over life” and “power over death” (*History of Sexuality*, esp. 135-145). A new diversity of cultures and tactics within black resistance to slavery begins to emerge through this approach. Michael Johnson’s emphasized the “power over death,” in which confession is a means for deciding whether to execute or spare the accused. I reconsider the pivotal confession of George Wilson as a religious practice, not a juridical event. Religious confession was a technique for deciding how the enslaved should live—by repenting and being forgiven—and was a mode of biopolitics and power over life. Therefore power in these confessions functioned somewhat differently than Johnson imagined. Wilson and others like him resisted white domination through adoption of a biopolitics of governing their fellow members of the AME church. Vesey violated what some of the AME members understood as more effective resistance. George Wilson confessed what he had learned of the planned rebellion as part of his own politics of resistance to white authority and the rebels’ vision of resistance and moral order.

**Nicholas Miller, Washington University in St. Louis: “The Biopolitics of Transformation: Lycanthropy and Thresholds of Indistinction in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Edgar Huntly*”**

This paper is drawn from a larger project on *Edgar Huntly*, in which I argue that Brown employs tropes of somnambulism and lycanthropy to imagine an emergent biopolitical democracy where even the boundaries between human and animal life are susceptible to being leveled away. In what has been called “an age of democratic revolutions”—where all political systems seem destined to be superseded or transformed through leveling—I place *Edgar Huntly* alongside Brown’s other novels to explore whether a radical democratic equality can exist without reducing personhood to the simple equivalence of one animal life with another. To accomplish this, I read *Edgar Huntly* as a narrative in which sleepwalking becomes a way to think about species difference, and I argue that the lycanthropic transformations in the novel expose a potential for unlimited human indistinction. By blurring human-animal distinctions Brown grapples with what I call a “politics of indistinction,” and he initially seems excited by the generative possibilities of transformation and leveling. However, by tracing the democratic impulse to the its logical conclusion, Brown ultimately imagines a



version of democratic life that collapses under the weight of its own equalizing impulse.

**Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, Northeastern University: “Zombie Biopolitics: Colonial Geography, Race, and the Spectacle of Torture”**

According to Michel Foucault, a historical transition takes place as the terrorized and punishable body of the subject of monarchical sovereignty is replaced by the disciplined body of the liberal political subject: at some point during the eighteenth century, Foucault argues, we move from a social and political organization based on punishment to one based on discipline, from sovereign power to what Foucault calls, variously, “governmentality” or “biopower”—namely, a power that does not operate by external force, but that operates by way of constructing (and thus controlling) viable bodies and lives. In contrast to Foucault’s temporal narrative, however, I propose a spatial one: the theatre of horror deployed by sovereign power is not supplanted by the disciplined body of governmentality, rather, it is displaced or relocated to the colony in the eighteenth century. In this paper, I consider the ways in which the spectacular display of the tortured black body becomes a means of articulating state authority that is consonant with (rather than external to) the workings of biopower and the security state, particularly with respect to the colonial geopolitics of the transatlantic eighteenth century. In contrast to the “make live” imperative of Foucauldian biopolitics, I argue that the racialized biopolitics of colonialism formulate an imperative to “make the slave a figure of the living dead”—to generate a zombie biopolitics. Turning to newspaper reports on slave conspiracies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and to *Lady Nugent’s Journal Of Her Residence in Jamaica*, I explore scenes of racialized terror as implicated within the juridical foundations of liberal state formation.



**Standing Left to Right:** Duncan Faherty, City University of New York; Kathleen Donegan, University of California, Berkeley; Sari Altschuler, City University of New York; Joseph Rezek, Boston University; Mary McAleer Balkun, Seton Hall University; Cristobal Silva, Columbia University; Andy Doolen (Chair), University of Kentucky

**“Early American Methodologies” (Roundtable)**

Chair /Respondent: Andy Doolen (standing in for Michael Drexler), University of Kentucky

**Cristobal Silva, Columbia University: “Epidemiology and Early American Studies”**

This paper argues that attention to epidemiology resituates our understanding of local histories in ways that help

account for broader political and economic forces in the Atlantic World. For example, rather than relying on “nation” as the grounding term for communal identity, epidemiological analysis asks us to consider the various ways that illness and immunity cut across territorial, economic, and racial boundaries to reveal the fault-lines of the seveneenth- and eighteenth-century colonial world. More specifically, by contextualizing the 1793 Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic in terms of the decade long hemispheric pandemic that raged from the Caribbean and South America to the northern states, we can begin to rethink the historiography of nationhood and Republican identity in the late eighteenth century, and to examine the complex immunological interactions of African, European, and American bodies that gave voice to nationalist currents that continue to resonate to this day.

**Kathleen Donegan, University of California, Berkeley: “Narrative Practice: Writing between the Lines”**

As a new method for Early American Studies, I suggest a narrative practice that is neither opening anecdote nor meta-history, but one that interrogates “what happened” in response to close literary readings. Which is to say: a narrative practice that also serves as an exegetical method. In this model, narrativity is grounded in textuality; its arc is also the arc of the argument. In an archive as fragmentary as ours, and one that relies so heavily on “non-literary” texts, narrative can offer a way of opening historical space by writing between the same lines we read. In this way, critical choices are highlighted, even intensified, by collating them with a narrative that is not a recaptulation, but rather a sustained explication of a “possible past”: one proceeding from complicated readings of texts. We need not abandon discursive criticality in order to bring historical actors up close. Indeed, it may be time for literary readers to be the kind of writers who can use texts in ways that do not have to choose between analyzing our subjects and telling their stories.

**Duncan Faherty, City University of New York, Queens College and the Graduate Center: “Ugly Feelings: Affect, Canonicity, and American Literature 1800-1820”**

“If Ugly Feelings is a bestiary of affects,” Sianne Ngai wryly notes in her introduction, “it is one filled with rats and possums rather than lions, its categories of feeling generally being, well weaker and nastier.” This paper embraces Ngai’s call for renewed attention to neglected canonical species in order to interrogate the relationship between catharsis and canon formation. As Sandra Gustafson argues, the “disciplinary schism” between “early Americanists” and “U.S.-Americanists” has unwittingly created a scholarly void. Indeed, the space between the normative borders of these two critical camps – a blind spot spanning from 1800-1820 – remains ignored by most configurations of U.S. literary history. Arguably, this disregard stems from over-privileging certain unknotted affects: in so much as texts from this period are taxonomized as incapable of producing the prestigious feelings of anger, fear, sympathy, melancholia or shame. By deploying Ngai’s notion of a “noncathartic aesthetic” as a means of questioning this misguided dismissal, I hope to demonstrate that our failure to fully engage this interstitial period results from a habitual reliance on a faulty (and unendingly catharsis seeking) historiography. Our operant methodologies are too often driven by a residual historiography; our praxis is too often shaped by the assumption – often completely unacknowledged – that grand historical events (like the Revolution or the rise of nationalism) produce art that engenders (tonally, formally, aesthetically) grand esteemed feelings, and that such texts are the only ones worthy of study. To put it another way, I want to

suggest that both “early Americanists” and “U.S. Americanists” regardless of their methodologies represent their close readings as orbiting expansive historical flashpoints; thus, texts which produce or foreground an emotional release tied to one of these flashpoints are affectively canonized.

**Joseph Rezek, Boston University: “Materiality, Aesthetics, and the Early Anglophone Atlantic”**

This talk argues for the benefit of combing three current trends in early American studies – Atlantic studies, the study of material texts, and the return to aesthetics. These three trends reflect our continued interest in some of the defining features of modernity: the interconnectedness of the Atlantic world, the rise of print as a dominant communications system, and the emergence of bourgeois aesthetic theory. I argue that these phenomena can be fully understood only in relation to each other. This talk discusses foundational scholarship related to these fields as well as recent developments and then gives an example from my work on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In my scholarship I have explored the importance of the book as a material object to the aesthetic construction of writers like Phillis Wheatley and Ignatius Sancho as representative of their race; the impact of the London-dominated publishing industry on the literary strategies of elite writers from the Anglophone periphery; the uses of print in the formation of early black Atlantic counter publicity; and the role of transatlantic textual dissemination in the emergence of cultural nationalism. The early modern Atlantic cohered because of the uneven traffic in goods, texts, ideas, and persons, free and unfree. Literary and historical disciplines are often dependent on an archive of printed texts; they must therefore account for the traffic of the material world *as well as* the formation and reception of the texts reflecting that world. An interdisciplinary method focusing on materiality and representation can account for the mutual constitution of aesthetics and politics in this period.

**Sari Altschuler, City University of New York: “Disability and Early America”**

In 1814, Thomas Gallaudet was moved to communicate with Alice Cogswell, a neighbor’s deaf daughter. Gallaudet made what progress he could and, when felt he could do no more, he gathered funds from his community to go to Europe where he learned sign language. Gallaudet would make his fame as the founder of America’s first school for the Deaf, but his relationship to disabled persons was not wholly unusual. In fact, before modern technological advancements, medical innovations, and institutionalization, American communities were full of what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has called “extraordinary bodies.” Disability was a visible, vibrant, and every-day fact of early American life. This paper explores the promises of Disability Studies for Early American Studies. Disability Studies has long claimed disability as the universal category—one that affects many at times and will apply to all of us if we live long enough—, though Early American Studies has been slow to pick up on this method of inquiry. Disability and its suggestions about individual interdependence are particularly relevant to a world without modern modes and technologies of segregation. Recognizing the physical variety of all early American communities is the first step to rethinking crucial aspects of early American study. Historical treatments of disabled bodies, early national institution-building, common metaphors

(deafness, blindness, physical impairment), and literary depictions of disabled figures might all be rethought if we reimagined the early American landscape in this way. This paper highlights the particular relevance of and need for disability theory in early American study and the opportunity for Early American Studies to build its own set of disability-informed theories and methodologies.

**Mary McAleer Balkun, Seton Hall University: “The Continuities of American Literature”**

In his response to White and Drexler’s essay “The Theory Gap,” Russ Castronovo asks, “Does looking at the text as a hidden-in-plain-sight letter inadvertently create a monocular perspective that asks how early American studies can engage the theory-rich terrain of later periods but does not also ask how critics working in nineteenth-, twentieth, and twenty-first-century literature have made both theoretical and historical use of early America?” This question points to another gap that might be explored by scholars of early American literature: in what ways—whether in terms of genres, themes, motifs—might the texts of early America be read as influential for later works. White and Drexler ask, “What connects the eighteenth century with the seventeenth, sixteenth, or fifteenth?” But it is just as important to ask the reverse: what connects the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries to the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first? It may be that the answer can be found in the new formalism, a critical approach that emphasizes form and aesthetics, characteristics that distinguish literary analysis from its historical counterpart. By returning to some of the cornerstones of literary study, bringing with us what we have learned about culture, ideology, and historiography, we might well find ourselves engaging our colleagues working in later periods of American literature in new and mutually rewarding conversations.



**A Note on the Society of Early Americanists Website from Susan Imbarrato, Webmaster**

The Society of Early Americanists is pleased to announce that the University of California Irvine, School of Humanities is our new host for the Society of Early Americanists website. We thank UC Irvine, School of Humanities for generously offering to host the SEA website, with technical support from the excellent UC Irvine Humanities Information Technology Department. Special thank you to Professor Michael P. Clark, Department of English, Vice Provost for Academic Planning, University of California, Irvine, School of Humanities for his kind assistance in arranging for the SEA website to be hosted by the UC Irvine, School of Humanities. We also thank the Minnesota State University Moorhead Information Technology Department for their excellent support as our previous website host. The SEA website address is the same: <http://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/>. Please refresh your SEA website bookmarks. If there are any viewing or browser issues, questions or suggestions, please let us know by emailing SEA Webmaster, Susan Imbarrato ([seacoord@mnstate.edu](mailto:seacoord@mnstate.edu)). Thank you.



## Reflections of SEA Members on the October 2011 A.S.A. Conference at Baltimore

While *interdisciplinarity* is not an entry in Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler's "Keywords for American Cultural Studies," the term helps hold together that very helpful 2007 collection; the blurb at the NYU Press website does, after all, refer to the bringing together of "new essays from interdisciplinary scholars, each on a single term, such as . . . ." As Emily García and Duncan Faherty and several colleagues demonstrated in the latest issue of *Early American Literature*, another venue for talking with and learning from an interdisciplinary array of scholars, many of whom are indeed interdisciplinary in what they do, is the annual conference of the American Studies Association.

As recently as the turn of the millennium, the catch—and isn't there always a catch?—was that the A.S.A. had become almost obsessively presentist, so much so that the expression "early American" suggested topics from the era of Vonnegut and Pynchon and miniskirts rather than books about Judge Pyncheon, let alone matters involving his and his author's ancestors. Thus was born a group within the A.S.A., the Early American Matters Caucus. Fast forward from the summer of '04 to October 2011 and the most recent A.S.A., which included at least 14 early-American-flavored sessions; a list appears at that caucus's website, [earlyamericanmatters.fsu.edu](http://earlyamericanmatters.fsu.edu). Many of these sessions were interdisciplinary, bringing literary types together with historians of various stripes and scholars of materials culture, in the audience as well as at the table, and many of them led to conversations possible across chronological boundaries as well as departmental ones! (For comparison, the 2010 A.S.A., in San Antonio, had seven early-American-Flavored sessions, as did the one in Albuquerque the previous fall. That 2009 conference also included two sessions that the Early American Matters Caucus co-sponsored with the A.S.A.'s Environment and Culture Caucus, as well as an optional day trip, that Sunday, out to the Acoma Pueblo.)

A huge portion of the credit for the large number of sessions this past fall goes to the A.S.A.'s 2010-2011 president, whom we readers of this Newsletter recognize as one of our own: Priscilla Wald, another in a series of Duke profs (along with Cathy Davidson and Jan Radway) who have led the A.S.A. Priscilla encouraged the members of the 2011 program committee to look favorably upon strong proposals from the full spectrum of Americanist topics, and that encouragement helped increase the number of early topics in the mix. With her help, the program committee also called on a number of early Americanists (Jennifer Greeson, Elizabeth Young, and former A.S.A. president Mary Kelley, among others) to serve as chairs or commentators for sessions the committee had constructed from individual paper proposals.

One tradition within the Early American Matters Caucus is encouraging ourselves and our colleagues to submit panel proposals that the program committee will find too good to pass up – and then circulating a list of the ones that have actually gotten onto the program, so that we can choose as a group which one to designate as Sponsored By. This year the vote was so close between two – "Early American Methodologies," which grad student Sari Altschuler had organized, and "Early American Biopolitics," which another grad student, Nick Miller, had organized – that I checked with the A.S.A.'s command module to ask permission, this one time, to sponsor two. The response was heartening: based on that request, they began allowing any caucus that wanted to do so to designate two sessions already on the program as Sponsored By. Another tradition, once we've arrived at an A.S.A. conference, is attending a reception, and the one in Baltimore was the third consecutive one we've co-sponsored with the A.S.A.'s Environment and Culture Caucus. An e-mail from one of the many colleagues who attended the 2011 event contained this reminder: "I think your article should definitely include the reception -- it was great to have so many early American folks in one place, and I got to have substantive conversations with both old friends and new ones. Many thanks!" Which is to say thank you to Paul Erickson of the American Antiquarian Society, who has outdone himself as Reception Arranger, three years now and counting. Here are several comments from among the interdisciplinary array of early Americanists who were part of the A.S.A.'s 2010 conference --

"One of the pleasures of the 2011 conference was the interdisciplinary nature of the several early American panels I attended, with lively conversations between historians of art, literature, and material culture. Another highlight was the 'Early American Methodologies' panel, which demonstrated how early Americanists are engaging and propelling key issues in American studies, from affect to epidemiology and disability studies." -- **Wendy Bellion (Art History, University of Delaware)**

"It was gratifying to see the Early American panels draw so many scholars working in later periods. I think that had much to do with the panelists' time-bending, period-breaking approaches to American culture." -- **Andy Doolen (American Studies, University of Kentucky), who graciously agreed to fill in for a panel chair who was way too sick to attend.**



“The climate at the A.S.A. for Early American matters has dramatically improved over the last few years, and not simply because more sessions and papers seem focused on earlier periods. Across the last two conventions, in my experience, scholars working in later periods have come to embrace the ways in which their work needs to be in dialogue with the expertise that scholars of earlier periods can afford them -- and it is heartening to see the re-emergence of lively cross-temporal debates and exchanges. This is especially important at A.S.A., I think, since so many of the conversations in sessions and hallways are centered around issues of methodology and genealogies of knowledge. A central facet of the vibrant atmosphere at the A.S.A. is its self-reflectivity, and I am happy to say that increasingly that meta-cognitive analysis has a trans-temporal sense of fields and sub-fields.” -- **Duncan Faherty (English, City University of New York, Queens College and the Graduate Center)**

“Although at 8:00 a.m. on the last day of the conference, panelists and attendants to our panel, ‘The Pequot War Re-considered,’ actively engaged innovative and fresh interpretations of the well-studied early American conflict. It was a rigorous interdisciplinary discussion enjoyed by all.” -- **Sandra Slater (History, College of Charleston)**

“I was delighted to find that early American matters were everywhere at the ASA, even in panels with contemporary content. To offer just one example, the panel ‘Getting the Nation Right with God: American Politics in the Conservative Christian Imagination’ led to consideration of the jeremiad and various tropes dating back to the Great Awakening. The lively discussion about the 2012 presidential campaign was all the better for this historical and literary awareness.” -- **Karen Woods Weierman (English, Worcester State University), whose p.s. about the reception I quoted above**

-- and here in closing is a shout-out to the interdisciplinary array of selfless colleagues who serve on the Early American Matters Caucus’ working committee: Sari Altschuler, City University of New York, The Graduate Center; Paul Erickson, American Antiquarian Society; Dennis Moore, Florida State University; Sally Promey (American Studies as well as Religion and Visual Culture and Women’s Gender and Sexuality Studies), Yale University; Peter Reed, University of Mississippi; Sarah Rivett, Princeton University; Karen Salt (School of Divinity, History and Philosophy), University of Aberdeen; and James O’Neil Spady (American History: Humanities concentration and Social and Behavioral Sciences concentration), Soka University of America. Looking forward,  
*Dennis Moore, dmoore@fsu.edu, Past President, Society of Early Americanists*

## Forthcoming Conferences

### **Legends of Empire: Negotiating the Imperial Moral Compass, New York University, February 17-18, 2012.**

This conference will explore the ways in which multiple actors constituted, challenged, contested, negotiated, and put into practice narratives about the moral foundations and authority of empire. How were black and white legends deployed to fuel imperial rivalries and conflicting visions of the proper practice of empire? Who made use of these narratives, in what contexts, and to what ends? This conference will emphasize notions of morality, broadly construed, as understood by and contested among the historical actors themselves, rather than twenty-first century assessments of the moral implications of their actions.

### **Conference on Race, Gender, and Sexualities in the Atlantic World, The Carolina Lowcountry in the Atlantic World Program (CLAW) at the College of Charleston in Charleston, March 9-11, 2012.** The conference will address women, gender, and sexuality in the Atlantic World 1500-Present. The featured keynote speaker is Jennifer L. Morgan (New York University).

### **‘Triumph in my Song’: 18th & 19th Century African Atlantic Culture, History, & Performance, University of Maryland, May 31-June 2, 2012.**

As the study of the black experience in pre-Civil War America grows, it incorporates increasingly diverse fields of scholarship, each of which has the potential to make enormously valuable contributions to our understanding of this topic. The conference program will feature live performances, roundtables on methodologies and analyzing evidence, and colloquies with established authors in the field.

### **SEA Council of Officers**

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### Conference Calls for Papers

*While every effort has been made to present information accurately, interested persons should always verify submission dates and criteria in conference announcements.*

#### **American Literature Association Conference; San Francisco, CA; May 24-27, 2012**

##### **Deadline: January 16, 2012**

The Society of Early Americanists invites individual paper proposals for the 4 SEA panels at the next American Literature Association conference. Topics for 3 of the panels are completely open. The 4th panel will focus on teaching early-American topics. For the Open Panels on Early American topics, please send a 1-2 page abstract of your individual paper proposal with the subject line: "SEA at ALA 2012--open panel." For the Panel on Teaching of Early American topics, please send a 1-2 page abstract of your individual paper proposal with the subject line: "SEA at ALA 2012--teaching panel." Please send proposal by email as an attachment to Kathleen Donegan at <kdonegan@berkeley.edu>.

#### **American Studies Association Conference**

##### **"Dimensions of Empire and Resistance: Past, Present, and Future;" Puerto Rico Convention Center (All Events) and the Caribe Hilton San Juan, Puerto Rico; November 15-18, 2012**

##### **Deadline: January 26, 2012**

The 2012 ASA Program Committee invites current individual members of the ASA (or an affiliated international American studies association) to submit proposals for individual papers, entire sessions, presentations, performances, films, roundtables, workshops, conversations, or alternative formats described below on any topic dealing with American cultures. <[http://www.theasa.net/annual\\_meeting/page/submit\\_a\\_proposal/](http://www.theasa.net/annual_meeting/page/submit_a_proposal/)>

#### **SSAWW Triennial Conference**

##### **"Citizenship and Belonging," October 10-13, 2012; Westin Tabor Center, Denver, Colorado**

##### **Deadline: February 6, 2012**

Conference site: <<http://www.ssaww2012.wordpress.com>>  
See <<http://public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/ssaww/call.htm>> for CFPs. Presenters must be members of SSAWW by the "early/discounted" date for conference registration in the fall of 2012.

#### **Anne Bradstreet at 400; Marsh Hall; Salem State University; Salem, Massachusetts; June 29-30, July 1, 2012**

##### **Deadline: March 1, 2012**

This conference seeks to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> birthday of New English poet and writer, Anne Dudley Bradstreet. As such, the primary goal of such a conference would be to reconsider the entire corpus of Bradstreet's poems, especially the earlier poems, which are routinely dismissed due to their length and depth of learning in favor of the shorter, later, and more intimate poems. Bradstreet herself likely admired her public sphere poems, the 'quaternions,' much more than her private poems. Several other perspectives and new approaches to Anne Bradstreet will also be encouraged, including: Bradstreet's relationship to sovereignty as a transatlantic figure, (immigrant, colonial, colonizer);

Bradstreet's relationship to the body (mother, wife, woman); the hemispheric Bradstreet in the context of contemporaneous women writers (Spanish or English speaking); the queer Bradstreet (here we would be thinking of several verses in "David's Lamentation for Saul and Jonathan"); the scientific Bradstreet (how learned sources became versified); and extra-textual responses to Bradstreet (like John Berryman's long poem, "Homage to Mistress Bradstreet," (1956)). Other set panels and plenary sessions with featured chairs/speakers would include:

A New Quest for the Historical Bradstreet: Using the same research strategies employed in biblical scholarship of the last century, and given the limited primary sources about Bradstreet, what can we know of the historical Anne Bradstreet? Moreover, as Bradstreet readers and scholars, have we not simply traded the details of her life, and applied them to biographical criticism, without checking the sources? Panel Chair: Charlotte Gordon, of Endicott College; author of: *Mistress Bradstreet, the Untold Life of America's First Poet* (2005)

A Monstrous Regiment of Women: An allusion to John Knox's essay, "The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women" (1558), this phrase was commonly used in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, first to malign the reign of Mary Tudor, then applied to the claims of Mary Stuart, and later to Elizabeth Tudor. Anne Bradstreet grew up in this cultural climate in England, and surely heard it. What role in terms of the evolution of feminism can we assign to Bradstreet, or is her feminist influence merely our modern projection? Panel Chair: Wendy Martin, of Claremont Graduate University; author of the comparative analysis, *American Triptych: Anne Bradstreet, Emily Dickinson, Adrienne Rich* (1984)

The Titans and the Editions: We know Anne Bradstreet through the editions, and through the 'titans' or leading scholars on her behalf. These would include the 1642 manuscript; the 1650 *Tenth Muse*; the 1678 second edition, *Several Poems*; a third edition, collated and edited by John Harvard Ellis in 1867, contained material from the so-called 'Andover manuscripts.' In 1967, Jeannine Hensley edited the version we all use, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*. Then in 1981, *The Complete Works of AB* was edited by Allan Robb and Joe McElrath. A concordance was also constructed by Raymond Craig in 2000. How did these scholarly 'titans' in essence create the authorship of AB? Panel Chair: Raymond Craig, of Kent State; author of the *Bradstreet Concordance* (2000).

Send all paper submissions/abstracts of 50-100 words to: [elizabeth.ferszt@basisscottsdale.org](mailto:elizabeth.ferszt@basisscottsdale.org), or: [Ivy.Schweitzer@Dartmouth.edu](mailto:Ivy.Schweitzer@Dartmouth.edu).  
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Anne-Bradstreet-at-400-Conference/230166327041843>





# Society of Early Americanists

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In addition to keeping your SEA membership active, you can contribute to the Society in other ways.

1. The Fund to Honor Excellence in Teaching (<http://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/honoredteachers.html>).
2. Members can support the Society with donations to the SEA Graduate Student Travel Fund. For more information, please see the SEA Membership page (<http://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/>)

## Membership Information

The Society of Early Americanists provides a forum for scholarly and pedagogical exchange and professional support among scholars of various disciplines who study the literature and culture of America to approximately 1800. Our membership of over 680 individuals enjoys a bi-yearly newsletter detailing activities in our field, a website that links to many documents of interest to early American scholars and teachers, and a listserv. We also offer opportunities for networking and dissemination of professional work. If you are interested in joining the Society, please see the membership information on our home page: <http://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/membership.html>.

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