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SEAN

The Society of Early Americanists Newsletter

THE SOCIETY OF EARLY AMERICANISTS

From the SEA President

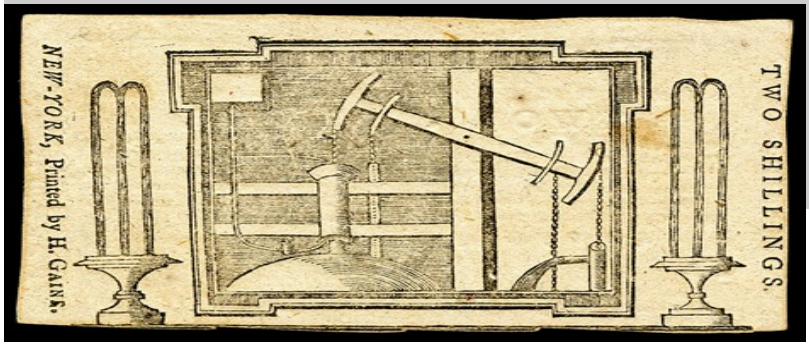
This is my final newsletter column as an SEA executive officer, and I want first of all to thank those who served with me. Kris Bross and Laura Stevens provided models of unflappable leadership as well as a determination to make our society more inclusive and diverse. Patrick Erben, Ralph Bauer, and Susan Imbarrato have all demonstrated attention to detail, scrupulous courtesy, and awareness of risks that I sometimes lacked in my own habits. SEA as an all-volunteer organization is always a team effort, and such teamwork is indispensable when dealing with a financial crisis or a weather crisis, the two greatest challenges I've faced in the last year and a half. I'm proud to have guided SEA through those events, and to have helped in the transition to our new website during my term as vice-president.

In this column I'd like to offer some reflections on the history and growth of the SEA by comparing it to the other scholarly society that has been most important for my research and teaching, the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. ASLE (an SEA-affiliated organization) was founded in 1992 in Reno, Nevada at a meeting of the Western Literature Association. It is therefore a year or two older than SEA, and has its origins in the western U.S. rather than the eastern states and in twentieth-century literature.

When I began as an Assistant Professor at Oregon in 1993, two of my senior colleagues in the English department, Glen Love and Louise Westling, were leaders in the ASLE. Many PhD students at Oregon since then have focused on eco-criticism and environmental humanities, and I've watched the field grow and evolve through teaching and advising these students. The field changes much more quickly than early American studies, to the point where some dissertation and book projects come to seem passé by the time they are finished.

In late June I attended the ASLE conference at University of California, Davis, and was pleased to see many of our Oregon PhD alumni, as well as many SEA colleagues. The entire affair had been organized by local host Michael Ziser, and Lauren LaFauci, our affiliate liaison to ASLE, organized a panel that included Michelle Navakas and Daniel Couch. I presented on a panel organized by Tim Sweet that also included a superb paper by Tom Nurmi about Emily Dickinson, extinction, and the chemistry of early photography.

Inside this Issue . . .



Other panels on Early Modern topics included fascinating studies of manure in Paradise Lost, and apart from the intellectual stimulation, I learned more about the management of ASLE and its conferences by talking to SEA colleague Michael Ziser and to my new Oregon colleague Stacy Alaimo, who served as co-president of ASLE for 2019. The group grew very quickly over the past decade and now reports 1450 members. I counted about 1100 names in the index of presenters in the conference program, almost four times as large as the SEA biennial conference in Eugene.

For fifteen years ASLE has employed a managing director, based at Keene State College in New Hampshire, where one of its past presidents taught. But this is the society's only employee, and its many programs rely on a roster of more than twenty-five elected and volunteer officers, council members, liaisons, and editors. At its founding ASLE created its own journal, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, and then sold the journal to Oxford University Press as its subscriber base grew. Oxford UP supports the membership payment system for ASLE, and the press sponsored a reception with food for nearly a thousand people at the Davis conference. This kind of support from a publisher is not available to SEA because *Early American Literature* has belonged to UNC Press since long before we created an affiliation with the journal.

With regard to its biennial conference, however, ASLE leaders tell me the society feels its growing pains. The conference has generally been held on university campuses in late June, when dormitory housing is available for conferees. Some sites have been rather remote, such as the University of Idaho in Moscow in 2015, and others more urban, such as Wayne State University in Detroit in 2017. ASLE conference outings emphasize hiking, rafting, and local environmental history, rather than the colonial history sites that have been a feature of most SEA conferences until we moved west to Tulsa and Eugene.

ASLE maintains a commitment to creative writers, visual artists, environmental activists, and scientists, and dormitory housing and university meeting spaces have helped make their conferences more affordable. What's more, for many years nearly every proposal was accepted for the program. But organizing these events for more than a thousand people is even more challenging than what I and other SEA presidents have done, because conference hotels take care of many tasks that ASLE has to arrange for on its own or do without.

The SEA prefers conference hotels where we can have banquets and plenary sessions to feed and edify all the attendees as one group. Only when we held joint conferences with the Omohundro Institute did we shift our schedule from early March to late June and adopt a more decentralized format. At our joint meeting in Chicago the Loyola University dorms offered lower-priced lodging, but we could not enjoy the sumptuous banquet rooms at the large hotels on the Miracle Mile.

I would be thrilled if the SEA could grow as large as ASLE, and if so many young scholars were eager to study early America. But on the other hand a conference four times as large would not foster the same sense of community we enjoy. And even at our more modest size I can see that we face some of the same challenges as ASLE. Can we afford to hire a managing director to handle our finances and membership? I think not. Could we run conferences for more people with lower registration fees if we shifted to summer and used college dorms?

Maybe, but some members don't want to stay in dormitories. Could we expand our membership by creating new positions, such as coordinators to reach out to museums and historical sites? Possibly. Could we renegotiate our agreement with UNC Press to get more revenue for SEA? I don't really know. But these are all ideas I wanted to put on the table. Whatever the outcome, I find the affiliation or overlap between the SEA and ASLE to be fruitful for both. The common interests in environmental history, colonial and post-colonial eco-criticism, and in major authors from Milton to Melville all generate excellent scholarship and inquiry.

Gordon Sayre
SEA President

From the SEA Vice-President

The 2021 SEA Biennial in Atlanta: The Many Pasts, Presents, and Futures of Early America (March 3-7, 2021)

I would like to use my *SEAN* column—coinciding with the beginning of my tenure as SEA president—to announce officially the location of the 2021 SEA Biennial Conference and reflect on the opportunities a conference in Atlanta will offer our society and the field of early American studies.

You may wonder why, aside from the fact that I live and work close-by, Atlanta would serve as a suitable or even attractive location for an early Americanist conference!? Indeed, I have considered where to hold our next biennial conference for a while now—especially the stimulus the conference location would provide and the messages it would send for the direction and future of our field and scholarly society. The thought of hosting the conference in a destination brimming with colonial history has been tempting. Yet, our last three conference locations have taken the SEA beyond its traditional practice of closely aligning our meeting places with the period and places we study: Chicago (2015), Tulsa (2017), and Eugene (2019). Gathering in these places has allowed us to consider, for example, settler-colonialism's invasion of indigenous America beyond the Allegheny mountains into the old Northwest, the trans-Mississippi West, and the Pacific; they have helped us reconsider the geographic and chronological meanings of "early America;" and they have pushed us to grapple with the crux of our society's future and its continuing relevance: *who* are the people who do, shape, and transform early American studies?

For me, the subjects and methodologies of early American studies are now exhibiting a vastness (to borrow a term from the Omohundro Institute's director Karin Wulf) that will undoubtedly further grow and evolve in the coming years. *Yet*, I am not sure that we have truly made a break-through when it comes to attracting indigenous scholars and scholars of color to our biennial meetings (and to become involved in the life of the society more broadly). I truly appreciate Brigitte Fielder as chair of the committee on Antiracism and Equity, especially her work in calling attention to a lack of equal participation and the often unacknowledged racial, ethnic, or even linguistic biases that may have made our organization neither personally inviting nor professionally rewarding to minoritized colleagues (I am here echoing Brigitte's column in the Spring 2018 *SEAN*). While acknowledging this deficit, I also want to recognize and laud the colleagues and SEA members who have stalwartly attended our conferences and already injected energy and perhaps even some much-needed friction into our society's efforts.

I would like to harness the next conference in Atlanta very deliberately to push and challenge our organization to go beyond just a basic sense of self-scrutiny but, more actively, to invite, engage with, listen to, and collaborate with colleagues who have not hitherto found or returned to our meetings/society because they have been excluded—wittingly or not—based on race, language, sexual orientation, age, employment status, or physical ability. Atlanta, given its reputation for continually reinventing itself, its heritage as a hub of the civil rights movement, but also its powerful role in mechanisms of racist violence, segregation, and removal, seems to me uniquely situated for addressing and beginning to overcome systemic and implicit inequities. I think of the 2021 SEA biennial in Atlanta as a challenge—a challenge for us to envision and create the many pasts, presents, and futures of early America and of early American studies.

Concretely, I am working on and hoping to achieve these goals and steps:

1) Combining accessibility, affordability, and a vibrancy of place that stimulates our interactions with the city and each other. I should be able to announce the specific location soon.

2) Forming a program committee as well as a local arrangements committee. Besides asking colleagues I already know and expect to contribute, I also hope that you will self-nominate or nominate others to participate on the program and/or arrangements committee.

3) Gathering a consortium of *local* scholars, professors, students, administrators, community leaders, and institutions willing to invest time, expertise, funding, and especially perspective in this conference. Specifically, I hope to find buy-in and collaboration from Atlanta HBCUs as well as other metro area universities and organizations. In order to honor the ancestral people of North and West Georgia, I also plan to collaborate with scholars and community representatives of the State recognized Georgia Tribe of Eastern Cherokee and Muscogee (Creek).

4) Inviting local as well as national stakeholders to organize panels/panel series, curating meaningful programs at important local sites/institutions, running workshops (e.g. on the Wednesday before the full-fledged conference starts), and hosting/sponsoring keynotes, lectures, etc.

5) Creating a conference standard of ethics that articulates for this and perhaps future SEA biennials a roadmap for a welcoming, productive, and equitable professional experience.

6) Designing experimental forms of conference presentation and participation that acknowledge and accommodate a range of physical and financial abilities.

7) Reconciling the indispensable benefits of in-person meetings for our society and field with the growing need to reduce the environmental damage created by long-distance travel.

At our next biennial in Atlanta, I invite you all to not only investigate the many early American pasts but also to envision the manifold futures of early American studies by breaking down a variety of barriers. Please contact me with your ideas and feedback, and please consider helping with the conference.

Patrick Erben
SEA Vice-President

From the Executive Coordinator

On February 28th-March 2nd, 2019, the Society of Early Americanists held its 11th biennial conference in Eugene, Oregon. The conference had been in the planning for some two years under the expert leadership of our outgoing president, Gordon Sayre, who was assisted in the composition of the program by Michelle Burnham, Jonathan Field, Brigitte Fielder, Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Tom Hallock, Elizabeth Bohls, Brett Rushforth, and the SEA executive officers. The SEA is in debt to these colleagues for their hard work in staging yet another richly inspiring event that brought together, in the best of SEA traditions, junior and senior scholars from both North America and Europe, as well as traditional and new approaches to the study of early America, hereby ensuring the continued vibrancy and growth of early American studies.

The vibrancy of our field was very evident in the rich and diverse array of events that the conference program offered. Included were presentations by Native artists, sessions on teaching early American materials, in both higher and secondary education, and workshops on subjects ranging from creative writing to hand-spinning. There were scholarly panels on relatively little known early American intellectuals; on early American material culture; on modern movies and television series about early America; as well as on such well-known early American figures as Benjamin Franklin, Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, and Charles Brockden Brown.

Perhaps one of the most entertaining highlights was the performance of a scene (in English translation) of the comedy of manners *Astucias por Heredar un Sobrino a un Tio*, written during the eighteenth century in Mexico by the Spanish-born playwright and polymath Fermín de Reygada Vitorica.

Also in keeping with SEA conference tradition was the program's interdisciplinary nature, mixing literary and cultural criticism with ethno-historical and anthropological approaches, environmental humanities, as well as art history and the history of religion. Notable in this regard was a pronounced presence of theory in the program. Theoretical approaches that informed panels and papers included eco-criticism (which has had a strong currency in early American studies for some time), as well as intertextuality, and cognitive theory. Moreover, one panel was explicitly devoted to literary-critical methods in early American studies, including New Historicism, New Criticism, and New Formalism.

Apart from the regular free-standing panels, the conference program continued the tradition of previous SEA events in featuring several ongoing topical clusters, such as the early Caribbean (coordinated by Richard Frohock, Cassander Smith, and Elizabeth Bohls); Native/Indigenous studies (coordinated by Kelly Wisecup, Caroline Wigginton, Jennifer O'Neal, and Drew Lopenzina); Russian Colonization in the Pacific Northwest (coordinated by Jeffrey Glover), as well as several panel series organized by the ad hoc committees that have recently formed in the SEA membership, including one on anti-racist scholarship (coordinated by Brigitte Fielder) and one on Ethical Mentoring of junior scholars (coordinated by Laura Stevens). And, of course, also in keeping with tradition, the conference program included one of Dennis Moore's signature "colloquies" with authors of recent books—in this case Sari Altschuler, author of *The Medical Imagination: Literature and Health in the Early United States*.

The first SEA biennial to be held in a West Coast state, the conference continued the trend in the last twenty years or so of significantly expanding of the traditional geographies of early American studies. Thus, the program featured a roundtable on "Spanish American Entanglements" as well as panels on the Russian/Native encounters in the Northwest. These new geographies also brought into new focus the intersections between time and space in our definitions of what qualifies as "early" American studies.

At the last biennial conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the SEA officially adopted the expanded historical time frame of "up to approximately 1830."

But even this expanded historical scope is, of course, based on colonial and neocolonial chronologies modeled on the Anglophone eastern portion of North America. Thus, several of the panels—especially those dealing with geographic regions in the West and Native American histories and traditions—necessarily stretched even that expanded time frame. Thus, a panel on the Russian settlement at Fort Ross traversed both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, and a panel on "Early Anishinaabeg Literatures" had Jane Johnston Schoolcraft at its center but encompassed writings up to the early twentieth century.

The conference program culminated in several memorable keynote addresses, including a talk by Lisa Brooks that focused on the trickster figure of the coyote in order to offer reflections on "animacy, adaptation, and the Anthropocene" in early America and beyond. Melinda Marie Jetté discussed "French Voyages of Encounter in the Pacific Slope, 1820s - 1850s;" Michelle Burnham presented on "Bodies at Risk: Violence and Gender in the Early Colonial Pacific;" and Chris Cameron discussed "Slavery, Freethought, and Early African American Religious Studies."

With over seventy panels and four keynotes, the conference program was shaping up to rival recent SEA biennials in size. But despite the planning committee's meticulous preparations, best efforts, and (no doubt) fervent prayers and incantations, the weather gods were not clemently disposed toward a smooth rollout. On Monday, Feb. 25th—two days before many of the conference attendees were scheduled to arrive—Eugene was hit by a winter storm that brought eleven inches of snow, making that date the city's second snowiest day in recorded history. As a result, many panelists were delayed in their arrival, while others had to turn back altogether, often after protracted layovers in airports all over the Western United States.

Hence, several panels had to be cancelled or reconfigured on the fly. While the snowfall had stopped by the time the conference began, the treacherous road and sidewalk conditions turned transportation between the various conference sites at the hotel and the university into a challenge. To the best of my memory, this was the first time that an SEA biennial was severely impacted by inclement weather, but the incident may nevertheless serve as an occasion for us to rethink the tradition of having our conference in early March and consider later dates in the year.

Despite these challenges, the conference administrators adroitly adjusted with calm and flexibility and were able to keep the program on track. For the major organizational feat in making the 2019 biennial another spectacular success, we are deeply in debt to our outgoing president and conference chair, Gordon Sayre, the program committee, and everyone at the University of Eugene who played a part in the planning and execution of the 2019 SEA biennial. Thank you, Gordon and team, for your service, resilience, and poise!

Ralph Bauer
SEA Executive Coordinator

Announcements

William and Mary Quarterly Prizes Announced

Alyssa Mt. Pleasant, Caroline Wigginton, and Kelly Wisecup were awarded the 2018 Lester J. Cappon prize for their essay titled, "Materials and Methods in Native American and Indigenous Studies: Completing the Turn." The article appeared in the *William and Mary Quarterly* April 2018 issue.

Kelly Wisecup

Caroline Wigginton

Alyssa Mt. Pleasant

Early American Seminars

The following seminars are available for early American scholars. For more information, visit the SEA website, click on the Teaching and Resources tab, and go to the tab titled Fellowships. If you know of any new seminars, please contact Tamara Harvey at tharvey2@gmu.edu.

- The McNeil Center for Early American Studies Brown Bag Works-In-Progress Series (Philadelphia, PA)
- The Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture Colloquium (Tuesdays, 7-8:30 p.m., Williamsburg, VA)
- The Newberry Library Scholarly Seminars
- Boston Area Seminar in Early American History
- Boston Seminar on African-American History
- Boston Environmental History Seminar
- Boston Seminar on the History of Women, Gender, and Sexuality
- New England Biography Seminar
- Providence College Seminar on the History of Early America

EAL Table of Contents Available on SEA Website

The newest *Early American Literature* table of contents is available on the SEA website. Go to the Membership and News page, scroll down, and click on the tab *EAL Journal*.

The table of contents for the current issue, Volume 54, Number 2, 2019 is now available.

Early American Literature Podcast Now Available

Do you love listening to podcasts? If so, you will be excited to learn that *Early American Literature* now hosts its own podcast. The podcast will be released three times a year and feature informal conversations from journal contributors on their research and scholarship.

Visit https://english.as.uky.edu/podcasts/early-american-literature-podcast to hear Chet'la Sebree talk about her work on Sally Hemmings, and Carolyn Eastman discussing her work on oral culture in early America.

SEA Scholars and Junior Scholars of the Month January - June 2019

January Scholars

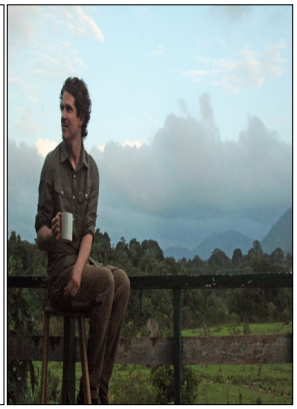
Tara Bynum is Assistant Professor of African American Literature and Culture at Hampshire College. Her current book project, *Reading Pleasures*, is under contract with University of Illinois Press.

Daniel Diez Couch is Assistant Professor of English at the United States Air Force Academy. He is currently working on a book manuscript titled *American Fragments: The Political Aesthetic of Literary Ruins in the Early Republic*.

February Scholars

Martin Brückner is Professor of English and Co-Director of the Center for Material Culture Studies and the Delaware Public Humanities Institute at the University of Delaware. He is working on a digital database titled *Thingstor.*

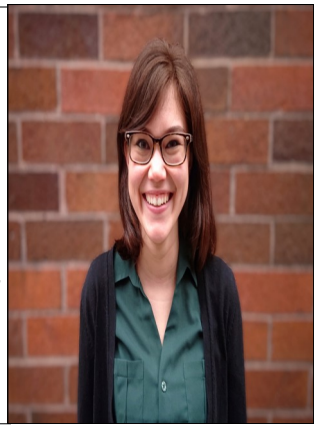
Thomas Doran is Assistant Professor in Residence of Environmental Literatures and Cultures at the Rhode Island School of Design. He is currently working on several articles and a book project related to animal protectionist rhetoric in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.



March Scholars

Birgit Brander Rasmussen is Associate Professor of English, General Literature and Rhetoric at Binghamton University, State. She recently finished an article titled "American Beowulf: Native American Literature 901 AD," which is a chapter in her upcoming book project.

Kimberly Takhata is a PhD Candidate at Columbia University. She is currently working on her dissertation, which looks at the relationship between colonial literary production and embodied indigenous practices.



April Scholars

Brigitte Fielder is Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Her current work explores early black futurity, especially the resonances of children and childhood, as well as the possible connections between Afrofuturism and black early America.

Kaitlin Tonti is a new PhD graduate from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She is currently working on a journal article that explores how early American literary identity is in part developed through American women's written correspondences. She is currently serving as co-chair of the SEA Junior Scholars Caucus.

May Scholars

Miles P. Grier is Assistant Professor of English at Queens College, CUNY. His current book project is tentatively entitled *Inkface: Othello and the Formation of White Interpretive Community*, which follows Othello in print and on stage in early American texts.

Jessica Taylor is Assistant Professor of History at Virginia Tech University. She is currently working on a book manuscript titled *Certaine Boundes: Indian Peoples, Nations, and Violence in the Seventeenth- Century Chesapeake.* She is also serving as first co-chair of the SEA Junior Scholar's Caucus.

June Scholars

Toni W. Jaudon is Associate Professor of English at Hendrix College. She is currently working on several smaller pieces, including a state-of-the-field essay on religion in U.S. literatures and a longer project tracing accounts of secularism through non-Christian religious practices in the nineteenth century.

Shelby Johnson is Assistant Professor of English at Florida Atlantic University. She is currently working on her book, *Small Plots: Race and Impoverished Belonging in the Atlantic World, 1770-1840*. In it she contends that transatlantic writers of color summon a spiritually inflected imaginary of a finite earth that improvises forms of belonging.

Memories from the Society of Early Americanists Biennial Conference
Eugene, Oregon
February 28-March 2, 2019

The Society of Early Americanists held its Eleventh Biennial Conference February 28 to March 2, 2019, in Eugene, Oregon.

Keynote speakers included Prof. Chris Cameron, University of North Carolina–Charlotte, founder of the African American Intellectual History Society and author of *To Plead Our Own Cause: African Americans in Massachusetts and the Making of the Antislavery Movement;* Prof. Lisa Brooks, Amherst College, author of *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War;* Prof. Michelle Burnham, Santa Clara University, "The Revolutionary Pacific: Transoceanic American Writing and the Calculus of Risk"; and Prof. Melinda Marie Jetté, author of *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races: A French-Indian Community in Nineteenth-Century Oregon, 1812-1859*.

Eugene, Oregon

Ralph Bauer and Alex Mazzaferro, winner of the 2017-2018 SEA Essay Prize

Marion Rust and Caroline Wigginton, winner of the 2018 EAL Book Prize

Early American Historical Sites: Moundville

Few places better illustrate the scale and scope of Mississippian societies in early America than Moundville, twenty minutes south of Tuscaloosa, Alabama along the banks of the Black Warrior River. At its height around 1200, Moundville was one of the largest cities and ceremonial centers in the Mississippian world—indeed, in North America. Functioning as a political and religious capital for the region, the city covered over 300 acres and included twenty-nine flat-topped mounds surrounding a large central plaza. Residences for rulers as well as temples and public buildings were built on top of the mounds, while commoners lived outside the plaza but largely within the bounds of a wooden palisade encircling the city.

'Mississippian' broadly describes a set of cultural characteristics linking a series of towns and chiefdoms throughout the Midwest and South—most centered on mound sites—which emerged after 800 CE. Mississippian culture thrived in the centuries between 1100 and 1400, both in small towns and in various regional centers including Cahokia (modern East St. Louis), Etowah (Georgia), Spiro (Oklahoma), and Moundville, then largely declined after 1500. However, early European incursions into the Southeast, like the 1539-43 Soto expedition, still encountered significant Mississippian chiefdoms from the Carolinas to Florida—and the Natchez paramount chiefdom remained a significant power in the lower Mississippi Valley well into the eighteenth century.

Moundville is second only to Cahokia in size and complexity for a Mississippian site, and (I would argue!) outranks even that city for the power and beauty of its representational art. A number of stunning artifacts have emerged from Moundville, including the famous Rattlesnake Disk, a carved sandstone palette with an image of two intertwined horned rattlesnakes encircling a hand-and-eye motif. The hand-and-eye is found on a range of pottery, personal ornaments, and ceremonial objects at Moundville and is thought to reference a star constellation associated with the Path of Souls, the route to the afterlife followed by the dead. After 150 years or so as a major fortified city, the identity of Moundville shifted around 1350 to become a ceremonial center, with a smaller population of mostly elite families and a growing number of burials—suggesting that the site became a necropolis for most of the region as families brought their dead loved ones to be interred at this spiritually significant capital. Other symbols connected to the Beneath World of Mississippian cosmology—for example, *piasas*, or supernatural beings blending snake, cat, and/or bird characteristics—are common on objects found at Moundville.

A breathtaking bowl of dark green diorite with a scaly, serpentine neck and the crested head of a wood duck is the preeminent example of this type of iconography and of the artistry that Moundville's political and spiritual leaders could enlist in their service.

Mississippian sites like Moundville are crucial for expanding our visions of early America—its chronology, its scale, and its shapes of power. Emphasizing the far-reaching trade networks, regionally specific iconography and belief systems, and aesthetic richness of Mississippian societies, as well as contextualizing what mound cities might have looked like when fully populated, helps raise the stakes for students when imagining North America prior to European invasions. Students in my courses are consistently surprised by the size of Cahokia, the fine detail of Moundville's art, and the distances that trade objects traveled to end up at Etowah. One told me that she'd looked up images of the serpent-duck bowl to show her roommate after class and spent the evening following Wikipedia links to look at Mississippian art. "I knew there was stuff like this in South America," she told me, "but why didn't we know this was right here?" For early Americanists throughout the Southeast, the Ohio River Valley, and even the upper Midwest, integrating the histories of local mound sites (some of which are far older than Mississippian centers like Moundville) into our courses is a useful way to get students to think about the specificity of place, while also disrupting common notions of Native America as static and unchanging.

Moundville's own history demonstrates profound change. By 1450, the most elaborate burials were no longer being made at the site, and residential activity continued to decline until around 1600, when it stopped being inhabited. This redistribution of power would ultimately result in new social configurations across the region, as the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and other modern tribes emerged. Today Moundville Archaeological Park is administered by the University of Alabama, and hosts a large Native American Festival each fall which functions for many tribal attendees as a homecoming to ancestral homelands and to a site that remains culturally significant to multiple tribal nations.

Mairin Odle
University of Alabama

Digital Early America: Colonial Williamsburg's "Historic Threads"

One of Colonial Williamsburg's online resources that is worth noting for us early Americanists is the "Historic Threads: Three Centuries of Clothing" exhibit. Showcasing bright, color images of some 235 pieces of clothing and costume accessories from the 17th through the early 19th century, the site allows visitors to magnify, scroll over, and learn the history of these material items that range from formal gowns and waistcoats, to purses and gloves, to belt buckles, spectacles, and even prints and paintings. Each piece is also accompanied by a brief description of its provenance, purpose, and details about its material construction. The homepage of "Historic Threads," which features a close-up image of luxurious floral embroidery, is organized into two tabs: "Learn" and "Explore," which take visitors to either short, informative articles about clothing and accessories from this period ("Learn") or the image gallery of the 235 items ("Explore").

The "Learn" portion of the site has a menu with links to articles about various sartorial-related topics from the 18th century, including short pieces about Formal, Fashionable, and Everyday clothing, and the use many types of accessories (for example: handkerchiefs, pockets, purses, walking sticks, and headwear). There are also two longer articles in this portion of the site that discuss the "lifecycle" of clothing for the 18th century from diapers to adulthood to mourning ("Lifecycle"), and an "Accessory Timeline" that traces the changes in accessories over time, particularly women's. Each article under this tab, in addition to having illustrative pictures, has direct links to the "Explore" section of the site where visitors can view additional images of the specific items being discussed.

The "Explore" portion of the site has thumbnail images of all 235 items and then various filters so visitors can select a pre-determined search term for viewing items (i.e. men's, underwear, pregnancy, etc.); they can search by a keyword or a particular genre of clothing of their own choosing, or they can just click through all the items, slideshow style. Each item is accompanied by a brief description of the item's construction, purpose, and date of creation/use, and options to magnify and scroll over the item for closer examination.

The information given within "Historic Threads" is written in direct, easily accessible prose and contextualizes the items in basic terms of broader historical and sociocultural significance. The site would be appropriate for just about any level of reader and education from middle school through undergraduate, and it provides high quality images of material items that could enhance classroom discussions of early American history, culture, and literature by providing a "visual" aspect to otherwise foreign concepts for students, like cap lappets or chatelaines.

I know this site has proven useful for me in classes about early American material culture and it has been the genesis for short, low stakes writing assignments I have created that invite my students to analyze an item of their choice from the collection and/or (for a more creative assignment) to invent a story around the item. I've also used the site to show students specific pieces related to a text we've currently been studying, such as a woman's pocket when we're reading Mary Rowlandson's captivity or a set of front-lacing stays and stomacher to show students just how someone like Rebekah Chamblit was able to conceal her pregnancy from prying eyes. Students respond well to the visual nature of the site and appreciate the opportunity to see real versions of items mentioned in our texts that have been used, worn, and preserved.

While the site does offer a wide array of material items and clothing from a broad time span, there are, of course, some gaps in the overall scope of the site. For example, most of the items displayed are of a "higher end" status and of western/Anglo origin. Visitors will see fashionable aprons with shiny gilt embroidery and sequins, as well as fancily quilted silk petticoats, beautiful embroidered silk and linen waistcoats, and exquisite jewelry, while there is exactly one apron made of plain linen displayed in the entire gallery. In fact, when you filter the image gallery to search for "Everyday/work wear," only 15 items are displayed of the 235 included on the site. "Historic Threads" does address at least a portion of this classist concern, noting in one of the short articles, "Because of their beauty and expense, the more decorative accessories were preserved—and some eventually entered museum collections—while the everyday accessories were typically used up" ("Accessory Timeline"). This is certainly true; however, no real attempt is made within the image gallery (or overall site) to offer working class counterpoints to the objects pictured, whether through basic

description of how an everyday item would differ from the high-end one pictured, or artists' renderings of what average people would have worn and used instead.

Another criticism is of the white-washed nature of the items displayed on the site. In addition to the upscale character of nearly the entire collection, most, if not all, of the items also reflect predominantly western-European sensibilities and styles and seem to be exclusively representative of Anglo traditions and experiences. Considering that Native Americans and Africans/African-Americans were significant parts of early American culture and society—particularly during the 200+ year time-span this site covers—the lack of clothing and accessories representing their identities is a gross oversight. Obviously, clothing items and accessories from these groups may have been "used up" as the site asserts about working-class items, or, perhaps more likely, such items have simply been preserved within individual families and communities or donated to different institutions than Colonial Williamsburg. However, the lack of address of race is troubling. There are two tabs under the "Learn" portion of the site that gesture toward diversity, entitled "African Americans" and "Native Americans," but each only contains a scant three sentences and basically asserts that Anglo settlers "admired" Native American ways and styles, while African-Americans generally wore styles after their Anglo "neighbors." Not a lot of complexity or unpacking there.

In recent years, Colonial Williamsburg has made efforts to expand its portrayals of BIPoC and diverse class distinctions by including portrayals of free Blacks and middle class farmers, but with little success. Colonial Williamsburg as a physical site still caters to America's white, middle and affluent socioeconomic classes, and the "Historic Threads" online exhibit seems to mirror this.

With all of this said, however, I still think this site is worth a visit and a poke-around. Besides offering visual examples of things students may have read about but never seen, the site itself is a rhetorical text worth analysis. The way the site is organized, what is included versus what is excluded, how passages are worded (lots of passive voice to uncover and plenty of euphemisms), and even how clothing and accessory items are grouped all invite further analysis and arguably demonstrate exactly how history and public memory get organized and edited to tell a particular story to a particular group in a particular time and space.

[The images and information in this online collection come from two physical exhibits held at the Colonial Williamsburg DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum: the "Fashion Accessories from Head to Toe: 1600 to 1840" exhibit (held in 2011) and "The Language of Clothing" exhibit (2002).]

Cathy Rex
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Plain linen apron

Watch with chatelaine

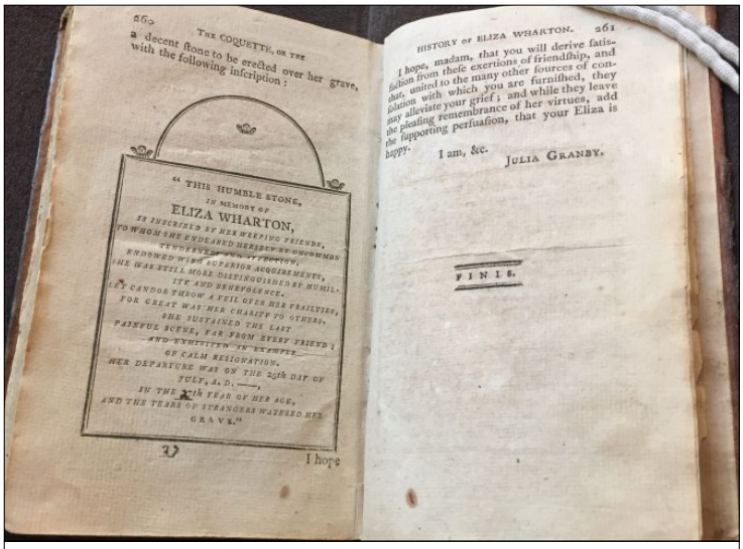
One of the exciting dimensions of early American writing is its sheer creativity. Faced with circumstances ranging from the wondrous to the horrifying, writers in the transatlantic world of the early Americas developed new forms and genres and modified old ones to capture their experiences of colonization. However, it can be difficult at our historical distance to help students appreciate this. After all, while the *Bay Psalms*' hyper-fidelity to their source and rough-hewn poetics are radical in many ways, to students they appear antiquated and kind of dull. One way I've found to help students engage early American writing more deeply is through low-stakes, creative writing assignments that allow students to emulate, intervene in, or manipulate course texts.

In my version of American Literature I (Beginnings-1865), I ask students to complete three or four "Investigatory Writing Assignments" (IWAs) as one of their smaller, on-going assignments. Each time an IWA is due, students select from a list of eight or so options a small project that they will complete with the stipulation that they can only produce any given option once in a semester. Each option follows the same basic structure--either a creative piece paired with a 250-word reflection or a 500-word analysis. All options require that students articulate how their writing connects to and engages course concepts. I reiterate each time that the goal of the assignment is not to make them accomplished creative writers, but rather to help them see the texts we're working with differently. To that end, I evaluate them on fully completing the option they've chosen and how well the connection to the course is articulated.

Since the IWAs are low-stakes writing assignments, they give students an opportunity to take risks and experiment while working with course materials and concepts. If a student's piece doesn't fulfill its ambitions, all they have to do is explain fully and specifically how the attempt was related to what we were working on in class. For instance, I once had a student, inspired by Michael Wigglesworth's *Day of Doom*, attempt to render the contents of some apocalyptic Netflix show in ballad meter with internal rhyme. Three pages in, the student realized that they would need to generate many times that amount of writing to fully capture the plot they'd begun detailing. In their reflection, they discussed how the formal features of Wigglesworth's poem can seem silly to a twenty-first century ear, but require significant dedication and invention to maintain at length. Although the student didn't complete the piece they'd set out to write, they emerged from the effort with a different sense of Wigglesworth's artistry that would have been difficult to impart otherwise.

One of the most popular options asks students to emulate some of the writers of occasional verse that we read by writing a formal poem (employing rhyme and meter) of at least twenty lines commemorating a life event. Inspired by poems like Bradstreet's "On my dear Grand-child Simon," or Wheatley's elegy on George Whitefield, students have written poems about a range of losses and celebrations. While these poems are often a little rough in their meter and rhyme, students often reflect that they understand more fully that early American mourning practices require retrofitting the one mourned to fit social and cultural expectations because they found themselves engaging in a similar process. In a larger sense, they come to appreciate the sometimes-crooked meter and off-rhymes of our poets as they begin to read those moments not as artistic failings, but impressions of humanity.

Other options ask students to intervene in course texts either critically or creatively. Students might take the opportunity to translate one of our course texts into a different genre or form--one student recreated a portion of *The Coquette* as a twitter feed, another translated one of Mary Rowlandson's removes into emojis. In producing these translations, students find it necessary to reexamine a text we've read and pay close attention to its language and aesthetics, thinking about how these might be rendered via other means. Another option asks students to use the Early American Imprints database to find and read a text that is not on the schedule of readings, then produce a 500-word analysis of that text's relationship to material we've covered in class. As a result, students are not only introduced to a portion of the broader archive of early American anglophone writing, they find themselves applying course concepts in order to make sense of what they've dug up.



1797 version of Hannah Wenster Foster's The Coquette

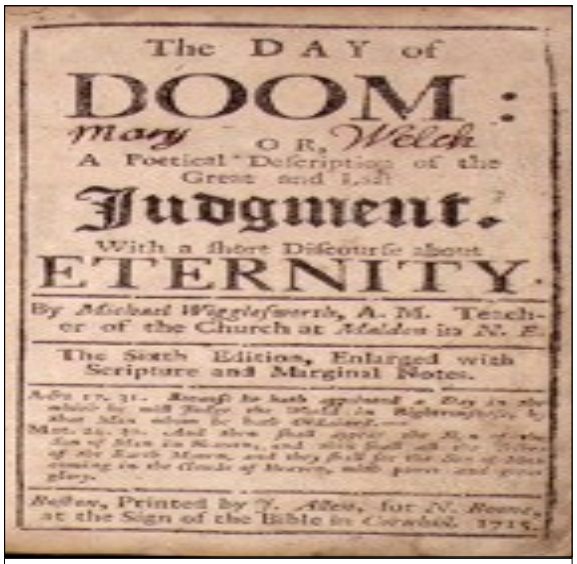
Some of the weirder options ask students to manipulate course texts through different procedures. We might discuss in class how Anne Hutchinson's "Immediate Revelation" is a sophisticated pastiche of scriptural quotation, original not in its language, but in how that language was selected, spliced together, and arranged.

At another point, we might discuss how neo-classical poetry involved a relatively limited stock of images, language, and conceit, but how the best poets could rework and redeploy these resources to great effect. Students then might choose to produce a collage text, limiting their language to what can be drawn from a certain number of source texts.

Another choice might be to feed a couple of source texts into an algorithm called a Markov chain generator, where the language of the texts is analyzed to determine the probability that any given word will follow another. Students can then sculpt a text (a poem, a letter, a travelogue) from the block of text the Markov chain generator generates from these probabilities. In both instances, students find it necessary to revisit texts they've read and pay close attention to their language in order to produce interesting results.

An assignment like the IWAs builds in choice, offers a range of experiences, and asks students to make connections across course materials. While creative writing assignments in the early American studies classroom are unlikely to produce great literature, it gives students a chance to interact with early American writing from a different vantage, making the material feel more vibrant and immediate.

Nicholas Mohlmann
University of West Florida


The DAY of
DOOM:
OR,
A Poetical Description of the
Great and Last
Judgment.
With a short Discourse about
ETERNITY.
By Michael Wigglesworth, A. M. Teacher of the Church at Malden in N. E.
The Sixth Edition, Enlarged with Scripture and Marginal Notes.
Boston, Printed by B. Allen, for N. Boone, at the Sign of the Bible in Cornhill. 1715.

"The Day of Doom" *by Michael Wigglesworth*

SEA @ ALA
30th Annual Conference
Boston, MA 2019

The following sessions at the 2019 American Literature Conference were sponsored by the Society of Early Americanists.

We would like to thank Leonard Von Morze for organizing these in his role as SEA liaison to the ALA.

Speaking American?: Multilingualism and Translation in Early America
Organized by the Society of Early Americanists

Chair: Meredith Neuman, Clark University
1. "Liberty, Equality, Sorority: Translating Haitian Revolutionary Fiction," Courtney Chatellier, New York University
2. "'The double-tongued are sure to stray': Biloquism as Multilingualism in Wieland," Pichaya Damrongpiwat, Cornell University
3. "Kotzebue in the Pacific," Len von Morzé, University of Massachusetts Boston

Women's Authorship Unbound I: Manuscript Networks in the Colonies and Early Republic
Organized by the Society of Early Americanists

Chair: Betsy Klimasmith, University of Massachusetts Boston
1. "Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson's Manuscript Books: Curating a Legacy?," Chiara Cillerai, St. John's University New York
2. "Milcah Martha Moore's Commonplace Book and the Politics of the Unpublished," Kaitlin Tonti, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
3. "The Networks of Mary Penry," Scott Paul Gordon, Lehigh University

Women's Authorship Unbound II: Poetry, Politics, and Periodicals
Organized by the Society of Early Americanists

Chair: Renée Bergland, Simmons University
1. Sally Minyard, Texas A&M-Commerce, "'Born for Liberty': Revolutionary Newspapers, Broadsides, and the Shifting Identity of the Daughters of Liberty"
2. Paul Lewis, Boston College, "'And do as they please': Why Judith Sargent Murray Almost Certainly Wrote the Most Strikingly Feminist Poem Published in Boston During the 1790s and Why This Matters"
3. "Technologies of Containment in Maria Gowen Brooks's Zóphiël; or, The Bride of Seven," Magdalena Zapędowska, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Bartram, Linnaeus, and Natural History in Sweden: A Conference Review

In recent scholarship on literary geography, conversations turn increasingly to the geography of texts. For authors associated with a given region, common sense would lead us to use narrative for understanding that place. But how do texts themselves travel? How do insights differ when we track down new patterns of dissemination -- from differing locales? These questions presented themselves at an intimate gathering at Sweden's Uppsala University, March 27-29, 2019, for "Enlightenment, Nation-Building, and the Practices of Natural History: The Bartrams and Linné." A center of enlightenment science and home to impressive botanic collections even today, Uppsala is a logical venue for a symposium on natural history. (Off-year SEA, anyone?)

The shape of eighteenth-century science has always been a function of plants traveling across the oceans, from local settings to metropolitan centers, and back again. The value of this particular seminar, with presenters from both sides of the Atlantic, was hearing the seemingly familiar made new, with approaches from different angles. Presentations included:

- Thomas Hallock (U of South Florida), "Signing Nature, Memorializing Plantations: Public Memory on the Bartram Trail"
- Linda Andersson Burnett (Linnaeus U), "Colonial Ethnography and Linnaean Natural History: A Transnational History"
- Christina Kullberg (Uppsala U), "Archipelagic Knowledge: French 17th Century Natural Histories from the Caribbean"
- Markus Heide (Uppsala U), "William Bartram's *Travels*: Domestic Imagination and Creole Knowledge Production"
- Hanna Hodacs (Darlarna U), "Atlantic Coffee or Chinese Tea -- John Ellis (1710-1776) on the Cultivation and Consumption of Caffeinated Drinks"
- Marcel Hartwig (Siegen U), "Knowledge Media, the Bartrams, and the Transatlantic Trade of Plants"
- Stephanie Weiner (Wesleyan U), "Form and Language in Natural History Poems"

Between the formal talks, garden strolls, a walking tour of the storied town and campus, and casual conversation over *fika* (coffee breaks), new insights emerged. How does a figure such as Thomas Pennant, not commonly known to early American scholars, connect British American and Arctic colonialisms? In what ways do Sweden's legacies of the Sami mirror settler-colonialism in the past and present-day United States? Given German expectations to hopscotch across historical periods, what new theoretical models can be applied to enlightenment knowledge production?

How can John Clare and John Ashbery re-teach us the poetics of natural history? Environmental humanities in Scandinavia remains a vibrant field and Uppsala University provides a particularly rich setting to rethink colonial letters. When we shift our own view to different settings, bringing together scholars from across disciplines and two continents, even the most familiar figures are going to surprise.

Thomas Hallock
University of South Florida

Upcoming Conferences and Calls for Papers

The Society of Early Americanists Special Topics Conference
Exeter, UK, June 24-27, 2020

The topic of the 2020 Society of Early Americanists Special Topics Conference is "What Does It Mean to Remember?" Papers and panels may engage with the following topics, though we emphasize that this is not an exhaustive list:

- Transatlantic circulation of people, ideas, texts, foods, goods, things
- The "Winthrop fleet"—technology, people, motivations, microhistories
- The English diaspora in the Americas and globally in the 17th century
- Indigenous travelers to and/or perspectives on England/Europe
- American Puritanism "before the fact"
- Commemorations and remembrances of the Mayflower, Thanksgiving, Plymouth Rock.
- Digital Pilgrims (DH approaches and applications)
- Popular Pilgrims/the Pilgrims as Popular Culture in the U.S. and beyond.
- Anglo-American-Indigenous relations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

Guiding questions include: What Does It Mean to Remember" or "How Do We Remember?"

Individual paper proposals should include
• Presenter's name, title, and institutional affiliation (or independent status)
• Title and short description of the presentation.

Full session proposals should include
• A title and overall description of the panel
• Presenters' names, titles, email addresses and institutional affiliation (or independent status)
• Titles of each presentation on the panel, if applicable.

Email 1-page proposals to SEA2020@exeter.ac.uk by **20 September 2019**.

***Early American Literature* invites proposals for a special issue, "Reframing 1620."**

The year 2020 will mark the 400th anniversary of the establishment of Plymouth colony, the first permanent English settlement in the American northeast. This anniversary is certain to inspire new scholarly discussion. While recent scholarship has often turned to other sites of encounter and colonialism, Plymouth retains a tight grip on the American imagination. Its founding has an indelible place in popular memory. And the histories of this place, and these peoples, remain relevant. As is evident in the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe's ongoing struggle to protect its sovereignty and self-determination, the legacies of Plymouth's founding continue to unfold.

What new approaches to Plymouth colony—and Wampanoag country—will yield new insights? What lessons remain to be culled? This special issue of Early American Literature will explore the evolution of historical and literary scholarship on Plymouth and its surrounding history and mythology. We seek papers reflecting new approaches to Plymouth colony, its history and literature, its environs, its associated characters, and its legacies, including its connections to and effect on Native communities, American identity, and historical memory. The histories and stories that have framed 1620 should be reconsidered to reflect the multiple dimensions of Plymouth in Wampanoag country.

Therefore, we seek to reframe 1620 in a special issue of EAL as a collaborative format. No one article needs to attempt to do it all, but the multiple voices that will comprise the issue will be an attempt to reflect the multivalent nature of 1620. We welcome articles on narration, identity, race, culture, material culture and book history, language, medicine, religion, politics, communication, economics, geography and the environment. The issue will be guest-edited by Katherine Grandjean (Wellesley College) and Sarah Schuetze (University of Wisconsin-Green Bay). Final articles, running c. 8,000 words, will be peer reviewed. The journal projects a publication date of late 2020 or early 2021.

Please send 250–word proposals by July 15th to Katherine Grandjean (kgrandje@wellesley.edu) and Sarah Schuetze (sarahcschuetze@gmail.com). Complete essays of selected proposals will be due to the guest editors by October 15th.

American Contact: Intercultural Encounter and the History of the Book
April 23-25, 2020
Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

American Contact is a multi-disciplinary symposium that invites scholars to discuss the use of material texts in cross-cultural encounters in the Americas. We seek to explore how texts—broadly defined to include not only books but textual artifacts and material culture including visual art, musical scores, and various kinds of handwork—have facilitated (1) communication across cultural divides, (2) the creation and transmission of knowledge, (3) the performance of both colonization and resistance, and (4) the creation of alphabetic and alternative literacies from the eras of contact, conquest, and colonization through the twentieth century in both North and South America.

American Contact proceeds from the fact that "text" was put under particular pressure in the Americas, where we find rich histories of negotiation between cultures defined by widely divergent linguistic and notational traditions. It is for this reason, we suggest, that the manifold ways that texts operate come into focus precisely at such moments of intercultural encounter. Although they have often remained marginal to studies of "the book," historically centered on Europe, material texts from the Americas emerge as central to their material, geographic, and conceptual reorientation.

The symposium will take place at Princeton University and the University of Pennsylvania on April 23-25, 2020. Support for travel and lodging will be offered to participants in need.

The symposium is part of a broader multiyear Humanities Council Global Initiative that will result in three products: the symposium, a published volume of short, single object-focused essays (to be submitted for consideration at the University of Pennsylvania Press's Material Texts series in August 2021), and an accompanying digital humanities website focused on how to teach with those objects. This multi-part project was envisioned and organized by Rhae Lynn Barnes, Glenda Goodman, and Aaron M. Hyman (Johns Hopkins University, History of Art).

As the first step in that process, the symposium will take an unconventional form. We invite abstracts of 250 words for **10-12 minute** papers that respond to the American Contact's prompt, advocating for the capacity of one particular object and its biography to yield insight into the function of material texts in intercultural encounters and challenge or expand normative definitions of text, textuality, "the book," and/or reading and writing practices.

Presenters will be asked to focus on only **ONE** textual material object (using a maximum of **THREE** images, including details and comparisons) to address these themes. These short, focused presentations are meant to incite both depth of analysis and methodological provocation. Our intention is that range and diversity will come through the assemblage of otherwise highly focused presentations from across the Americas and the centuries.

Abstracts, CVs, and questions can be sent to AmericanContact2020@gmail.com by September 1, 2019. Please indicate whether your object is housed at one of the hosting institutions.

51st Northeast Modern Language Association Annual Conference
March 5-8, 2020
Boston, MA
All submissions should be uploaded to NeMLA's conference website by Sept. 30, 2019:
http://www.buffalo.edu/nemla/convention/callforpapers.html

Landscapes of Politics and Identity in American Literature
Chair: Kathleen Healey (Worcester State University)

For Americans, the landscape brings strong associations, whether cultural, political, historical, or commercial. The landscape, in a sense, is central to the American identity. This session seeks proposals on the meaning of landscape in American literature. How do Americans use the landscape to create identity? In what ways are landscapes used politically or culturally to create meaning? This session encourages interdisciplinary approaches to the landscape in American literature, including examination of literature and the visual arts.

American Gothic, from Native Americans to the Present ***Chair: Robert Daly (SUNY University at Buffalo)***

Our panel subject includes and links American Indians, slavery, witchcraft, migration, Poe, Sedgwick, Hawthorne, Dickinson, Alcott, others, Amazon Women, alien nations, alienation, and Jordan Peele's *Us* (aka U.S.). Since the gothic calls into question both literary and cultural taxonomies, we shall remain open to suggestion, but like the gothic itself, we shall be eager to explore links not usually made in surveys of time, place, author, and genre. We shall like surprises.

Feeling (Un)American: Race and National Belonging in the African American Literary Tradition
Chair: Gabrielle Everett (Rutgers University), Margarita Castroman (Rutgers University-New Brunswick)

In his 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois oses a question that remains at the heart of the African American literary tradition: "How does it feel to be a problem?" This panel takes up Du Bois's question by exploring: What affects does the nation demand of black Americans? How has African American literature wrestled with, circumvented, accepted, or defied such demands? We invite papers that expand on the connection between race, affect, and national belonging in African American literature.

American Gothic Domesticity: Blissful Misery
Chair: Danielle Cofer (University of Rhode Island), Caitlin Duffy (SUNY Stony Brook University)

This panel invites papers interrogating gothic depictions of domestic spaces in American fiction (including, but not limited to, literature, film, and television). Papers utilizing gothic and sentimental literature to support, challenge, or problematize conceptions of what qualifies as "home" are especially welcome. We also encourage papers that explore the American home's representation temporally by tracing transformations or continuations of its fictional appearance across time.

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Society of Early Americanists

To Our Members

The SEA thanks its new and renewing members for their invaluable support of our Society. Your contributions make early American studies thrive. Please remember to keep your membership current and direct any membership inquiries to the Executive Coordinator, Ralph Bauer: sea-coord@gmail.com.

You can also help build our membership by referring colleagues in the field to the Society's homepage: http://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/index.html

Contributing to *SEAN*

There are several regular features in the *Society of Early Americanists Newsletter* for which contributors are sought:

- Teaching Early America
- Early American Historical Sites
- Digital Early America

For more information about these features, or to submit an article on another topic, contact Mary Balkun, SEAN Editor, at mary.balkun@shu.edu

Society Information/Membership

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 1830. Our membership of over 350 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 homepage: https://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/membership.html

Opportunities for Giving

In addition to keeping your SEA membership active, you can contribute to the Fund to Honor Excellence in Teaching: https://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/honored_teachers.html

Image Index

1. Colonial Currency from New York, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US-Colonial_(NY-173)-New_York-2_Aug_1775_REV.jpg
2. William Bartram's *Franklinia alatamaha*; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:William_Bartram01.jpg
3. Pennsylvania Hospital by Wm. Strickland, 1755; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Franklin#/media/File:PennsylvaniaHospitalWilliamStrickland.jpg
4. Kelly Wisecup. Courtesy of Kelly Wisecup.
5. Caroline Wigginton. Courtesy of Caroline Wigginton.
6. Alyssa Mt. Pleasant. Courtesy of arts-sciences. buffalo.edu.
7. Tara Bynum. Courtesy of hampshire.edu.
8. Daniel Diez Couch. Courtesy of the SEA Scholar of the Month posts on the SEA website: societyofearlyamericanists.org;
9. Martin Brückner. Courtesy of the SEA Scholar of the Month posts on the SEA website: societyofearlyamericanists.org.
10. Thomas Doran. Courtesy of the SEA Scholar of the Month posts on the SEA website: societyofearlyamericanists.org.
11. Birgit Brander Rasmussen. Courtesy of the SEA Scholar of the Month posts on the SEA website: societyofearlyamericanists.org.
12. Kimberly Takhata. Courtesy of the SEA Scholar of the Month posts on the SEA website: societyofearlyamericanists.org.
13. Miles P. Grier. Courtesy of the SEA Scholar of the Month posts on the SEA website: societyofearlyamericanists.org.
14. Jessica Taylor. Courtesy of the SEA Scholar of the Month posts on the SEA website: societyofearlyamericanists.org.
15. Brigitte Fielder. Courtesy of the SEA Scholar of the Month posts on the SEA website:societyofearlyamericanists.org.
16. Kaitlin Tonti. Courtesy of the SEA Scholar of the Month posts on the SEA website: societyofearlyamericanists.org.
17. Toni W. Jaudon. Courtesy of the SEA Scholar of the Month posts on the SEA website: societyofearlyamericanists.org.
18. Shelby Johnson. Courtesy of the SEA Scholar of the Month posts on the SEA web site: societyofearlyamericanists.org.
19. Conference Registration. Courtesy of Mary Balkun.
20. Eugene, Oregon. Courtesy of Mary Balkun.
21. Ralph Bauer and Alex Mazzaferro, winner of SEA Essay Prize. Courtesy of Mary Balkun.
22. Marion Rust and Caroline Wigginton, winner of the 2018 EAL Book Prize. Courtesy of Mary Balkun.
23. Map of Moundville. Courtesy of alabama200.org.
24. Colonial Williamsburg Museum Collection: Historic Threads. Courtesy ofHistory.org/museums/clothingexhibits.
25. Plane linin apron. Courtesy of History.org/museumsClothingexhibits.
26. Watch with chatelaine. Courtesy of History.org/museums/clothingexhibits.
27. 1797 version of Hannah Wesbter Foster's *The Coquette*. Courtesy of smallnotes.library.virginia.edu.
28. *The Day of Doom* by Michael Wigglesworth. Courtesy of english.cam.ac.uk.