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SEAN

The Society of Early Americanists Newsletter

THE SOCIETY OF EARLY AMERICANISTS

From the SEA President

Dear SEA members and early Americanist community:

I am writing to provide some important developments and contextual information regarding the 2021 SEA Biennial Conference: **We are moving to an all-virtual conference format.** As you know, the March 2021 SEA Biennial was to take place at the Emory Conference Center & Hotel and the Emory University campus. Emory University recently released its fall 2020 reopening plan (https://vimeo.com/emoryuniversity/review/428479064/08edd47bd1).

In short, Emory will be leasing the Emory Conference Center and Hotel to serve as a) overflow student housing, and **b) quarantine space for students who are sick with COVID-19 or have been in contact with anyone who is sick with COVID-19.**

Although the plan has been billed for the fall 2020, no ending date for this protocol has been announced; thus, it is highly likely that this plan will continue throughout the winter and spring (i.e. our conference dates), especially given many public health predictions.

In addition, we are seeing a significant spike in COVID cases, as you know, in many states (especially across the South) as well as a precipitous drop in travel funding for many of us in academia. In sum, the SEA executive and advisory officers met and considered our options (cancel outright; move to all-virtual/online; postpone to fall '21). We concluded, for the following reasons, to move the conference to an **all-virtual conference in early March 2021**:

a) allowing the SEA to hold a conference during its customary time.

b) providing a sense of persistence and continuity in our society's activities (especially as our topical conference in Exeter, UK, planned for June 2020, was cancelled).

c) providing a platform/venue for early Americanists/SEA members to continue their professional development, exchange work, etc...

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Plymouth in 1622

d) Providing increased accessibility in times of uncertainty and allowing for an inclusive/accessible conference model.

e) helping us to configure and experiment with future models for combining our valued and beloved in-person conference with virtual elements.

f) using our existing line-up of keynote and plenary speakers.

g) taking advantage of our existing relationship with Ex Ordo, which is now rapidly expanding its virtual conference capabilities, featuring:

a. a fully integrated conference platform, with everything under the same roof

b. content delivery and participation options: Stages: sharing live video (via Cisco Webex) with participants; especially appropriate for keynotes and plenaries; Bundles/ Clusters: on-demand content released bit by bit to control when content is available (to approx. imate the stair-stepped conference experience) and/or to release/group panels by theme Rooms: housing panels and presentations, via video or text and images

c. Communication features will include live responses (especially for keynotes/live-streaming), messaging, interactive chats for each "Room", etc.

d. Access options will be many, i.e. participation can be restricted for registered attendees but also be opened to the public for individual events.

e. Pricing for the virtual conference will be very affordable (registration fees, as a result, will be very low; we have to work out final costs but will offer free registration for a broad and inclusive group of participants)

What's next:

1) We very much hope that everyone who has already submitted a proposal will participate in the Virtual 2021 SEA Biennial Conference. Please email any questions to perben@westga.edu.

2) We also hope that the new arrangement will allow a range of interested scholars and students in our and adjacent fields to participate in the SEA Conference (perhaps for the first time) and thus help us shape an even more vibrant, diverse, and inclusive community—especially during these trying and confusing times.

3) **We extended the submissions deadline for completed panels to September 15, 2020 (to coincide with the deadline for individual paper proposals).**

If you have already submitted a panel, you may edit/ change your submission, given the new circumstances (e.g. tweak your approach, add on other panelists who are now able to participate).

4) We will soon follow up with an **electronic survey** allowing you to contribute requests and ideas for the format and options offered by the Virtual 2021 SEA Biennial.

In addition to the features already mentioned, please contribute anything that you think would make the Virtual SEA Biennial an attractive event; we will work with Ex Ordo on shaping and developing a Virtual Conference that allows for the greatest range of both traditional and experimental approaches for sharing scholarship and pedagogy, workshopping, networking, and meeting.

5) We will update the conference website to reflect the new arrangements and send out frequent information via the EARAM listserv and the SEA membership directory.

I am, of course, saddened by having to take this step. Our location would have offered amazing in-person experiences. However, I hope we can still--as much as possible--tie Atlanta/Georgia and the programmatic and historical touchstones it provides--into our virtual conference; most importantly, we will continue our Common Reading Initiative and collaboration with the Atlanta University Center HBCUs.

Please email me at perben@westga.edu if you would like to participate in the Common Reading Initiative (see page 6 of this newsletter for additional details) focusing on Honorée Jeffers's *The Age of Phills:* (www.hfsbooks.com/books/the-age-of-phillis-jeffers/); I will send you a Google doc to sign up as a participant.

All the best, and be well.

Patrick Erben
SEA President

From the SEA Vice-President

While the current pandemic has resulted in the closure of most of our treasured local cultural haunts, one of the few silver linings of the current disruptions is that it has forced institutions to find alternative venues of reaching and communicating with their traditional audiences. Thus, college campuses that have for years resisted granting their staff the opportunity of working remotely at least some days of the week—hereby lagging behind other employers in both the private and government sectors—have learned that they can serve their students just fine by functioning in a mostly online environment.

Senior administrators in higher education have been surprised by the superlative turnouts at their leadership forums and town halls conducted via Zoom. Admittedly, instruction has been more of a mixed bag. While the world of pedagogy did not end with the sudden shift to fully online instruction this Spring semester, many remain convinced that it cannot substitute for in-person teaching and are eager to return to campus as soon as it is safe to do so.

No doubt, however, the opportunities for networking and socializing that are such an important part of every professional conference—especially for junior members of our community—will be greatly diminished, if my experience with online happy hours can serve as an indication for what to expect.

Still, a conference program that is fully online next spring may provide other unforeseen opportunities by facilitating greater participation from members abroad and domestic without an ample institutional travel budget; new members whose travel schedule is usually filled by commitments to other organizations and conferences; or members who have reservations about excessive professional travel due to environmental or personal health reasons.

The enhanced potential for a more diverse international and interdisciplinary intellectual exchange may warrant a consideration of a hybrid format of conferencing on a more permanent basis for future meetings, long after the current pandemic has dissipated.

While it is already now not uncommon for individual panelists who are unable to attend a conference in person to participate via Skype or some other teleconferencing platform, this is still the exception rather than a normal option built into the conference planning from the very beginning.

What such a hybrid model of conferencing in the future—2023?—will look like in terms of its logistical details and implications remains to be seen, but it is likely that the experience of a first fully online SEA biennial in 2021 will teach important lessons in this regard.

Besides academic conferences, another type of scholarly event potentially of interest to the reader of this column that has seen considerable disruptions in the face of the current pandemic involves special exhibitions by libraries and museums. A good example of this to which I would like to draw your attention is the current special exhibit *Alexander von Humboldt and the United States: Art, Nature, and Culture* in the (temporarily closed) Smithsonian Museum of American Art in Washington DC (March 20 - August 16, 2020; https://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/humboldt). The exhibit focuses on the reception that American artists and writers gave the famous Prussian naturalist and explorer, who visited the United States for six weeks during his return from his travels to South America and Mexico in 1804.

Organized by Smithsonian senior curator Eleanor Jones Harvey, the special exhibit comes as part of a recent wave of renewed interest in Humboldt, who, after enjoying considerable fame in the United States during the first decade of the nineteenth century, was largely forgotten in this country in the wake of its nineteenth-century turn toward populism, nationalism, and westward expansionism (though Humboldt's fame—and, at times, notoriety—has continued unabated in Latin America to this day). And as with academic conferences, administration, or instruction, so also with special exhibitions in the age of COVID19: the conversion to an online format brings with it special challenges but also new opportunities that may point to a scholarly media landscape permanently altered by the adjustments made during the pandemic.

Alexander Von Humboldt

Thus, while the visitor is not able see the exhibit in its physical space, the curators have produced an animated film introducing the viewer to the life of Humboldt; a thirty-five minute virtual tour through the physical exhibit space guided by Jones Harvey; an online gallery of the paintings of artists inspired by Humboldt, such as Rembrandt Peale, Charles Willson Peale, and Frederic Edwin Church; a blog; a docudrama on Humboldt's life; and an

immersive media experience based on Church's famous painting "Heart of the Andes," which was inspired by Humboldt's travel and scientific writings as well as by his own journey to the Andes in 1859, during which he retraced the Prussian naturalist's footsteps.

Intended mainly for a general audience, the exhibit is rather celebratory of the famous nineteenth-century traveler, hereby following the trend set by recent scholarship in the United States and Europe, with the publication of new work on Humboldt by Vera Kutzinski, Otmar Ette, Andrea Wulf, and others, though eschewing an engagement with some of the more critical portrayals by Latin Americanists such as Mary Louise Pratt and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra. Although the online installation cannot replicate the experience of visiting an actual exhibit in the magnificent building that houses both the American Portrait Gallery and the Museum of American Art, the visitor does not have to travel to Washington DC in order to enjoy this overall interesting and well-done exhibit.

Ralph Bauer
SEA Vice-President

From the SEA Executive Coordinator

"1619/1776"

On March 6, 2020, just as the threat posed by COVID-19 was coming into focus, the *New York Times* hosted a panel discussion on "Slavery and the American Revolution: A Historical Dialogue," which is available to watch here. Overshadowed by the pandemic, the event covered issues of critical interest and deserves wide attention. It was organized in connection with the 1619 Project that the *Times* launched last August to mark the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first Africans in North America.

Moderated by Omohundro Institute Executive Director Karin Wulf, the panel featured a conversation with historians Annette Gordon-Reed, Eliga Gould, Gerald Horne, and Alan Taylor. In Wulf's blog post about the event, she notes that the focus for the panel was a line in Nikole Hannah-Jones's introduction to the 1619 forum, which "had referred to protecting slavery in America as a 'primary' motivation for patriots seeking independence from Britain."

The paradox of a war ostensibly for freedom but in fact to defend slavery is a compelling journalistic gambit. This point was not lost on contemporaries like Samuel Johnson, who famously quipped in "Taxation No Tyranny" (1775): "How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?" Scholars sometimes (often?) prefer more nuance.

In a follow-up to the panel, the *NYT Magazine*'s editor Jake Silverstein wrote about a small but important revision to Hannah-Jones's introduction: "We recognize that our original language could be read to suggest that protecting slavery was a primary motivation for all of the colonists. The passage has been changed to make clear that this was a primary motivation for some of the colonists. A note has been appended to the story as well." Silverstein's revision ("some of"), while minimal, adds crucial nuance to the story that the *Magazine* offered about the relationship between the Revolution and slavery.

In addition to stressing that protecting slavery was not the main reason for the Revolution, most of the panelists emphasized another point as well: people's motivations for supporting the Revolution were complicated. Motives varied by region, occupation, and social position, among other factors. Sometimes they shifted from one moment to another. The panel invited the audience to consider our own motivations, which are complicated and often changeable. At a more political level, the panelists briefly touched on the fact that many of the patriot leaders believed that slavery was a dying institution, and they noted that a number of states began the process of abolishing slavery during or just after the war.

If protecting slavery was a "primary" motivation for all patriots, why was it the case that by 1789 five of the Northern states had policies that gradually abolished slavery: Pennsylvania (1780), New Hampshire and Massachusetts (1783), Connecticut and Rhode Island (1784)? By 1804 all of the northern states had abolished slavery or had plans in place to gradually reduce it.

So, what changed? Why didn't slavery slowly fade away, as many of the Founders believed it would? As the panelists observed, the invention of the cotton gin and the rise of King Cotton made the slave system enormously more profitable, while territorial expansion extended its domain into the deep South.

A New Map of North America

Rather than dying out, slavery renewed its vampire life. The ideology of slavery changed to fit these novel circumstances. The myth of the black and white plantation "family," and the American School of Ethnology with its pseudo-science of race, arose to defend the "peculiar institution" in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

Early Americanists work in the shadow of cultural narratives that took shape during the nineteenth century and reflect the historical circumstances of that later period. Nowhere are these differences between earlier and later approaches more exigent than in discussions of race. Thomas Jefferson understood slavery, not as creating a plantation "family," but as the equivalent of race war. He was under no illusion that the human beings he owned were happy in his possession: this is the underlying meaning of his 1820 statement that "we have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other."

Relationships with Native American communities shifted as well as the nineteenth century progressed. For decades the European colonies were small outposts in Indian Country, their survival at least partly the result of devastating virgin soil epidemics that decimated their Native neighbors. The balance of power later shifted, and Indian Removal became official government policy after 1830. In 1880 the United States covered far more territory, and had displaced far more Indigenous communities, than it had in 1780. Settler colonialism was a process, not a matter of identity or a permanent state of mind: this point is well made in many of the essays collected in a special issue of the *William and Mary Quarterly* 76.3 (July 2019).

I can touch only briefly on another approach to the issues raised by the 1619 project. In February the Woodson Center launched the 1776 Project, featuring essays by scholars and journalists. The Center's founder, Robert Woodson, is African American, as are the great majority of the writers whose work appears on the site.

The contributors approach the issue of slavery from different angles and experiences, but they share a goal of challenging the teleology embedded in the 1619 Project. The 1776 Project is neither as prominent nor as well-resourced as the 1619 Project, and the site can be glitchy.

In selecting a sample, I chose two essays by the Columbia linguist and literature professor John T. McWhorter, whose work I have long admired. The first is here, and the second is here. There are many more essays available on the site itself.

The issues raised by this debate about the shape and tendencies of the past are of critical interest for us as citizens and as teachers of early American literature and history. I suspect that many of us are wrestling with how to address these topics, particularly in connection with the Black Lives Matter movement. The Society of Early Americanists will continue to be a place where open, respectful discussion and evidence-based scholarship are protected and valued, on these issues as on all others.

Sandra M. Gustafson
Executive Coordinator

Announcements

SEA Junior Scholars' Mentoring Program

This year the SEA Junior Scholars Caucus has the pleasure of rolling out a new mentorship program that will allow senior scholars to aid and guide junior members as they navigate the field. Currently, the academic job market is immensely unsteady and leaves prospective applicants feeling defeated and overwhelmed. Junior scholars can often feel lost amid a large sea of academic expectations, and this is part of the reasoning for creating the SEA Mentorship Program. As careers in the humanities are dependent on networking, we hope to link junior scholars with mentors who can provide them with positive, concrete advice and feedback on their scholarship, teaching, and job materials. That might include,

- Help with writing, from grant applications to syllabi to thesis chapters
- Advice on the job market, collaborative ventures, and workplace professionalism
- A phone call, coffee meet-up, or Zoom meeting to share ideas
- Provide feedback on application documents
- Consultations on specific teaching or professionalization concerns

Prospective mentors should fill out the appropriate form here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScBztS1licVLh_x8b7YM5EzoIwvuggcvreMk7l1ZbIoMoODgw/viewform

Please contact Kaitlin Tonti, SEA Junior Scholars Co-Chair, at kaitlin.tonti@shu.edu if you have any questions or desire further information.

The Age of Phillis: A SEA Common Reading Initiative

The 'common reading' experience has become a popular strategy in U.S. colleges and universities in recent years to help students acclimate to academic life. The experience simultaneously creates a sense of community centered on a single book and showcases diversity of thought as students share their various interactions with the text. Building on the benefits of this approach, members of the SEA Program Committee are excited to organize a common reading initiative as part of the 12th biennial meeting, to be held online in March 2021. The featured text is *The Age of Phillis*, by award-winning poet Honorée Jeffers.

Inspired by the work of Phillis Wheatley Peters, *The Age of Phillis* is based on Jeffers's fifteen years of archival research into Wheatley Peters's life. Importantly, the book considers more fully the world of Wheatley Peters before and after enslavement. Most often, studies of this early black poet center on those years of her life when she was deemed the human property of the Wheatley family, between 1761 and 1773, a time span that included the publication of her *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*. While addressing those all-important years of enslavement, *The Age of Phillis* is equally committed to acknowledging the life of Wheatley Peters beyond the parameters of enslavement. The book begins with a series of poems that imagine what life would have been like for a little girl (and her parents) growing up in the Senegambia region of West Africa, said to be Wheatley Peters's birthplace. . Jeffers also includes a series of poems that reconstruct the vital social networks Wheatley Peters maintained during and after enslavement with figures, including her husband, John Peters.

Importantly, the poems here push beyond discussions about the virtues (or lack thereof) of John Peters and emphasize instead marriage as an agentive act for Wheatley Peters, one that allowed her to shed one name, "Phillis Wheatley," and embrace another, Phillis Peters. While largely composed of verse, *The Age of Phillis* ends with a critical reflection essay about the rewarding but sometimes frustrating archival work that is necessary to highlight the humanity, the lives of early black Americans like Phillis Wheatley Peters.

Given that *The Age of Phillis* provides a nicely readable, informative reconstruction of Wheatley Peters and given Jeffers's critical and creative foundations in early African American cultural studies, the initiative's organizers agreed that the book is a solid choice for the SEA common reading initiative, one that can excite a new generation of scholars and engage them in the world of early (African-) American culture.

SEA is collaborating with administrators and faculty at colleges and universities in the Atlanta area, particularly those at the Atlanta University Center (Spelman, Morehouse, and Clark Atlanta) and Emory University, which originally was selected as the venue for the conference before the pandemic led organizers to move the conference entirely online. Faculty and administrators will incorporate Jeffers's and Wheatley's poetry in their summer, fall and spring curriculums through course work, independent study, and book clubs. Although the program committee has reached out specifically to schools in the Atlanta area, participation is welcome from any administrators and faculty interested in reading and assigning the texts to students.

In terms of assignments, faculty could do something as simple as have students compare/contrast the texts of Wheatley Peters and Jeffers. They might ask students to discuss points of craft and genre or talk about how historical moments and figures inform modern-day creative works. Students might discuss how and why Wheatley works as a muse for present-day creative writers.

To assist with course design, members of the 2021 SEA Program African American Panel Stream subcommittee (Tara Bynum, Brigitte Fielder, and Cassander L. Smith) are working in collaboration with Jeffers to craft teaching resources, things like images, timelines, bibliographies, lesson plans, and discussion prompts. However administrators and faculty choose to incorporate the texts, the idea is to prepare students to participate in the SEA conference in any of the following ways:

- There will be a colloquium-style plenary, tentatively scheduled for the opening evening of the conference. During that plenary, presented virtually, Jeffers will read from her collection. Then, Jeffers and students will participate in a dialogue about Wheatley Peters. Students will be able to pose questions to Jeffers about her process and/or present their own ideas about the works.

- With the move of the 2021 conference to an all-virtual format, students will be able to contribute a variety of digital and multimodal projects for virtual display on the conference website.

- Depending on interest, there is also the possibility of student-led panels that would run concurrently with other panel sessions.

Broadly speaking, the next biennial conference seeks to engage early Americanists deliberately in African American Studies as well as Latinx and Native and Indigenous Studies, while aiming to make our society and the field overall more inclusive (and to have conference attendance reflect the diversity of scholarly subjects discussed). This reading initiative speaks to SEA's mission of "furthering the exchange of ideas and information among scholars of various disciplines who study the literature and culture of early America to 1830."

It does this in two respects. First, it encourages the increased presence of academics of color and panel topics involving communities of color by collaborating specifically with administrators, faculty and students at historically black colleges and universities. Second, the initiative aims to introduce undergraduates to the field while providing them opportunities to pursue and present research.

Those interested in participating in the common reading initiative, can sign up at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Hkr9fWMcJRDewauAjfIzy-ZHxqYN40uZ0nQ_EjUIiqA/edit?usp=sharing or contact the initiative's organizers and SEA program committee members:

Patrick Erben, University of West Georgia, perben@westga.edu

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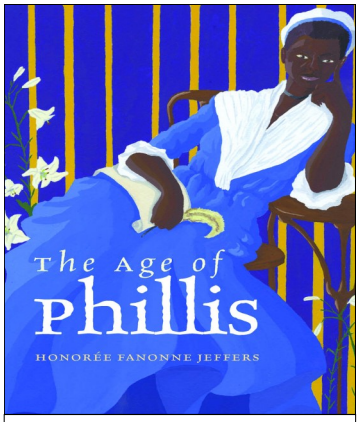
Cassander Smith
University of Alabama



Cover of *The Age of Phillis*

SEA and SEA Jr. Scholars Business Meetings

The SEA business meeting that was scheduled to take place at the Special Topics Conference in Exeter in June will now be held virtually on September 11, 2020, at 2:00 pm Eastern (NYC) time via Zoom.

Immediately following the general business meeting, the SEA Jr. Scholars Caucus will hold its business Meeting, also in Zoom.

The Executive Committee will send a draft agenda to the membership by August and then take any requests for additional agenda items.

SEA Statement to the Membership and Early Americanist Community

We, the executive committee of the Society of Early Americanists, express our profound grief over and condemnation of the brutal killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the multitude of victims of racist violence before them. As scholars and teachers of early American literature, history, society, and culture, we are horrified by the pernicious continuation of racial injustice, inequality, dehumanization, and oppression. In sharing these words, we are aware of the inadequacy of any statement.

Yet we know that we must not remain silent but must contribute to knowledge, truth, and change. We understand that both words and actions matter; all must be chosen wisely, carefully, and—above all—with humanity. We deeply care about all of our members, colleagues, and students, but we commit ourselves especially to everyone who has not been heard, seen, or valued.

The mission of the Society of Early Americanists—"to further the exchange of ideas and information among scholars of various disciplines who study the literature and culture of America to approximately 1830"—directs us to focus on the very roots of American racism and white supremacy, especially the institutionalization of slavery and racism as well as the systematic genocide of Indigenous peoples.

This mission also trains our attention on the early American origins of anti-slavery, abolitionism, and anti-racism as well as the flourishing of African American, Indigenous, and Latin American literatures that many early Americanists teach, study, and help recover.

Yet we must do more than develop our expert knowledge of injustice and resistance in our past; we must deploy this knowledge for change and, most importantly, we must make sure that our own organization does not perpetuate—intentionally or not—practices of exclusion. Concretely, this means that our organization needs to become as diverse as the literary, historical, and cultural subjects we study.

Toward this goal, we are taking some important steps now and in the immediate future. We also invite our members to articulate to us the work they wish to see; we particularly encourage colleagues in positions of privilege to redouble their efforts as agents for change. Currently, we are working to make our next biennial conference (March 2021) a catalyst for further advancing our society and our field toward diversity, anti-racism, and equity. Indeed, the fitting theme of our conference is "The Many Pasts, Presents, and Futures of Early America."

As we are meeting in a state that perpetrated (with the Creek and Cherokee removals) one of the worst racist pogroms in American history and that propagated the horrors of white supremacy through slavery, segregation, and racist violence, we also recognize Atlanta's role in particular as the epicenter of the modern Civil Rights Movement and hub of African American culture, activism, and business.

Similarly, we would like to harness our own work and voices to build paths toward equity, justice, and empowerment. We seek to further these goals by:

- Shaping the conference through the collaboration of a diverse program committee (www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/conferences/sea-2021-biennial/program).
- Continuing (from previous SEA conferences) dedicated panel streams on African American, Native & Indigenous, and LatinX Studies, as well as Anti-Racism & Equity (organized by the SEA's Ad-Hoc Committee on Anti-Racism & Equity).
- Offering keynote addresses by African American and LatinX speakers.
- Featuring a Native and Indigenous Studies keynote plenary panel, focused on Southeastern Native American history.
- Consulting with tribal leaders and scholars.
- Organizing the SEA's first Common Reading Initiative in cooperation with Atlanta University Center's HBCUs.
- Inviting students from AUC and any other campus/course/group adopting the common text to attend a keynote plenary reading and colloquy and to exhibit poster board research projects in a dedicated conference space.
- Collaborating with and seeking the counsel of Chief Diversity Officers at Emory University and the University of West Georgia.
- Increasing and expanding our usual travel support to make the conference more accessible to scholars of color (especially students, contingent faculty, independent scholars, and other academics who lack institutional funding).

Beyond the conference, we seek to recognize more prominently and expand the leadership and membership of academics of color in our organization, but we also acknowledge that scholars of color are often disproportionately tapped to do themselves the work of anti-racism, inclusion, and equity.

Thus, we especially urge our white colleagues to join in or rededicate themselves to this work in the SEA and other scholarly societies, in their teaching, and in their scholarship. This includes acknowledging the anti-racist scholarship and work that scholars in the field have been doing, listening to colleagues of color, being mindful of referencing the work of academics of color in their research and classrooms, collaborating with faculty of color, dialoguing with rather than for academics of color, donating to scholarship funds that benefit underrepresented groups, and mentoring junior faculty of color.

Let us work, converse, organize, and make change together. In signing this, we'd like to turn the often meaningless "Take care" into "Let's take care of each other."

Patrick Erben, SEA President
Ralph Bauer, SEA Vice President
Sandra Gustafson, SEA Executive Coordinator

SEA Scholars of the Month and Junior Scholars of the Month

Jay David Miller recently completed his Ph.D. and is currently enrolled in a postdoc at the University of Notre Dame, where he is working on his book, *Quaker Jeremiad.* Miller cites Patrick Erben, Sandra Gustafson, and Lisa Brooks as some of his inspirations.

Jay David Miller
SEA Junior Scholar of the Month
January 2020

Sandra Gustafson
SEA Scholar of the Month
February 2020

Sandra Gustafson is Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame and Executive Coordinator for the Society of Early Americanists. She is completing her new book, *A Just and Lasting Peace": Reimagining the Republic in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction.*

Kade Ivy is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Notre Dame. He recently defended his dissertation proposal in early unperformed drama and looks to Hillary Wyss and Sandra Gustafson for mentorship and inspiration. Ivy also admires Anne Bradstreet's poetry.

Kade Ivy
SEA Junior Scholar of the Month
May 2020

Thomas Hallock
SEA Scholar of the Month
June 2020

Thomas Hallock is Professor of English at the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg. He just completed *A Road Course in Early American Literature: Travel and Teaching from Atzlán to Amherst.* His current inspiration is Honorée Fanonne Jeffords' *Age of Phillis*.

Ana Schwartz, University of Texas at Austin

"So convenient a thing is it to be a *reasonable creature,*" Benjamin Franklin shilled over two centuries ago, "since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do." Franklin was probably joking. And, like many jokes, his repays serious attention. During quarantine, scholars have had their exercises of reason interrupted, slowed down, and suspended; many have had to find more creative ways to think, write, research. Most have found the opportunity to think at reason's limits. These times exhaust reason. Some limits have already been productive topics of our research. Take, for example, science's uncertain knowledge regarding the virus itself. This is a strange condition to live through, but not a new one. Abundant case studies exist of individuals engaging with unknowns of all sorts: possums, populations and plants; animals, vegetables, and minerals; sickness, and salvation itself.

What happens in the thick of the encounter with the unknown, however, quickly depletes our field's existing resources for understanding reason and its history. The present moment poses, with an intensity that can't be ignored, unrelenting examples of individuals gripped by a fear that may not be wholly conscious, who find or make reasons for everything they have a mind to do. An irrationality exists at the heart of reason that our field's epistemological turn, grant-worthiness and interdisciplinarity notwithstanding, has not satisfyingly addressed. That failing is to some degree understandable. Irrationality puzzled Franklin too.

Here he could only describe it with vague language that obstinately clung to thinking, to the mind. Still, his fervently irreverent insight quietly disturbs our own thought. My use of reason is just as susceptible as my aggressively mask-less neighbor's to be motivated by some perverse imp, something that isn't reason. This isn't to say that our responses are equivalent in moral and political consequence. They're not. But it does mean that the challenge of living together—of keeping ourselves and our neighbors alive—will require significantly more sensitivity to what happens beyond reason than early Americanist scholarship has yet modeled. Maybe these times will give us the mind to do so moving forward.

Steven W. Thomas, Wagner College

I had planned to take students to Poland over spring break to develop Wagner College's relationship with the University of Warsaw. My colleague there, anthropologist Dr. Kamil Wielecki, and I created a course on comparative postcolonialisms with his students and mine reading some of the same material. The class followed from a previous class we had done together on comparative colonialisms when Wielecki had a Fulbright at Wagner. We planned visits to museums and archives, as well as a trip to Auschwitz. We also arranged for the famous author of *Tropical Fish*, Doreen Baingana, to travel from Uganda to Poland to spend the week with our students. Dr. Wielecki and I spent a year diligently preparing this course. Needless to say, we and our students were devastated when the Coronavirus pandemic cancelled the trip.

But some positive things came out of it. To salvage the course, we invented a virtual transnational experience, connecting Wagner College with both Poland and Uganda. Using video-conferencing software (Zoom), our classes talked with Baingana in Uganda. One of the Polish students was so inspired after their on-line conversation that she immediately translated one of Baingana's stories from English into Polish and published the translation in a local on-line literary magazine ***Wizje*** (or "Visions").

My college's IT staff enabled students at the University of Warsaw to join the on-line course-management system (Moodle) so that they could collaborate with my students on graded assignments. Some of them continued their conversations on social media. Meanwhile, we facilitated several more guest-speakers on Zoom, including my history department colleague Lori Weintrob, who directs our Holocaust Center. Although the experience was not the dream that had been originally planned, there were some precious moments here and there of productive and expansive connection.

Richard S. Pressman, Professor of Emeritus of English St. Mary's University of San Antonio

Being an emeritus professor, I thank my lucky stars I do not have to teach on line! I cannot imagine teaching literature—that very human, very sensitive subject—at a distance. Even Zoom would not suffice for me. I know that my colleagues in the humanities felt greatly burdened by it, as it take so much more time. There was communicated to me a general exhaustion that was stronger than what I used to feel at academic year's end.

Even so, the major work I do, preparing texts for publication for Early American Reprints, is greatly affected. While all the texts are originally created in Word, they are then transferred to InDesign and edited therein until they reach their final form. All that work must be done in our Academic Technology lab, with the help of the experts there. The lab is, of course, shut tight. So, while four texts are in process, all final production is on hold...until who knows when.

Kathryn Gray, University of Plymouth

2020 marks the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower sailing; an anniversary that has, over the years, decades, centuries, attracted all kinds of attention and contention. As a member of the English department at the University of Plymouth (UK) and an early Americanist by trade, I've worked with partners in the cultural sector to help them develop a different approach to the anniversary, one that might enable lasting change and help them understand the multiplicity of people and voices that share this historical moment.

An approach that engages indigenous pasts and presents, and responds to contemporary indigenous voices, within these retellings in exhibitions, art works, storytelling practices, etc., has come to define the work of various projects within Plymouth UK.

So what did COVID do to this?
In some senses, the work of scholars, including me, to enable lasting cultural change in public spaces in support of decolonising a very Anglo-centric narrative has had its impact. While the exhibitions are on hold, exhibitions curated or co-curated by Wampanoag cultural leaders and intellectuals, they will emerge, once lockdown is over, and the achievements of these collaborations will forever change the way that this city approaches its colonial past.

What gives me such hope?
When the Black Lives Matter campaign began to establish traction across the US and Europe, the City Council in Plymouth agreed to rename Sir John Hawkins Square at surprising speed. This isn't the first time people have called to have the name removed from a city square. This year, a confluence of circumstances led to a different, progressive outcome.
I'd like to think that the work done to enable a comprehensive appreciation of Plymouth's colonial past over the past few years, through extensive work in the cultural sector, played a part in taking local politicians on this journey to recommend this change. We will never know….but, as I say, I have hope. Only time will tell how we deal with Drake!

While we're in lockdown and museums are closed, I've worked with the curator of Legend and Legacy to develop online material, Q and A sessions and discussions, giving us a chance to share our thinking about Mayflower, our approach, and the exhibition that developed as a result of that approach. There's more to come and for someone who has no social media presence at all, I'm coming around to Facebook live, podcasting, and online discussion forums.

Conferences:
SEA's own special topic conference should have been held in Exeter and Plymouth this June, with a final session in Plymouth, a roundtable called "Legacies and Futures," as a response to the Mayflower anniversary and discussion about where we, as a community of scholars and practitioners, go from here.

The conversation has found another outlet: as part of Plymouth's Arts Institute, I'm curating online digital content from the original line up of contributors, to share as part of a larger Legacies and Futures theme that the Institute has taken up in response to the Mayflower anniversary, Covid, and BLM.

The only Mayflower conference that's going ahead, at least of those that I know of, is in Leiden, in August 2020, and I'm delighted. It's all online and who knows what this new way of working will feel like; I'm sure it will demand a different kind of attention, focus, and patience, but it feels like a light at the end of a tunnel right now. Thanks to Leiden University for steering this through.

Benjamin Franklin

Ben Franklin's World:
Episode 278: Sarah Pearsall, "Polygamy: An Early American History"

The latest edition of BFW features Sarah Pearsall, a University Teaching Officer, Fellow, and Historian at the University of Cambridge, who will discuss the surprising history of polygamy in early North America, with details from her book, *Polygamy: An Early American History*. (from https:/benfranklinsworld. com/episode-278-sarah-pearsall-polygamy-an-early-american-history/). Ben Franklin's World is hosted by Liz Covart and sponsored by the Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture.

Less than a mile from my home stands a Pennsylvania historical marker at a busy intersection in northeast Washington County. It stands amidst the commotion of the crossroads and the noise of speeding vehicles on an elevated interstate fifteen yards away. One of the intersecting thoroughfares, Morganza Road, bears the name of the man commemorated on the sign, George Morgan (1743-1810). Historical markers are difficult to read in a moving vehicle, but the rush hour crawl at the Morganza intersection has made the Morgan marker familiar to many travelers:

> Here was the home, 1796-1810, of the noted Indian trader and agent. Site is marked by a monument. It was here that Morgan was visited by Aaron Burr. His conspiracy was first made known to Jefferson by Colonel Morgan.

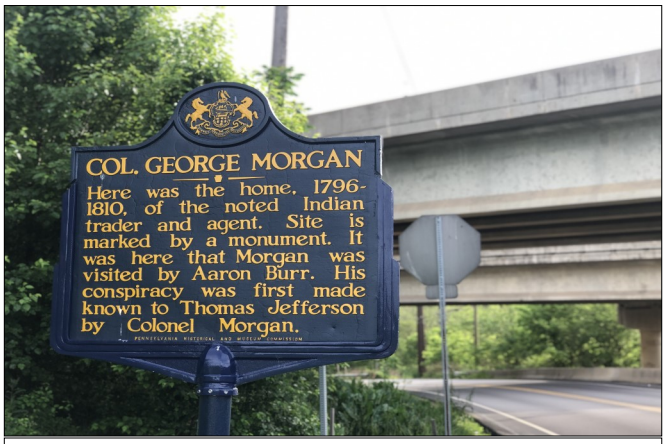
I have frequently come across Morgan's work as an Indian agent in my reading, but the details of the conspiracy were largely unknown to me until the marker prompted me to learn more. Further investigation revealed, unsurprisingly, the veracity of a marker about early America can be a bit dubious.

Like the marker, I will breeze over Morgan's early life so I can attend to Burr's visit in 1806, the alleged conspiracy, and questions about the marker's content. In his early life Morgan learned about trade and commerce in his hometown of Philadelphia and later moved his business to Fort Pitt, where he developed extensive trade networks and his own land interests. His trade with Ohio Indians, especially the Delaware and Shawnee, in the 1760s and 1770s made him a good choice to serve as a U.S. Indian agent at Fort Pitt during the Revolution. For his fair dealings, the Lenape bestowed on Morgan the name Tamenend ("truth teller"). Soon after the terms of the U.S. treaty with the Delaware in 1778 disintegrated, Morgan re-centered his life in the east.

After the Ohio Indian wars in the 1790s, George and Mary Morgan moved their family to western Pennsylvania in 1796 to a large tract they named Morganza, located 15 miles south of Pittsburgh and straddling Strabane and Cecil townships. George and his brother John had owned almost 10,000 acres of land in Westmoreland and Washington counties, and when John died in 1789, George inherited all of it. The retired colonel sold most of the acreage but kept 1,100 acres for himself to pursue ardently the cultivation of many crops and the lifestyle of a gentleman farmer. For labor, he continued his practice from his previous property, Prospect Farm (now part of Princeton's campus), with slaves and wage earners working the estate.

The Morgans' level of comfort changed in August 1806 when Burr arrived to see an old friend. What exactly happened during the two-day visit is not altogether clear, but the events rattled the republic and, more to the point here, stirred lively historical debate. The events at Morganza led to Burr's trial for treason and, ultimately, his acquittal. Despite the ruling, whether or not Burr was conspiring to use military action to break the western states from the Union has not been settled. The historical marker suggests he was guilty, while the trial continues in monographs about Burr's life and the conspiracy.

The stenographic record of the 1807 Burr trial, specifically the testimony of George and his two sons, provides evidence about what allegedly happened at Morganza. The elder son, John, a New Jersey militia general, testified that en route to Morganza, Burr asked him about the size and readiness of the militia at the nearby town of Washington. Burr raised the topic again with George, who testified, "After dinner, I spoke of our fine country . . . between the Allegheny mountains and the Ohio; and that by and by we should have Congress in this neighborhood, or at Pittsburgh." Burr replied, "No, never, for in less than five years, you will be totally divided from the Atlantic states." Morgan said that Burr continued, "All that was wanting was a leader in whom they could place confidence [to] carry them through." Morgan strongly objected, but Burr persisted, "With five hundred men New-York could be taken . . . [W]ith two hundred, Congress could be driven into the Potomac River." The elder son, John, balked at the statement: "I'll be damned, sir, if you could take the little town of Cannonsburg [*sic*] with that force." Burr then tried to recruit the younger son, Tom, who testified that he declined Burr's invitation to join the military expedition. And late that same evening—true to Mary's hunch—Burr again approached George, only to be rejected again.



Plaque Where Morgan's House Stood

The next day Burr importuned John yet again. John testified that Burr inquired "if I thought I could raise a regiment in Washington county." Burr said some local men who had joined the last armed uprising against federal overreach, the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794, had pledged themselves to his plan. Hearing this, John urged his father to notify President Jefferson about Burr's treachery. Morgan did so, writing a now-missing letter to Jefferson on August 29. During the trial a year later, Burr rebutted the Morgans' testimony as a heap of lies. And through skillful cross-examination, the Morgans' testimony was splintered by admissions about Burr's tongue-and-cheek tone and George's worsening forgetfulness.

Other matters related to the plot and trial are worth exploring. The historical marker's note that Jefferson first learned about the conspiracy from Morgan's letter seems erroneous. In his reply to Morgan in early 1807 and in his letter to the colonel's daughter-in-law in 1822, Jefferson did state the primacy of Morgan's notification in exposing Burr's "mad project." Yet Jefferson was evidently mistaken, for by the time he received Morgan's letter on September 15 he had already possessed more than a dozen letters about Burr's plot.

More broadly, the events at Morganza recharged an ongoing wrangle between Jefferson and Burr, who were at odds since the early 1790s. Like Washington, Adams, and Hamilton, Jefferson did not trust Burr, and the contentious election of 1800 exacerbated the situation. Sharing the Democratic Republican ticket, Jefferson and Burr handily defeated the Federalists but tied in electoral votes. After much political ado, the thirty-sixth ballot in Congress ended the stalemate, making Jefferson president and Burr vice president, an office he held until 1804, the year he killed Hamilton and thus permanently tarnished his reputation.

A key piece of evidence in the conspiracy case was a cipher letter supposedly written by Burr to General James Wilkinson, who was to lead military campaigns in the enterprise. The letter, which Wilkinson deciphered from codes he and Burr had shared, outlines the first phases of military action and was, therefore, attributed to Burr. The letter was a deciding factor for Jefferson, who was so convinced of Burr's maleficence that he proclaimed him guilty of treason in his public addresses, including his Special Message to Congress in January 1807, in advance of the grand jury indictment in June 1807.

The authorship of the letter, however, remains uncertain. Burr was largely presumed to be the author until 1983 when Mary Jo Kline and Joanne Wood Ryan argued that the letter *might* have been composed by Jonathon Dayton. This view accounts for the grand jury testimony of Burr associate Samuel Swartout, who said the letter he delivered to Wilkinson was in Dayton's hand.

Subsequently, Burr scholars have taken various positions on the matter. Lomask removes any doubt from Kline and Ryan's findings to say that Dayton was the author.

Melton takes the opposite position, not even mentioning Dayton in the context of the encoded epistle and concluding that in the letter "Burr had committed himself in writing." Isenberg speaks with conviction that "in fact" Dayton wrote the letter. Lewis surmises the letter could have been penned by Dayton but really authored by Burr, who might have guided Dayton through encryption to deflect suspicion from himself. Other possibilities exist about Wilkinson shading a transcription to preclude revelations about his role in the plans to seize Louisiana Territory for the western states.

Ultimately, the trial, with Chief Justice John Marshall presiding, did not convict Burr. The jury foreman reported, "Burr is not proved to be guilty under this indictment." Burr then demanded a "guilty" or "not guilty" verdict, which Marshall declined. In his lengthy opinion, Marshall wrote that proving treason requires that "an overt act of levying war . . . must be proved by two witnesses." In this case, Marshall said, "It is not proved by a single witness." Morgan was dissatisfied with the ruling, and the historical marker supports him with an extralegal suggestion that Burr was guilty.

Monument to Morgan

While Burr lived under the shadow of the trial, Morgan lived comfortably in his remaining years at Morganza until his death in 1810, with Mary passing fifteen years later. By the time she died, portions of the estate had been sold to homesteaders. In the 1870s, about 500 acres of the Morganza acreage were converted into the Pennsylvania Training School, a reform institution, which added a home for the intellectually disabled in 1962. In the first decade of the 2000s, the land was repurposed again to become part of Southpointe, a sprawling 800-acre business park with massive, gleaming buildings that loom large over a small marker and a monument recalling Morgan and a time of upheaval in the young nation.

1. For Morgan's diplomacy as an Indian agent, see Gregory Schaaf, *Wampum Belts & Peace Trees* (Fulcrum, 1990).

2. The townships were incorporated in 1781. Strabane was split into north and south townships in 1831.

3. See Max Savelle, *George Morgan: Colony Builder* (Columbia UP, 1932), pp. 230-33.

4. See Milton Lomask, *Aaron Burr: The Conspiracy and Years of Exile, 1805-1836* (Farrar, 1982); Buckner F. Melton, Jr., *Aaron Burr: Conspiracy to Treason* (Wiley, 2002); Nancy Isenberg, *Fallen Founder* (Penguin, 2007); James E. Lewis, Jr., *The Burr Conspiracy* (Princeton UP, 2017); Oliver Perry Sturm, *The Conspiracy Against Burr* (Story Arts Media, 2019).

5. Canonsburg is less than two miles from the Morganza site. Founded in the 1790s, the town was named after Colonel John Canon, a Washington militia leader during the Revolution and a participant in Colonel William Crawford's 1782 Indian expedition.

6. Quoted in Lewis 46.

7. Jefferson probably dismissed letters written by Federalists and ignored others that identified men in his own party as complicit in Burr's conspiracy (Lomask 125-127).

8. Melton 216.

9. Quoted in Lomask 281.

Keat Murray
California University of Pennsylvania

Digital Early America
Moravian Soundscapes

Moravian Soundscapes is a digital companion project to the book, *Moravian Soundscapes: A Sonic History of the Moravian Missions in Early Pennsylvania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020). Through sound recordings, digital and historic maps, archival materials, and pictures, the project documents and reconstructs the soundscapes of eighteenth-century Moravian mission communities in eastern Pennsylvania.

As a first-time book author, this project was inspired by my desire to use my background in historical performance and sound design to create a truly "sonic" history of early Moravian communities within the context of the Seven Year's War and the American Revolution. Through digital storytelling, I hoped to articulate a compelling sonic rendering of this unprecedented period of cultural shift and physical copresence between European settlers and Native nations and communities by incorporating sensory data and knowledge in ways that would be especially encouraging of participatory and place-based learning.

Readers are therefore encouraged to follow along with the book's narrative on the *Moravian Soundscapes* website through a series of sound maps containing soundscape compositions, field recordings, and historically-informed recordings of spoken texts and hymns in Mohican, German, Delaware, and English. The sound maps also contain Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates, providing readers with the option to literally listen and learn "in place" by visiting the locations discussed in the book.

The sonic content of the *Moravian Soundscapes* website is based upon the contributions of a team of collaborators, and two years of fieldwork and spatial reconstruction using archival documents, archaeological data, and geo-rectification of historical maps against modern satellite data. During the fieldwork and reconstruction process, our team conducted a series of acoustic studies and produced field recordings in extant Moravian buildings, such as the eighteenth-century *Gemeinhaus* (Moravian worship hall) in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Bell House

We also collected decibel readings at approximately 5-foot intervals from the various sound sources we recorded, and processed them through a SPreAD model for studying sound decay over distance. For instance, a rasterized image of a 1758 map of Bethlehem by the Moravian cartographer, Christian Gottlieb Reuter, allowed us to assign terrain values based upon Reuter's topographical markings to create a fairly accurate representation of Bethlehem's topography. We then assigned values to the pixels of the rasterized image based upon the presence of agricultural fields, coniferous and deciduous forests, grass lands, shrub lands, water, and urban or built environments to produce detailed "sound boundary" maps of eighteenth-century Bethlehem.

Our team also worked to incorporate the sound environments of places that no longer existed. For inspiration, we turned to the work of electronic composers, Barry Truax and Hildegard Westerkamp. Both Truax and Westerkamp have simulated acoustic environments through "soundscape compositions" created from digitally layered field recordings or pre-recorded sound samples, creating what Truax has termed a "representation of acoustic environments." My collaborators and I used this method to create soundscape compositions that incorporated recordings of historic tools, musical instruments, cookware, and other elements of Moravian material culture, and field recordings of hymn singing and other sounded aspects of Moravian religious culture.

We also incorporated German and Mohican sermons that were read and recorded by Paul Peucker and Christopher Harvey—historical researchers familiar with eighteenth-century German and Mohican pronunciation. Finally, early music students in the historical performance program at Florida State University assisted us in recording hymns in German, Mohican, English and Delaware. The hymns were mixed into various soundscapes and also used to recreate a Mohican-Moravian *Singstunde* [singing meeting], a worship service based upon improvisation of hymn verses.

It is my hope that this exploration of the sonic history of the Moravian missions can contribute to a broader understanding of "the sensory worlds of early America," to borrow from Richard Hoffer.

Gnadenhütten, PA

Certainly, sounds and silences possessed the power to unite and divide, to produce understandings and misunderstandings, and to constitute adaptive or destructive strategies for navigating an era characterized by equal measures of violence and hope.

The sonic stories of Moravian communities reflect and re-sound the lived experiences of the German and Native Moravians who inhabited these shared spaces for a brief time in the mid-eighteenth century. Listening to these stories teaches us about the inextricable intertwining of the aural dimension of landscapes and places with issues of cultural, political, and religious sovereignty.

To tell those stories, to sound them, my collaborators and I have been continually reminded throughout this project of the benefits of thinking creatively about the practice of history. As a historian, musician, and sound artist, I have been especially inspired by Craig Womack's vision of interactive, imaginative historical work, facilitated through digital story-telling: "History means very little until we develop a relationship with it that in this cyber-age we might call 'interactive' . . . I am talking about more than developing a capacity to empathize with people from our pasts.

This has to do with placing ourselves inside their stories, becoming participants in history, more specifically, turning our selves into characters in a story. History must be dreamed. It has to be authored. It must be turned into a fiction before it can ever be true. . . . This is the responsibility of any human being who desires an ethical relationship to her past."

It is my hope that the sonic storytelling and geospatial techniques employed in the *Moravian Soundscapes* project will become helpful frameworks for future projects that explore the intangible cultural heritage and soundscapes of #VastEarlyAmerica. As a new SEA member, I'd especially like to offer my thanks to Patrick Erben and Mary Balkun for their support of this project. I'm grateful for this opportunity to share the work of the *Moravian Soundscapes* team with SEA members and the larger community of fellow early Americanists.

1. Richard Hoffer, *Sensory Worlds of Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

2. Craig S. Womack, "Theorizing American Indian Experience," in *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*. Craig S. Womack, Daniel Heath Justice, and Christopher B. Teuton, eds. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 372–374.

Sarah Eyerly
Florida State University

In 1793, we blamed St. Domingue, black self-determination, and noxious miasmas. In 2020, we blamed China, communism, and airborne viral particulates. In 1793, we accused the French and black Americans of conspiring against us. In 2020, Bill Gates and the World Health Organization. In 1793, we claimed black Americans were exploiting white deaths for profit; in 2020, we policed black Americans more aggressively for breaking stay-at-home orders, lifting these restrictions just as we realized how disproportionately Americans of color were dying. Vinegar; Clorox wipes. Rush; Fauci. Bloodletting; hydroxychloroquine.

Our current coronavirus pandemic is complex, but it's not without precedent. In 1793 and for many more years after that, a yellow fever pandemic ravaged the Western hemisphere from the Caribbean through the new United States' Eastern seaboard, disrupting lives, economies, political systems, medical knowledge, history, and literature.

In the fall of 2019, I taught an undergraduate class on American literature, disease, disability, and disorder, ranging from Boston's smallpox inoculation controversy through the 1793 yellow fever pandemic to *Moby Dick* and *Beloved*. As we explored beauty, normalcy, pain, and their intersections with race, gender, and class, I reminded students that illness and disability are omnipresent, something many people can afford to ignore periodically, but that no one can avoid completely.

Yet even I didn't realize just how soon we'd be reminded that pandemic disease is not the stuff of history, medical ignorance, tropical climates, or developing economies. It is not something that only happens to people way back then or way over there. It is not something that can be explained by a simple formula or prefabricated narrative. Rather, pandemic disease is here and now and complex, embedded in and interacting with other complex systems like racism, partisan politics, medical methodology, and scientific education. Whether here and now or there and then, we must work to understand and communicate such complexity without reducing it.

Systems-mapping, a problem-solving tool frequently employed in interdisciplinary settings, attempts to understand and solve problems by identifying and affirming their complexity. While rules vary, all systems maps use arrows and feedback loops to illustrate the many contributing factors to a problem over time. vectors or supply chains. As such, it enables and encour-ages abstract, structural thinking that magnifies rather than reduces the complexity of any given problem. Importantly, the systems map asks thinkers to focus on the problem itself rather than on what their expertise would normally address. For example, a trained literature student examining the coronavirus pandemic might gravitate towards the WHO's messaging or media representation, but the systems map would ask her to consider less-familiar objects of study like disease vectors or supply chains. As such, it enables and encourages abstract, structural thinking that magnifies rather than reduces the complexity of any given problem.

In my literature class last fall, the systems map helped students understand the complex systems that contributed to the 1793 yellow fever pandemic, including the French and Haitian Revolutions, chattel slavery, conflicting medical theories on contagion and climate, Federalism, as well as the works of literature that charted that complexity, like Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond; Or, the Secret Witness* (1799). The systems map, therefore, enabled students to imagine, illustrate, and apprehend the complexity of early American life and literature.

Because systems mapping requires some knowledge of the problem at hand, I began this exercise by assigning the first few chapters of *Ormond* and engaging students in collective brainstorming and light research. First, we brainstormed two terms in small groups—yellow fever and the year 1793—free-associating and charting any idea that came to mind no matter how distant the relation.

I expected students to know little about yellow fever and more about 1793 (the general era, if not the precise year), so I encouraged them to draw on what they had learned from earlier in the semester, other classes, and outside of the classroom. Next, we generated a messy, full-class brainstorm on these terms, discovering intersecting nodes that needed more investigation, such as epidemiology, economics, and race. I grouped students according to interest on particular nodes and asked them to conduct an initial literature search for homework. They did not need to read thoroughly on the topic yet; rather, they were investigating what they might need to research more extensively.

Equipped with this brainstorm, research, and even more of *Ormond*, we spent the next class period drafting the systems map. For example, the group on epidemiology had discovered that the virus originated in Africa and was spread by mosquitoes, which intersected with the groups on economics and race who had discovered that the slave trade had introduced the disease to the Americas.

Yet, even as the pandemic system grew clearer, we discovered more questions to be researched, including early Atlantic beliefs about African immunity and fears of republican excesses and cultural decline. As our map took shape, we identified feedback loops that felt all too familiar: racist and colonial systems created real inequities that confirmed and ossified those racist and colonial systems. We expanded and scrutinized the pandemic's complexity as we read *Ormond*, regularly returning to and revising our systems map. Such revision emphasized that the system was never fully understood and our learning never yet complete.

Ultimately, systems mapping charts intertwined and entangled systems, rendering complexity visible but not reducible. In my class, it helped plot early American life, including the complex historical context of early American literature, and it visualized *Ormond*'s winding, difficult plot. Systems mapping can also be used to brainstorm for writing assignments, to narrow the scope of an argument, and to identify where more research needs to be conducted. As such, it's a portable tool, useful in other academic contexts and non-academic projects and problems as well. As our culture oscillates between revering, ignoring, and manipulating our past, systems mapping offers a pedagogical instrument for helping our students combat reductive and simplistic narratives about early America and for embracing the period's complexity.

Mariah Crilley
Virginia Commonwealth University

"Magnolia Warbler"

Interested In Writing a Piece for SEAN?

We are always looking for SEA members who are willing to contribute to our featured columns:

- Early American Historical Sites
- Digital Early America
- Teaching Early America: Focus on Pedagogy

Other topics of general interest are also welcome.

If you or someone you know is interested, please send a brief inquiry including your name, institution, and idea for a column to the SEA newsletter editor, Mary Balkun at mary.balkun@shu.edu.

Calls for Papers

Society for the Study of American Women Writers Triennial Conference
American Women Writers: Ecologies, Survival and Change
November 3-7, 2021
Baltimore, Maryland
The call for papers will be coming soon and can be found at: https://ssawwnew.wordpress.com/2020/06/10/save-the-date-2021-ssaww-triennial-conference/

The Southeastern American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies is pleased to announce that instead of hosting its annual meeting in Fort Myers, FL as originally planned in February/March 2021, the organization will instead move forward with a fully virtual conference.

To submit a panel or individual proposal, please send abstracts of no more than 300 words to Dr. Bryan Rindfleisch (bryan.rindfleisch@marquette.edu). The deadline for fully-formed panel proposals is **October 31, 2020**, and the deadline for individual abstracts is **December 1, 2020**.

In addition, applicants may propose an idea for a panel topic that can be circulated to interested parties. This type of proposal requires a panel title/ topic, a short description, and the panel organizer's name and email. The deadline for panel topic proposals is **October 31, 2020**.

Call for Essays or Collections of Essays

Bucknell University's series, **Transits: Literature, Culture, Thought 1650-1850**, invites expressions of interest for essays or collections of essays that highlight the scholarship of teaching the long eighteenth century including the Romantic era. Proposals for edited volumes need not have firm commitments from authors at this stage, but should detail possible contributors and topics.

The long eighteenth century was a period of complex interest in the processes of learning and education, exploration of the natural and human-made world, and questions about who should be educated, in what manner, and for what purposes. Many of our ideas about pedagogical projects and processes have their roots in the period—for good or ill—and these same pedagogical questions drive our scholarship and vice versa.

Ernest Boyer argued in 1990 for the value of the scholarship of teaching and learning: "The work of the professor becomes consequential only as it is understood by others. … knowing and learning are communal acts. … great teachers create a common ground of intellectual commitment. They stimulate active, not passive learning and encourage students to be critical, creative thinkers, with the capacity to go on learning … (*Scholarship Reconsidered*, 23-24).

Thirty years later, in this moment of pandemic pedagogy and cultural reckoning, our methods of delivery, curriculum, and even parameters of expertise are all under pressure. It thus seems both timely and essential to ask *how we teach the long eighteenth century now.* The *Transits* series invite expressions of interest that recognize and represent teaching as a serious scholarly activity—one that bridges the sometimes solitary and reflective work of conventional scholarship with the more communal and communicative work of teaching and learning.

Essays might consider the connections rather than the disjunctions between the work of scholarship and the work of teaching; theories of pedagogy from the long eighteenth century and their implications or revisions for our own contexts; how we teach the eighteenth century—as the period in which academic institutions were born, the period of Enlightenment and the developing idea of human rights, but also the period that institutionalized settler colonialism and slavery.

Work that engages critical pedagogical practices and pragmatic approaches as a way to think about the significance of the pedagogical act (rather than say how to teach a specific work or figure), are particularly welcomed. Interdisciplinary work or work that could be adapted into multiple fields would be of particular interest.

We particularly welcome essays and collection proposals from junior faculty and contingent faculty, who often find themselves on the "frontlines" of teaching. Additionally, *Transits* and Bucknell University Press are deeply committed to the work of equity, inclusion, and anti-racism in solidarity with the Association of University Presses and instructors and scholars of color. We warmly welcome work that explores or exemplifies inclusive teaching practices.

We welcome expressions of interest or submissions as you are able; by October 30, 2020 for fullest consideration. https://www1.bucknell.edu/script/upress/series.asp?id=33

Kate Parker, Univeristy of Wisconsin-La Crosse & Miriam L. Wallace, New College of Florida

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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, Sandra Gustafson: seacoord@gmail.com.

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

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 biyearly 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.

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.

1. "Plymouth in 1622" by W. L. Williams. Image courtesy of *Library of Congress.* www. loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/themes/colonial-america/exhibitions.html.

2. "Alexander Von Humboldt." Image courtesy of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_von_Humboldt#/media/File:Stieler,_Joseph_Karl_-_Alexander_von_Humboldt_-_1843.jpg.

3. "A new map of North America, with the British, French, Spanish, Dutch & Danish dominions on that great continent; and the West India Islands." Image courtesy of https://picryl.com/media/a-new-map-of-north-america-with-the-british-french-spanish-dutch-and-danish

4. *The Age of Phillis* by Honorée Fanonne Jeffers. Image courtesy of www.amazon.com.

5. Jay David Miller. Photo courtesy of *Society of Early Americanists*. www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/.

6. Sandra Gustafson. Photo courtesy of *Society of Early Americanists.* www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/.

7. Kade Ivy. Photo courtesy of *Society of Early Americanists*. www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/.

8. Thomas Hallock. Photo courtesy of *Society of Early Americanists.* www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/.

9. "Franklin in London, 1767." Image courtesy of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Franklin#/media/File:Benjamin_Franklin_1767.jpg

10. Plaque where Morgan's House Stood. Photo courtesy of Keat Murray.

11. Monument to Morgan. Photo courtesy of Keat Murray.

12. Bell House. Photo courtesy of Sarah Everly.

13. Gnadenhütten, PA. Photo courtesy of Sarah Everly.

14. "Magnolia Warbler," William Bartram. https://commons. wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Magnolia_warbler_bartram.jpg.