

**Southern Trans/formations**

***Southern Studies Forum***

Université d'Artois et Université Picardie Jules Verne

21-23 September 2023

**Book of Abstracts and Bios**



**Panel 1, Plantation Metamorphoses.**

**Chair: Clara Juncker (University of Southern Denmark, Odense)**

- **Peter Templeton** (Open University, UK), “The American Revolution, the 1830s, and *Horse-shoe Robinson*”

For the first few decades of the United States’ existence, Southern literary engagement with the American Revolution, while not wholly non-existent, was undoubtedly somewhat minimal and unaccomplished. Then, in the 1830s, there was a remarkable upsurge in Southern writers taking the Revolutionary War as a subject matter for their novels, with many of the most prominent Southern novelists of the day turning to the period for inspiration. This paper, which belongs to a proposed longer project examining this sudden awakening in interest on a much broader scale, proposes to examine one of these novels, John Pendleton Kennedy’s *Horse-shoe Robinson: A Tale of the Tory Ascendancy*. The goal here is essentially three-fold.

1. To explore why the Revolution establishes itself as such a central literary touchstone in the Southern imagination in this period;
2. to consider the reimagination of history and its translation into the form of the novel;
3. Finally, to investigate how this novel and the broader irruption in historical interest fits into a broader transformation in Southern identity.

The paper will draw on sources on J.P. Kennedy from the oldest to some of the newest, from H.T. Tuckerman to Andrew R. Black (by way of J.V. Ridgeley and Charles H. Brichford), plus a diverse range of sources on Southern history, culture, and identity (including Lucinda Hardwick McKethan, James Cobb, Hugh Holman, Drew Gilpin Faust, and Katherine Burnett).

**Dr Peter Templeton** is an Associate Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the Open University, UK. He is the author of *The Politics of Southern Pastoral Literature, 1785–1885: Jeffersonian Afterlives* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) and *Clerks: ‘Over the Counter Culture’ and Youth Cinema* (Routledge, 2021), as well as several articles on American Literature and culture. He is currently working on the fifth edition of *American Cultural Studies: An Introduction* with Prof. Neil Campbell, Dr Alasdair Kean, and Dr Andrew Dix, scheduled for publication in 2024.

- **Gabriel Daveau** (Nantes Université/Université de Lille, FR), “Frontier Humor and the Metamorphoses of the Old South in William Gilmore Simms’s Late Short Fiction”

This paper investigates the contributions of South Carolina writer William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870) to the imagination of the US Frontier. My contention is that his late short fiction, through a practice of Southwest humor, casts the Old South as an imaginative interface where unexpected metamorphoses can occur.

Simms's participation in the tradition of Southwest humor has received sustained critical attention, culminating in 1997 with the collection of articles *William Gilmore Simms and the American Frontier* (Collins and Guilds). Thanks to a rich use of the devices that define the genre, the writer conjures up an intricate and vivid picture of the Trans-Appalachian region in the antebellum, characterized by "the relationship of the plantation to the frontier or backwoods" (Moltke-Hansen, in Collins and Guilds 4).

I want to build on this critical tradition and explore the uses of this regional brand of humor in two short stories that were written at the tail end of his career, namely, "How Sharp Snaffles Got his Capital and His Wife" (1870) and "Bald-Head Bill Bauldy" (left in manuscript at his death and only published in 1974). Revolving around magical and exaggerated episodes in the wilderness, these are indebted for their content, structure, and narrative mode to a central nineteenth-century tall tale, "The Big Bear of Arkansas" (1841).

By reading together these stories that thirty years and a Civil War separate, I first aim to reassert the centrality of the comic mode in imagining the Old South. I will then show that these tales recast their region in a state of flux, at a cardinal crossroads of south and west, where the raconteurs' hyperbolic anecdotes smack of anarchy. This particular form of storytelling in turn leads to the symbolical blend of multiple Souths: what is human flirts with what is animal and non-human, and the Old meets the New.

**Gabriel Daveau** teaches courses in Anglophone literature as an ATER at Nantes Université. He is enrolled as a doctoral student at the Université de Lille and is a member of the CECILLE research unit. His research investigates short fiction produced by Southern writers between the years 1830-1870, with an interest for space and spatiality, and a concentration on the figure of William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870). He is currently writing a dissertation under the supervision of Ronan Ludot-Vlasak (PRISMES, Sorbonne Nouvelle), which is entitled "'Sectional' and 'National': William Gilmore Simms's short stories and the American literary canon." Between 2019 and 2022, he was the inaugural coordinator of the Institut des Amériques Southwest Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

- **Maarten Zwiers** (University of Groningen, the Netherlands), "Placemaking in the Plantationocene: Agricultural Transformations in the Mississippi Delta, 1930-1980"

This paper examines the historical connections between communities and the environment in the Lower Mississippi River Basin, specifically the racial ecologies that emerged there since the introduction of the New Deal in the 1930s through the 1970s. During this period, not only plantation agriculture in Mississippi's Delta region underwent significant change, but simultaneously, petrochemical factories began to dominate the landscape along the Mississippi River in Louisiana. The two industries became firmly interconnected in the years after World War II: the Cold War Delta plantation depended on the products manufactured by oil and petrochemical multinationals, such as fuel, herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizer. Instead of treating these two economic regions as separate entities—one based on oil drilling and the industrial production of petrochemicals, the other

on plantation agriculture—I consider them part of one and the same Plantationocene complex, with comparable racialized politics regarding labor and land. Yet within this toxic climate, placemaking initiatives developed that can be defined as counter-plantation projects. One of them was Fannie Lou Hamer’s Freedom Farm Cooperative (FFC), which started in the late 1960s with the goal of creating a more sustainable and socially just form of agriculture in the Mississippi Delta. Further downriver, in Plaquemines Parish, the Fishermen and Concerned Citizens Association (FCCA) was a comparable attempt to transform the racial ecology of the Louisiana wetlands. Such community activism and organization created alternatives to the business model of the neplantation—a model that led to species loss, environmental destruction, and the racialized displacement of people considered by planters and their allies to be a burden. Civil rights campaigns in the Agrochemical Mississippi Delta thus not only targeted racist politics and practices, but also constituted quests for multispecies justice and a transformative ethos of aquaculture and tilling the land.

**Maarten Zwiens** is Senior Lecturer of Contemporary History and American Studies at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. His research focuses on rural studies and U.S. southern studies. He is the author of *Senator James Eastland: Mississippi’s Jim Crow Democrat* (Louisiana State UP 2015) and co-editor of *Profiles in Power: Personality, Persona, and the U.S. President* (Brill 2020). His work appears in *Southern Cultures*, *The Southern Quarterly*, *The Global South*, and the *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity*. In 2022-2023 he was a visiting fellow with the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi and the New Orleans Center for the Gulf South at Tulane University. His current research project is titled “Race Land: The Ecology of Segregation.”

## **Panel 2, The Appalachian South.**

**Chair: Astrid Maes (Université Picardie Jules Verne/Université d’Angers, FR)**

- **Gisèle Sigal** (Université de Pau et des Pays de l’Adour, FR), “Harriette Arnow’s *The Dollmaker*: Migration, Alteration and Film Adaptation”

Harriette Arnow (1908-1986) saw herself as: “an observer and a recorder of a vanished and vanishing past”, and all her novels, although underappreciated, serve as a testimony of historical anthropological value. In her third book: *The Dollmaker*, she handles the classic theme of the American dream in terms of the contemporary confrontation of the hill culture versus urban living, a move from one culture to another. When *The Dollmaker* was published in 1954, the novel was a critically acclaimed best seller, a compelling and powerful book in its portrayal of the enduring human spirit. Through the chronicle of the World War II migration of rural hill people to an urban city, it offers a brilliant yet unpretentious depiction of the Appalachian region and its population in the early forties.

This paper will first examine the migration process in the novel, from a mountaineering, rural setting to an urban industrialized lifestyle. The reality of the nation’s past is captured in this account of a Kentucky poor white family, displaced due to economic

troubles. Reluctant to change, Gertie Nevels leaves the rural country, and the farther she goes from the hill culture, the greater the potential for the unhappy outcome, for tragedy. It will then explore alteration, a moral and spiritual transformation from hope to disillusion, and from possession to dispossession and loss. The story's downward spiral is in the line with the concept of social determinism as Gertie consistently submits to conventionally gendered expectations about womanhood. The shift from innocence and simplicity to experience and complexity mirrors a turbulent moment in time. Once in Detroit, the inability to adjust brings confusion, nostalgia and sadness. Gertie Nevels is endowed with human aspirations and plagued by economic frustrations; yet, her dilemma is true to life. Eventually, the last section will gain further insight into an adaptation process: an artistic conversion from the book to a TV movie released in 1984 where actress Jane Fonda's fierce lead performance was highly praised. We will scrutinize the reworking of the book for the TV play, and probe the Emmy-award winning literary adaptation despite some inconsistencies between the novel and the movie. By its very nature, this riveting story of migration and alteration powerfully captivates and transfigures readers and viewers; it emerges from the cultural ferment of a given time and reflects the hardships endured by rural communities whose lives were forever transformed.

**Gisele Sigal** is an Emeritus Associate Professor of English in the Pau University, Bayonne Campus south west France, where she taught Business English for more than thirty years. She also served as Head of the Business and Marketing Department for six years. Her research centres on Southern underappreciated writers at the turn of the twentieth century, such as Elizabeth Madox Roberts (who was the subject of her French Doctoral dissertation in 1996), James Still, Harriette Simpson Arnow, Edith Summers Kelley, and Ellen Glasgow. She has written several papers and has made contributions in various French, American and Polish edited collections, reviews, and journals.

- **Mae Miller Claxton** (Western Carolina University, US), “Transformational Texts: How Cherokee and Appalachian Writers Use Language to Reveal Environmental Devastation and Promote Healing in Their Works”

In the preface to *Sounds of Tohi: Cherokee Health and Well-Being in Southern Appalachia*, Lisa Lefler writes, “Little has been written about Appalachian and Cherokee histories as interconnected in a positive, symbiotic way” (xiii). Both cultures have experienced devastating “social and environmental consequences” after centuries of methodical destruction of natural resources and the removal of the Cherokee people from their homelands (xiii). As a kind of antidote to centuries of abuse, Lefler claims, “We can heal by being connected to place, language, and culture” (xiv). She and Tom Belt, Cherokee, go on to discuss how language itself can provide healing, especially the language of the Kituwah people. Lefler writes, “The language connects them with place, with the mountains of western North Carolina, with the earth, and it will provide others who settled here with a connectedness as well” (xviii).

While Lefler and Belt emphasize the healing power of the Cherokee language, I believe that Appalachian writers also see language as a way to promote healing through a process of uncovering or revealing abuse to the environment and then suggesting ways to heal from this trauma. Ann Pancake's *Strange as this Weather Has Been*, Ron Rash's poetry and novel *One Foot in Eden*, and Silas House's *Southernmost* all use environmental crises in their works to reveal human and environmental devastation. Pancake explores the topic of mountaintop removal in her work, Rash discusses the construction of a dam and the resulting flooding of a community in his novel, and House vividly describes a devastating river flood in *Southernmost*. Although none of these authors ends their works with a conventional happy ending, I would suggest that each uses the text as a path to healing.

**Mae Miller Claxton** teaches classes in Southern, Appalachian, and Native American literature at Western Carolina University in the Department of English Studies. Her scholarship focuses on Eudora Welty, Horace Kephart, Appalachian women writers, and the Native South. She has published *Conversations with Dorothy Allison* (University Press of Mississippi) and *Conversations with Ron Rash*, co-edited with Rain Newcomb. Along with co-editor George Frizzell, she published a collection of Horace Kephart's writings (University of Tennessee Press) in 2020. Articles have appeared in *Mississippi Quarterly*, *South Atlantic Review*, and *Southern Quarterly*, among others.

- **Ted Atkinson** (Mississippi State University, US), "About Dam Time: Infrastructural Development and Disruptive Temporality in TVA Novels"

In 1933, the US Congress responded to a call from President Franklin D. Roosevelt by passing the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Act. This legislation created an agency uniquely designated as a "federal corporation" charged with regional rehabilitation in an area that included most of Tennessee and parts of six other states. The endeavor addressed pressing issues on multiple fronts: flood control, agricultural reforms, soil conservation, and rural electrification. The overarching goal was to transform part of the US South by redressing decades of uneven development to bring the "backward" region in step with the nation in the march of progress shaped by modernity. A key strategy for garnering public support was to mobilize cultural production in disseminating New Deal propaganda. Through documentary films and photo-books, living newspaper stage productions, and museum exhibitions, the TVA was cast as essential for the region and a model worthy of emulation elsewhere in the US and the developing world. The primary focus was on the network of dams under construction in the Tennessee Valley to produce what the TVA promised would be a cheap, abundant, and long-term energy source in the form of hydroelectricity. A recurring temporal pattern is evident in these works, as geologic time merges with what Hannah Appel calls "infrastructural time" to set a standard of teleological progression that defines the formation of the TVA as inevitable. By the 1950s, a series of TVA novels—a subset of what Michael Truscello calls "drowned town fiction"—emerged in part as counternarratives to the state-sponsored works. Analyzing a few representative texts evinces how writers employ

aesthetic elements of the propaganda but disrupt the standard of infrastructural time. A primary means of achieving this effect is to shift the temporal frame of reference to the local people experiencing disruption and displacement and witnessing adverse environmental impacts caused by large-scale dam construction.

**Ted Atkinson** (he/him) is an associate professor of English at Mississippi State University and the editor of *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal of Southern Cultures*. Atkinson is the author of *Faulkner and the Great Depression: Aesthetics, Ideology, and Cultural Politics* (U of Georgia P, 2006) and numerous journal articles and chapters in edited collections. Atkinson's current book project, nearing completion, is titled *Monumental Designs: Infrastructure and the Culture of the Tennessee Valley Authority*.

### **Panel 3, Many Souths and Many Mouths: Representing Diversity Through Micro-Regional Foodways.**

**Chair: Stéphanie Eyrolles Suchet (CELIS/Université Clermont Auvergne, FR)**

This panel responds to the conference theme of transformations through the lens of contemporary popular food discourse by examining the ways that culinary texts respond to the challenge of representing the “Many Souths” that make up the imagined geography of the US South. Even popular food writers know that The South is too large and too diverse to be essentialized into a single cuisine or culture. Falling in line with “locavore” rhetorics, these writers come to rely on micro-regions and local foodsheds to define smaller and smaller regions of the South that can be more easily consumed. The presentations in this panel examine the ways that writers define the character and cuisine of the South's micro-regions.

- **Carrie Helms Tippen** (Chatham University, Pittsburgh, PA, US), “Imagining Micro-Regions in Southern Cookbooks”

Contemporary Southern cookbook writers must negotiate a specific rhetorical challenge when representing a distinct Southern food culture. On the one hand, their task is to essentialize a region into its unique component parts and demonstrate the “authenticity” of their cuisine. On the other hand, many of these cookbooks also want to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of the Southern community (past and present) with recognition of the many contributions to culture and cuisine from the many BIPOC and underrepresented people who live and have lived in the South. Many cookbook writers answer the challenge to simultaneously expand the diversity of the South and contract to a monolithic cuisine by focusing their attention on smaller Southern geographies: the Mississippi Delta, the Low Country, Appalachia (and sub-sets of Appalachia), urban city-centers, coastal port cities, rural communities, and other localized microregions. The turn to smaller regions allows writers to make a more convincing argument that the cuisine of a micro-region is uniformly distinct *because* it is uniquely diverse in its makeup. In this presentation, I combine some methods of

digital humanities with textual analysis to visually represent the geographies of Southern micro-regions and analyze the rhetorical strategies that writers use to discuss Southern diversity on a small scale.

**Carrie Helms Tippen** is Associate Professor of English at Chatham University in Pittsburgh, PA. Tippen is author of *Inventing Authenticity: How Cookbook Writers Redefine Southern Identity* (University of Arkansas Press, 2018) and *Pain and Pleasure in Southern Cookbooks*, forthcoming from University Press of Mississippi. She is series editor of the Ingrid G. Houck Series on Food and Foodways at UPM. Her academic work has been published in *Gastronomica*, *Food and Foodways*, *Southern Quarterly*, and *Food, Culture, and Society*.

- **Evangelia Kindinger** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany), “Cooking Up the Mountains: Appalachian Cookbooks and the Heritage Turn”

“It’s in my blood; it’s part of my DNA,” Appalachian chef Sean Brock writes in the opening remarks to his cookbook *Heritage*, published in 2014 (1). “It”—that is an appreciation for local food, for living off the land, for gardens, for preserving, and for hunting. In the Appalachian Mountains, Brock suggests, this has historically been the way to grow, prepare and eat food. Referring to the people of his hometown in Southwest Virginia, he adds that these foodways demonstrate a “very distinct way of living” (13) in Appalachia. In this talk, I turn to contemporary cookbooks dedicated to Appalachian foodways, among them Ronni Lundy’s *Victuals* (2016) and Lauren Angelucci McDuffie’s *Smoke, Roots, Mountain, Harvest: Recipes and Stories Inspired by My Appalachian Home* (2019) and their methods of creating an Appalachian culinary heritage. As I will show, cookbooks participate in the making of Appalachia as a distinctive place by means of gastroregionalism and the culinary heritage turn. In order to claim a mountain food heritage, the chosen cookbooks emphasize a culture of subsistence and foreground the figure of the mountain grand/mother who serves as an agent of heritage. These methods, I argue, are quite effective, yet they result in sidelining the importance of Cherokee and Affrilachian (a term I borrow from Frank X Walter to signify Black Appalachians) food practices for the making of heritage and Appalachia.

**Evangelia Kindinger** is Associate Professor for American Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. She is the author of *Homebound: Diaspora Spaces and Selves in Greek American Return Narratives* (Winter, 2015), editor of *The Southern Quarterly* Special Issue “Doing Southern Studies in Europe” (2022) and co-editor of the German glossary *Fat Studies. Ein Glossar* (transcript, 2022). In addition, she has co-edited the books *The Intersections of Whiteness* (Routledge, 2019) and *After the Storm: The Cultural Politics of Hurricane Katrina* (transcript, 2016). Since 2019 she co-edits the monthly academic blog *Food, Fatness and Fitness: Critical Perspectives*. She has published articles about various television programs like *Treme* and *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo*, about the fatness of Donald Trump, literature dealing with mountaintop removal in Appalachia, and American Gothic storytelling on paper and on the screen. She is currently



working on her manuscript *Fantasies of Mountain Womanhood: Femininity, Whiteness and the Making of Appalachia*.

#### **Panel 4, Southern Childhood.**

**Chair: Gérald Préher (Université d'Artois, FR)**

- **Camille Le Gall** (Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès, FR), “Translating Marginal Voices in Southern literature: The French Translation of Carson McCullers’s *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*”

In *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), Southern author Carson McCullers stages marginal characters, standing in stark contrast with the typically white, ableist, heteronormative social order of the South. While her characters appear to the reader as physically marginal, in their described corporeity or behaviors in the public and private spheres, their marginality is also conveyed through peculiar linguistics and stylistics. McCullers invokes markers of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) for most of her African American characters; the narrative voice becomes the poetic mediator of deaf mute John Singer’s sign language; and her queer characters implicitly share particular stylistics of expressivity and sensitivity. Marginality is infused in the text itself, through dialogues, internal focalisation, stylistic contagion, psycho-narration and free indirect speech. In her novel, McCullers gives a literary voice to the marginal Southerners, recentering the focus on those who were historically silenced.

In this paper, I will explore how the French translators of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* have rendered these marginal voices, and whether or not the translations allow the French readers to appreciate the subversive nature of McCullers’s characters and their voices in the context of the South. Translation challenges arise with each marginal voice in the novel: what “equivalents” can we appropriately use for AAVE in French? How do we establish, and then mirror, the consistency of queer expression in McCullers’s writing? How have the translators approached different marginal voices and the way they explicitly or implicitly appear to reader? If these marginal voices are not translated in a way that makes their original specificities apparent in the translation, how does that transform the reception of the Southern context for the target reader? How did the understanding of marginal voices evolve between the first and second translation of the novel?

**Camille Le Gall** is a French PhD student at Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès. She is writing a thesis on the transcription, translation and retranslation of marginal voices in French, in four novels from the South of the United States (*The Sound and the Fury*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *The Member of the Wedding*, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*). These marginal voices range from African-American voices, to queer, and disabled voices, and allow for the study of the translation of sociolects and idiolects, of their poetic and political dimensions in context and of the timeline of translation and retranslation in regards to these issues. She is supervised by professors Nathalie Vincent-Arnaud and Aurélie Guillain.

- **Suzanne Bray** (Université Catholique de Lille, FR), “The Witch Woman’s Revenge: Subverting Southern Gothic in Madeleine L’Engle’s ‘Poor Little Saturday’”

Transformation is a key word for discussing Madeleine L’Engle’s frequently anthologized 1956 story “Poor Little Saturday”, a tale “that combines Southern Gothic and fantasy.” It was the author’s first published work in the fantasy genre and led to her writing her best-known novel, *A Wrinkle in Time*. It is also the work that shows the beginning of a transformation of her attitude to the South, leaving behind the pessimistic defeatism of *Ilsa* (1946) and preparing the way for a more hopeful vision of the region where her mother still lived.

Within the story, which contains many autobiographical elements, the teenage narrator is transformed by his encounter with the witch woman in a haunted, deserted plantation house and is shown the possibility of richer, more fulfilling life than was considered possible in the small town in South Georgia where he lives. The witch woman herself, a feminist figure outside time, shows a new way of understanding femininity and transforms the despairing former owner who can’t live without her man, or perhaps her descendent, into a dynamic, intellectually curious and self-reliant woman. The story shows new possibilities for the South, as a man who cannot see the new vision is left moaning on the ground, while one who accepts it and lets it transform him, dances for joy.

**Suzanne Bray** is Professor of British Literature and Civilisation at the Université Catholique de Lille. She specialises in the interface between religious ideas and popular literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She has published extensively in English and French on several Anglican authors including C. S. Lewis, Dorothy L. Sayers and Madeleine L’Engle.

- **Rebecca Hains** (Salem State University, Salem, Mass., US), “Transforming Southern Representation in Children’s Streaming Media: *Lost Ollie*, *Tab Time* and the U.S. South”

Who and what we see on screen reflect media industry power dynamics, as television and film producers work with production companies to decide which stories are worthy of being told. It is therefore a central question of feminist media studies to ask: Which characters do we see on screen, in what types of roles, and in what settings—and whose stories are marginalized, trivialized, condemned, or entirely erased—and why?

In this context, this presentation explores Southern representation in U.S. children’s media. As background, this essay reviews the history of, industry powers behind, and cultural significance of especially well-known children’s media portrayals of Southerners and the U.S. South, such as Disney’s *The Princess and the Frog*—set in 1920s New Orleans—and Disney/Pixar’s *Cars*, set in the American Southwest and prominently featuring anthropomorphic tow truck Tow Mater, whose strong Southern accent is accompanied by a stereotypical redneck presentation.

It then focuses on two recent, contrasting offerings from streaming platforms that are children's media industry disruptors. One, Netflix's *Lost Ollie*, is a PG-rated animated mini-series adapted from the 2016 children's book *Ollie's Odyssey* by Louisiana author William Joyce and created by Shannon Tindle, who drew on his Kentucky childhood memories in design and storytelling. While the show has been criticized for its characters' inauthentic Southern accent and dark themes of traumatic separation, it has also been praised for its cinematic beauty. The other is Amazon Prime's *Tab Time*, a wholesome preschool series hosted by "momfluencer" Tabitha Brown of Charleston, North Carolina. Brown credits Mister Rogers' Neighborhood as inspiration for how she addresses challenging themes with compassion and warmth.

By considering these shows in the broader contexts of the history of Southern representation in U.S. media and children's media industry trends, we can understand the shifts they may signal in Southern representation.

**Rebecca C. Hains**, Ph.D. is Professor of Media and Communication at Salem State University, USA. She researches children's media culture from a critical/cultural studies perspective, taking an intersectional approach to exploring media representation, identity, and meaning-making. She is author and editor of five books, including *The Marketing of Children's Toys: Critical Perspectives on Children's Consumer Culture* (co-edited with Nancy Jennings, Palgrave, 2021); *Cultural Studies of LEGO: More Than Just Bricks* (co-edited with Sharon Mazarella, Palgrave, 2019); *The Princess Problem: Guiding Our Girls Through the Princess-Obsessed Years* (Sourcebooks 2014), and *Growing Up With Girl Power: Girlhood on Screen and in Everyday Life* (Peter Lang, 2012).

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Day 2

**Panel 5, Jesmyn Ward.**

**Chair: Frédérique Spill (UPJV, FR)**

- **Stéphanie Eyrolles Suchet** (CELIS/Université Clermont Auvergne, FR), "These characters feel flat to me': Minority at Play in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing*"

William Faulkner and Jesmyn Ward are both Southern writers, but Faulkner was a white male writing about the South during the period of Segregation while Ward is an African American female writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They both examine how the past affects the present: the issues of slavery and racism are at the heart of *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing* and, interestingly, they are epitomized by ghosts in both these novels. Yet, even if that theme is a common one between the two writers, their perspective on the past is a very different one. This is visible in the narratives of both these novels. The narrators in *Absalom, Absalom!* are all white while in *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, they are black or biracial. This

difference in the focalization as well as in the characterization of the characters from a different ethnicity unveils the different patterns of domination in society. But it also recalls what French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari called *minor literature*. This paper will thus study how, while Faulkner's work could be considered as *minor literature* in his time, the new perspective given by writers such as Jesmyn Ward reveal that he is in fact what Deleuze and Guattari called a *major writer*. The evolution between these two writers reflects how lines and limits have been and are being transcended, bringing forth a new Southern literary identity.

**Stéphanie Eyrolles Suchet** is a teacher, holder of the agrégation, a French high level competitive exam. She received her PhD from the University of Versailles St Quentin en Yvelines in 2016. She specializes in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Southern literature, especially in William Faulkner's work, but also Jesmyn Ward's. She has published academic articles in national and international journals and participated in international colloquiums.

- **Joanna Davis-McElligatt** (University of North Texas, US), "Whither Suffering?: On Jesmyn Ward's Respair"

In this talk, I work toward a critical definition of Jesmyn Ward's term "respair," deployed in her 2020 essay "Witness and Respair." The compound word—re-spair—signifies one's return to hope after a period of despair, and is, in Ward's essay, intimately connected to the act of witness. Following Elaine Scarry and Sara Ahmed, I frame Ward's respair as a study in hopelessness and the impossibility of sharing the fellow-feeling of pain, and on the importance of bearing witness to another's pain—a pain we cannot share—as a necessary counter to the failure of empathy. I suggest that Ward's deployment of the term is also central to Toni Morrison's "rememory," or the process of re-living, re-fashioning, and re-creating memory. I suggest that in Ward's oeuvre, sharing one's pain and bearing witness to that of others is a central ethic, a way of being in the world, and a mode of making meaning of Black suffering.

**Joanna Davis-McElligatt** is an Assistant Professor of Black Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of North Texas, where she is Affiliate Faculty in Women's and Gender Studies, and LGBTQ Studies. She is at work on her first monograph, entitled *Black Aliens: Navigating Narrative Spacetime in Afrodiasporic Speculative Fiction*. She is the co-editor of three volumes: *Narratives of Marginalized Identities in Higher Education: Inside and Outside the Academy* (Routledge 2019), *Narrating History, Home, and Dyaspora: Critical Essays on Edwidge Danticat* (UP of Mississippi 2022), and *BOOM! Splat! Comics and Violence* (UP of Mississippi 2024). Her scholarly work appears or is forthcoming in *south: a scholarly journal*, *Mississippi Quarterly*, *The Cambridge Companion to New Faulkner Studies* (Cambridge UP 2022), *The Cambridge Companion to the American Graphic Novel* (forthcoming, Cambridge UP), *A History of the Literature of the U.S. South* (Cambridge UP 2021), *Routledge Companion to Literature of the U.S. South* (Routledge 2022), and *Small Screen Souths: Region, Identity, and the Cultural Politics of Television* (LSU P, 2017), among other places.

- **Yesmina Khedhir** (University of Debrecen, Hungary), “Dismal Ecologies: Re-visiting the History of the Maroon Communities in Jesmyn Ward’s *Mother Swamp*”

In her most recently published short story *Mother Swamp* (2022) two-time National Book Award for Fiction winner, African American writer Jesmyn Ward, revisits the little-known history of the maroon communities, the runaway enslaved Africans, or better called “self-emancipators” (Morris 2), who lived in hiding from bondage in geographically secluded swampy areas in the South where they came into contact with other indigenous cultures, yet formed their own self-sufficient and resistant families and communities. Ward’s short story is set in The Great Dismal Swamp, a large swamp stretching from Southern Virginia to northeast North Carolina, which the narrator, Afice, depicts as at the same time an antagonistic and a forgiving place, both “alligator ridden, riven with knock-kneed roots” and a home, “shelter,” and “mother” (Ward), as the story’s title itself postulates, to the fictional all-female community to whom the Great Dismal Swamp gave birth for nine generations. Thus, in line with the ecological turn of the New Southern Studies and based on Kimberly Ruffin’s dichotomy of “ecological burden-and-beauty paradox” (Ruffin 2) in her reading of African American literary figuration of nature, I show how the Great Dismal Swamp in Ward’s *Mother Swamp* embodies a complex and liminal space that speaks for both Black historical subjugation and resistance. Ward’s deliberate choice of creating an all-female community aims to honor Black women’s knowledge, power, and resistance of both racial and gender oppressions in their intersection with other forms of capitalist exploitation, especially socio-economic and environmental. The paper aims to examine Ward’s representation of the dichotomous relationship between the all-female maroon community and their surrounding physical environment, i.e., The Great Dismal Swamp. Thus issues of history, memory/trauma, cultural identity, and female subjectivity in their connection with Southern Dismal space and place in the short story will be addressed.

**Yesmina Khedhir** is a senior PhD candidate at the Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. She has a BA and MA in English Language and Literature from the Faculty of Letters, Arts, and Humanities in Manouba, Tunisia and is a former Fulbright scholar (FLTA) at Stanford university. Her research project focuses on studying the multiple aspects of cultural memory and trauma in Jesmyn Ward’s fiction. Yesmina’s academic interests include, but are not limited to, African American literature, history, and culture, Black feminism/womanism, ecocriticism, memory and trauma studies, pop culture. Yesmina has participated in numerous international academic conferences and events and has published articles related to her field of research in international academic journals, books, and conference volumes. Her most recent article “‘Tomorrow, I think, everything will be washed clean’: Water Imagery in Jesmyn Ward’s Post-Katrina Novel, *Salvage the Bones*” is published in a collection of essays entitled *Bodies of Water in African American Literature, Film, and Music* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, June 2023).

## Panel 6, Inheritance/Heritage.

Chair: Waldemar Zacharasiewicz (University of Vienna, Austria)

- **Lisa Hinrichsen** (University of Arkansas, US), “Transforming Southern Space and Place in the Temporal Eco-poetics of Elegy”

This paper looks at how the US South is frequently portrayed as an imaginative zone of “no future,” with its material landscape shaped by temporal frameworks that figure the region as a “lost cause,” irredeemable, already gone, and as a “sacrifice zone” deserving of punishment. Here I think not only of the language that surrounded Hurricane Katrina’s onslaught onto New Orleans and the present-day realities of mountaintop removal, toxic dumping, chicken processing, industrial fish farms, wildlife genocide, eco-simplification, and other forms of environmental destruction, but also of histories of forest clearing, plantation farming, and human exploitation specific to the region. These material practices fuel fantasies of finitude that offer fetishistic figurations of commemoration and “heritage” that eclipse the real Souths still unfolding, essentializing the region as a place of loss, creating a history of “telling about the South” through anachronism, nostalgia, or other melancholic devices that hold purchase on the political present. I track these issues of naming and framing, reading the long-mythologized and still-persistent “southern sense of place” with and against contemporary ecocriticism’s less romantic understanding of place, returning to questions of form and to the function of the literary to think about how “the South” and “ecology” intersect under the mode of the elegy. As Timothy Morton has written, traditional elegies work against ecology, attempting to exert control over space and time, offering a vision of lost nature and a form for mourning that makes us “get over” nature. Morton has demonstrated how the affective fallacy enjoys a second life in the elegy, as the earth reflects human grief. The elegy, as traditionally rendered, then draws on modes of Enlightenment humanism, compacting rather than decentering problematic forms of anthropocentrism, functioning as a mode through which to foreclose rather than embrace ecological thinking. Morton’s critique of elegy, which focuses on the poetic and romantic era manifestation of the form, offers an intriguing site to put southern studies and ecocriticism into dialogue, particularly at a moment when popular texts such as J. D. Vance’s *Hillbilly Elegy* have claimed elegy for political purposes on a national platform, adopting the form as a structure of bereavement that uploads not only normative and schematic notions of white male identity but also the anti-ecological, hierarchical, and individualizing attitudes this identity position has historically rested upon. Ultimately, the U.S. South is not a “lost” cause, nor a “backward,” “derivative” cultural location, as Vance declares it, but a place of radical futurity, a site that will be the first to feel the effects of world-historical forces, including the now global order of crisis, economic austerity, climate change, welfare cuts, and health epidemics. For elegy to address climate change, it must dwell in more than one verb tense, looking forward and backward, gesturing both to what could have been and to what might yet be. As such, thinking within and against the figuration of the US South as a site of elegy remains

important, as we consider how to linger in foregone, in-process, and incipient forms of loss without foreclosing futurity.

**Lisa Hinrichsen** is Associate Professor of English at the University of Arkansas. She is the author of *Possessing the Past: Trauma, Imagination, and Memory in Post-Plantation Southern Literature* (LSU Press, 2015) and co-editor, along with Gina Caison and Stephanie Rountree, of *Small-Screen Souths: Region, Identity, and the Cultural Politics of Television* (LSU Press, 2017) and *Remediating Region: New Media and the U.S. South* (LSU Press, 2021). She served as President of the Society for the Study of Southern Literature from 2018-2020.

- **Constante González Groba** (University of Santiago, Spain), “‘Maybe the spirits are out for revenge’: Why Emmett Till will not stay dead”

The infamous case of Emmett Till, the 14-year-old black boy from Chicago brutally beaten to death in rural Mississippi in 1955 for allegedly whistling at a white woman, produced unprecedented emotional outburst in both black and white circles. Many southern African Americans dated their civil rights activism to their awareness of the Till case, which occurred when they were also teenagers. The brutality of the murder and the ensuing acquittal of the murderers by an all-white jury made them lose faith in the justice system and convinced them of the need for the direct action to which they devoted their lives.

The case gave rise to several different literary renditions that have kept Till's presence alive, the most significant ones being Bebe Moore Campbell's novel *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine* (1992), Louis Nordan's *Wolf Whistle* (1993), Bernice L McFadden's *Gathering of Waters* (2012), and James Baldwin's play *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964).

In our days of Black Lives Matter, Americans continue to use the Till narrative to read the present and Emmett Till continues to speak louder in death than he would have if he had lived. The recent killings of Trayvon Martin (for many, this generation's Emmett Till), Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, George Floyd and so many other blacks at the hands of the police continue to bring back the specter of Emmett Till and to make his vital story one that keeps repeating itself.

The main focus of my paper will be on two very recent fictional renditions of the case, one in fiction and one in film. In his 2021 novel *The Trees*, Percival Everett makes Till into what Christopher Metress had previously described as “a restless ghost who condemns and disrupts” (21). This black postmodernist moves away from sentimentalism and succeeds at the difficult task of giving the Till tragedy an irreverent and farcical treatment, which raises interesting questions: can the farcical treatment be both a coping mechanism and a valid mode of socio-political critique? Is the goal of satiric humor to critique or simply to make laughter at the ridicule of society an end in itself?

The story of Till did not make it into film until 2022. The creators of the film *Till* make the case that has always made many whites uncomfortable a story of the present and emphasize the determination and courage of Mamie Till who fiercely combatted the tendency of white America to historical erasure. She did not allow the body of her son to be

hastily buried in Mississippi and demanded an open-casket funeral for everyone to see the disfigured body in Chicago. Her fidelity to the bonds of love proves to be intensely political and the basis of the collective action promoted in our time of Black Lives Matter and of so much talk about the afterlives of slavery and the need for antiracist action. As Richard Brody has written, she “has come to recognize that the life of a Black person in the United States is essentially and inescapably political, and demands her ongoing and unrelenting action” (5).

**Constante González Groba** is Professor of American literature at the University of Santiago (Spain). He has published articles on Carson McCullers, Lee Smith, Lillian Smith, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Bobbie Ann Mason, Ellen Glasgow, Colson Whitehead, Ron Rash, Ellen Feldman, and others. He authored the book *On Their Own Premises: Southern Women Writers and the Homeplace* (Universitat de València, 2008). He edited *Hijas del Viejo Sur: La mujer en la literatura del Sur de los Estados Unidos* (Universitat de València, 2012) and *Unsteadily Marching On: The US South in Motion* (Universitat de València, 2013). He has led competitive research projects about women in southern fiction, southern fiction and civil rights, southern autobiography, and intersections of race and the body in US fiction. His latest book is *Pathologizing Black Bodies: The Legacy of Plantation Slavery*, co-authored with Ewa Luczak and Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis.

- **Marcel Arbeit** (Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic), “Self-transformation through Parenthood: Lewis Nordan and Clyde Edgerton”

The paper will compare two approaches of parenthood as described in southern non-fiction, Lewis Nordan’s autobiography *Boy with a Loaded Gun* and Clyde Edgerton’s book of advice for fathers *Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers: Advice to Dads of All Ages*. I will explore the traditional role of southern families, but also comment on the importance of the background of the parents, their own childhood experience, as well as the age when they became parents. On the one hand, there is the death of Nordan’s only son by suicide and his deep regrets for not being a better father, on the other hand there is Edgerton’s happy life with three children he had after the age of sixty. Besides the non-fiction books, I will also turn to interviews with the authors and trace their self-transformation in their fiction. I will analyze the books with the help of works of existentialist psychology (Robert Coles and others).

**Marcel Arbeit** is Professor in the Department of English and American Studies, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic. He is the author of a monograph on the novels of Fred Chappell and Cormac McCarthy published in 2006 (in Czech) and the main editor of the three-volume *Bibliography of American Literature in Czech Translation* (2000). He co-edited the *Mississippi Quarterly* special issue on Lewis Nordan (2007, with Thomas Ærvold Bjerre), *The (Un)Popular South* (2011, with M. Thomas Inge), and *Where Is History Today? New Ways of Representing the Past* (2015, with Ian Christie), and edited *The South from Elsewhere* (2014). His recent publications focus on Doris Betts, Fred Chappell, Harry Crews, Richard Ford, Lewis



Nordan, Flannery O'Connor, Chris Offutt, Ron Rash, and Elizabeth Spencer. Between 2005 and 2013 he was the President of the Czech and Slovak Association for American Studies. He is the editor-in-chief of the *Moravian Journal of Literature and Film*.

## **Panel 7, Changing Ideologies.**

**Chair: Valeria Gennaro Lerda (University of Genoa, Italy)**

- **Mark Newman** (University of Edinburgh, UK), “Father August L. Thompson and the Struggle for Racial Justice in Louisiana and Catholicism”

In 1963, Father August Louis Thompson, an African American Catholic priest in Ferriday, Louisiana, gained national attention when *Ramparts*, a lay Catholic magazine in California, published an interview he gave to John Howard Griffin, author of *Black Like Me*. Thompson described widespread racial discrimination, segregation and exclusion in the South and southern Catholicism. Ordained in 1957 as one of the few African American Catholic priests in the South and the first black diocesan priest in the Diocese of Alexandria, Thompson braved intimidation and threats to confront racial discrimination, working individually and sometimes with the civil rights movement. Frequently isolated in the diocese, he nevertheless resisted the opportunity to leave his native state. Thompson's ministry illustrates the challenges and hardships experienced by the South's African American priests during the civil rights and Black Power eras. His activities also provide further evidence in support of a developing historiography that recognizes black Catholic contributions to the civil rights movement and Black Power.

Thompson pioneered postwar black Catholic clergy outspokenness against racism in the church and strove with demonstrable impact during his ministry to improve the lives of African Americans in the Louisiana communities he served. Whereas historian Matthew J. Cressler has addressed the transformative impact of Black Power and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination on Father George H. Clements in Chicago, Thompson's activism preceded these developments and was rooted in his experience of southern racism in church and society. His activism and outspokenness demonstrate that black Catholic clergy involvement in the struggle for black liberation was not confined to the urban North and figures, such as Clements and Father Lawrence E. Lucas in Harlem, and had southern as well as northern roots.

**Mark Newman** is reader in History at the University of Edinburgh. His most recent books are *Desegregating Dixie: The Catholic Church in the South and Desegregation, 1945-1992* and *Black Nationalism in American History: From the Nineteenth Century to the Million Man March*.

- **Christopher A. Cooper** (Western Carolina University, US), “The 11th: Politics, Polarization, and Partisan Change in a Southern Congressional District, 1972-2022”

The political transformation of the American South from one-party Democratic domination (Key 1949) to two-party politics (Lamis 1988), to sizeable Republican advantage (Hayes and McKee 2008) is perhaps the most consequential electoral development in the United States over the last century. Any region flipping partisan loyalties would change American politics, but because the South is the fastest growing region in the United States, the partisan ripples approach something resembling a tsunami.

This paper uses the experience of North Carolina’s 11th congressional district as a lens to understand the political changes that have defined the last half-century in the American South. The story of how this once politically inconsequential southern Appalachian district found itself in the middle of the national political maelstrom, in many ways the story of southern politics over the last three decades. It is a story punctuated by political polarization, strategic gerrymandering, national political tides, the increasing urban/rural divide and the broader transformation of the South that has remade American politics.

After reviewing what we know about partisan change in the American South, and describing the political, cultural, and geographic context of the district, the paper then provides a detailed analysis of the political development of the 11th congressional district. The concluding section discusses what lessons can be drawn from the 11th and how micro-level placed-based studies can further our theoretical and practical understanding of southern politics and culture.

**Christopher A. Cooper** is Madison Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Public Affairs at Western Carolina University. His work on southern politics and culture, state politics, and elections has appeared in a variety of journals and edited volumes. He is also the co-author of *The Resilience of Southern Identity* (UNC Press, 2017).

- **Robert Hunt Ferguson** (Western Carolina University, US) “Monuments to Obsolescence, Trauma, and Hope: Living Among the South’s Post-Industrial Landscapes”

This paper and photo presentation examines workers’ and residents’ complex relationships with the built environment in Eden, North Carolina. Eden was one of the capitals of the American South's textile economy and the epicenter of the Fieldcrest empire for much of the twentieth century. Once a thriving industrial town, it is now a community where derelict textile mills sit in ruins and the unemployment rate dips below state, regional, and national averages. This presentation compares the voices of textile workers and images of their workspaces from the past, with voices of current residents and present-day images of decaying workspaces in the present. The process from industrial boom to industrial ruin in this small southern town—and the ways it has attempted to transform its identity while relying on myths and memories past—is emblematic of a region experiencing massive

socioeconomic changes. By examining labor, international trade policies, memory, and landscapes, this presentation asks the question: How do Eden's current residents cope with living among post-industrial ruins and still locate hope in the future of the towns' spaces and economy?

**Robert Hunt Ferguson** is an Associate Professor of History at Western Carolina University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His book, *Race and the Remaking of the Rural South: Interracialism, Christian Socialism, and Cooperative Farming in Jim Crow Mississippi* was published by the University of Georgia Press in January 2018. His work has appeared in the *Journal of Southern History*, the *North Carolina Historical Review*, *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, *Arkansas Review*, and *Environment, Space, and Place*. His research has been funded by the Center for the Study of the American South and the North Caroliniana Society.

## **Panel 8, Insights into Contemporary Southern Literature.**

**Chair: Marcel Arbeit (Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic)**

- **Stephanie Rountree** (University of North Georgia, US), “Health and Home(land): Settler Capitalism & Public Health in Charles Chesnutt & Louise Erdrich”

In 1888, Charles Chesnutt published his short story “Po’ Sandy” set on Lumbee homelands near what is today called Lumberton, North Carolina. On this narrative site, a white settler and enslaver built a kitchen-turned-schoolhouse—a structure constructed, as the narrator Julius conveys, with the corpse of a self-emancipated Black man who is unhomed, murdered, and magically transformed into pine wood lumber.

In 2004, Louise Erdrich published her novel *Four Souls* set on Anishinaabe homelands in what is today called Minneapolis, Minnesota. On this narrative site, a white settler and lumber capitalist built a grand white house—a structure constructed, as the narrator Nanapush conveys, at the cost of countless Indigenous and immigrant lives, and by the theft of Ojibwe homelands to profitably harvest its oak wood lumber.

More than one hundred years and one thousand miles separate the penning and place of each story, yet Chesnutt’s and Erdrich’s uncanny similarities underscore the continuity of pre-1865 U.S. policies in settler capitalism and enslavement as they have continued shaping American life beyond Emancipation into the twenty-first century. This paper derives from my current book project titled, which articulates my rubric of “American anteliberism” as a literary genealogy of corporeality, capitalism, and citizenship in technologies of U.S. public health since enslavement. This presentation highlights how citizenship mechanisms in Chesnutt’s and Erdrich’s texts systemically un-home BIPOC populations to shore-up white settler wealth, health, and homestead. Of course, such un-homing differs widely across populations, yet in each instance, it manufactures public health crises in violence, disease, and death. This paper examines Black enslavement in Chesnutt’s South and Native land theft in Erdrich’s Great Lakes region as institutional forms of un-homing that illustrate evolving

“trans/formations” of U.S. public health politics across vast continental geographies and over two centuries of American anteliberism.

**Stephanie Rountree** is Associate Professor of English at the University of North Georgia where she specializes in post-1865 U.S. literature and media, gender studies, and southern studies. Her research has appeared in such scholarly publications as *Southern Spaces, Faulkner and Slavery* (UP of Mississippi, 2021), and *The Routledge Companion to Literature of the U.S. South* (2022). Together with Lisa Hinrichsen and Gina Caison, she is co-editor of the three-book edited collection series out of LSU Press: *Small-Screen Souths: Region, Identity, and the Cultural Politics of Television* (2017), *Remediating Region: New Media and the U.S. South* (2021), and the now in-progress, final book of the series on documenting technologies of the U.S. South. Her current monograph project, titled *American Anteliberism: Literatures of Enslavement and Public Health*, investigates black enslavement’s formative role in the development of U.S. Public Health as evidenced in post-Emancipation literature.

- **Delia Steverson** (University of Alabama, US), “Everything I write comes right back to Georgia’: Delores Phillips, Oral History, and Recovering a Literary Legacy”

In this presentation, I foreground my recovery work on the late Georgia writer, Delores Phillips, to highlight the importance of oral history as a credible system of knowledge to transmit the stories and record the lives of Black authors and artists. Phillips is best known for *The Darkest Child* (2004), a poignant and powerful novel that follows a mother and her ten children as they attempt to survive racism, lynchings, and poverty in 1950s Jim Crow Georgia. *The Darkest Child* was the only novel published in her lifetime as Phillips died tragically of pancreatic cancer and in relative obscurity in 2014. Yet, what I reveal in this presentation is that Phillips was no one hit wonder—rather throughout her lifetime she wrote several short stories, poems, and two additional, albeit unfinished, novels. This discovery expands Phillips’s literary legacy and has led to a new collection of her works to be published this year.

While this volume will serve as a fundamental step in the process of recovery work to increase the visibility of Black disabled writers who may have fallen through the cracks of American history, what I found equally powerful during this process was Phillips’s hauntingly complex personal life. I turn to Phillips’s archive, specifically several interviews I conducted with Phillips’s sister, daughter, and brother, to underscore how Phillips’s experiences with chronic illness, medical racism, and personal tragedy intersected in intricate ways to reveal both the harmony and direct tension between her fiction, public persona, and interiority. Furthermore, these testimonies establish how many African Americans—especially in the south—have fallen victim to and simultaneously resisted historical patterns of medical malpractice.

**Delia Steverson** is an Assistant Professor of African American Literature at the University of Alabama, where her primary research interests include 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century African American Literary Studies, Critical Disability Studies, and Wikipedia Studies. Her book,

*Stumbling Blocks and Other Unfinished Work* (forthcoming, UGA Press 2023) contextualizes the life and works of Delores Phillips, author of *The Darkest Child*. Named a Career Enhancement Fellow by the Institute for Citizens & Scholars, Delia's work has been published in *The Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, the *College Language Association Journal* (CLAJ), and the *Journal of American Culture*.

- **Christine Chollier** (Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne, FR), “Looping the Loop? McCarthy’s *The Passenger* as Retrospective Dystopia”

As Cormac McCarthy was nearing his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, he published a diptych, *The Passenger* and *Stella Maris*. It may not be wholly irrelevant, now that he passed away, to start examining how coherent his whole production might be, i.e. how the earlier novels get to be transformed in the later ones. Therefore, what Kristeva, Genette and their like termed “intratextuality” might be one area worth exploring for transformations. Yet, McCarthy’s rewriting of the *roman noir* or *chase thriller* prompts us to look at generic transformations, also known as “architextuality” (Genette). Indeed, when, in *The Passenger*, Bobby Western, a salvage diver, finds a sunken jet with nine bodies still buckled in their seats, he also realizes what is missing from the crash site—the pilot’s flightbag, the plane’s black data box, and the tenth passenger. And then there were none... These fortuitous discoveries trigger off more or less fortuitous quests whose objects are scattered though time and space. Bobby Western turns out to be the passenger of a literary unidentified literary object navigating round blind turns and locked doors, back and forth between places, between past and present, and between characters.

Bobby Western’s drifting occasionally takes him north and west but Tennessee and Louisiana are his homeports. Yet, if the “South” as an idiom first sounds as a place, the literary South has taught us to read time in space, especially to read the “past that remains forever present” (CFP). In *The Passenger*, time and space “speak each other’s language,” in more ways than just one. “[T]he heritage from which it is difficult to escape” (CFP) first seems to be described in terms of intrafamilial relationships, but it is also translated into global anthropological issues through metaphorical connections which need to be explicated. Physics and metaphysics come into play to extend to local issues to the global sphere and transform the initial thriller into a metaphysical dystopia. This will bring us to scrutinize another kind of transformations, which Ricardou and Dällenbach once called “autotextuality.”

**Christine Chollier** is Professor of American Literature and text semantics at the University of Reims, France. She has published studies in literature and translation. Her literary critical studies include papers on Cormac McCarthy, Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Washington Irving, W. S. Merwin, Stephen Crane, Katherine Mansfield, Henry James, Ezra Pound, John Steinbeck, Margaret Atwood, Carson McCullers, Sherwood Anderson, Michael Connelly, Paul Auster, Frederick Douglass and William Styron, Harriet Jacobs and Colson Whitehead, etc., as well as theoretical articles on semiotics and translation.

<https://www.univ-reims.fr/cirlep/l-equipe-des-chercheurs-du-cirlep/christine-chollier,9931,32220.html>

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**Panel 9, Eudora Welty, Trans/formations, and Trans/gressions.**
**Chair: Susan V. Donaldson (College of William and Mary, US)**

- **Harriet Pollack** (College of Charleston, US), “Intersectionality, Trans/gression, Trans/formation and Eudora Welty’s Stories of the Southern Girlhood”

What's written on the body in Eudora Welty's girl stories is the attempt of daughters to escape the intersectionality of Southern race, class, and gender history and prescription.

I argue that Welty addresses the problematic history of the southern "body politic" by focusing on physical bodies in each of her tales pairing a focalizing middle-class daughter with a subject character who is not entitled to--and by "making a spectacle" of herself more or less freely transgresses notions of--white ladyhood. This "other woman" is characterized by gestures of bodily self-exposure that shock, attract, fascinate, and/or repulse the middle-class southern daughter who is the story's central consciousness. We see this pattern in such semi-autobiographical texts as "A Memory" (1937), "The Winds" (1942), "June Recital" (1947), and *The Optimist's Daughter* (1972). That is to say, across Welty's long career, these narratives, that only covertly address the issue of race in the "land of exclusion," quite evidently concern constructions of Whiteness being written and unwritten on the bodies of focalizing middle-class White daughters, young women variously in the process of transforming acceptance into resistance. Meanwhile the shameless female author repeatedly gives herself permission to expose herself in her art. This pattern plays disparately but across the full extent of Welty's career while the writer consistently associates trans/gression with trans/formation. This conference paper--which builds on one central argument of my book *Eudora Welty's Fiction and Photography: The Body of The Other Woman* (2016)--updates and extends that project.

**Harriet Pollack**, College of Charleston, is the author of *Eudora Welty's Fiction and Photography: The Body of The Other Woman* and the editor or co-editor of eight volumes including *New Essays on Eudora Welty, Class, and Race*; *Emmett Till in Literary Memory and Imagination*; *Eudora Welty, Whiteness, and Race*; and *Eudora Welty and Politics: Did the Writer Crusade?* In 2019 she established and now edits a University Press of Mississippi book series, *Critical Perspectives on Eudora Welty*, which most recently published *Eudora Welty and Mystery: Hidden in Plain Sight* (2023), edited by Pollack and Jacob Agner and *The Eye That Is Language: A Transatlantic View of Eudora Welty* (2022)—the posthumously collected essays of Danièle Pitavy-Souques, edited by Pearl McHaney.

- **Sarah Gilbreath Ford** (Baylor University, US), “Trans-corporeality and Coming of Age in Eudora Welty’s Fiction”

Throughout her fiction, Eudora Welty writes many versions of the story of a young White girl coming of age in a southern society in which her choices for adult identity are

limited. Even more proscribed than the marry-or-die imperative of earlier American sentimental novels, the social script White southern girls follow is to marry only men of a certain class and race. Women who do not marry in Welty's texts, such as Clytie and Miss Eckhart, become social outcasts, so young girls, such as Cassie Morrison or Nina Carmichael, who are just on the cusp of coming of age, have to ponder this potential fate. Against this social script, however, Welty writes scenes of trans-corporeality, which Stacy Alaimo defines as "the time-space where human corporeality, in all its material fleshiness, is inseparable from 'nature' or 'environment.'" In these scenes young women submerge in water, in a baptismal experience that has connotations of coming of age: sexuality, pregnancy, and sometimes death. Nature, though, seemingly acts with a will of its own in what ecocritics call "vibrancy." These experiences can thus prove perilous and even deadly, replicating the Ophelia story where a young girl finds the transition to adulthood overwhelming and drowns in the natural medium of water. Yet, in Welty's rewriting, submersion has the potential to be helpful because women can draw from nature a story of agency that runs counter to that offered by their society. Tracing this experience through nine different submersion scenes in Welty's work, I will argue that Welty uses the enmeshment with nature to transform the story of how southern girls become southern women.

**Sarah Gilbreath Ford** is professor of American Literature at Baylor University and serves as the director of the Beall Poetry Festival. She is the author of *Tracing Southern Storytelling in Black and White* (2014) and *Haunted Property: Slavery and the Gothic* (2020). She serves as co-editor of the *Eudora Welty Review* and as web editor of the Eudora Welty Society's website. In 2018 she won the Eudora Welty Society's Phoenix Award for scholarship and service. In 2019 she was named a Baylor Centennial Professor.

- **Christin Marie Taylor** (Shenandoah University, US), "Interracial Desire and Environmental Justice in Eudora Welty's 'Livvie' and 'Shower of Gold'"

The U.S. South of the mid-twentieth century drew hard boundaries according to race, wealth, and gender. The "color line" and other delimiting identity-based social constructs arguably ran deepest in Mississippi, where everyday social practices, public policies, and local laws deeply demarcated environmental spaces. Despite the everyday realities of Mississippi's segregated society, one southern woman writer's literary environments tell a story of interracial proximity and cultural exchange. Mississippi author Eudora Welty echoes forms of African American literary modernism, traversing literary conventions and seemingly stable social and spatial boundaries of race, sex, and class in her home state. Welty had in fact described herself as a trespasser, drawing inspiration from working-class African American cultural traditions that she had observed in the ordinary everyday. "I did ask in a polite way," Welty said, as she recalled conversing with an African American man about his decorative landscaping. "He said he didn't want to talk about that," and she ventured, "I was trespassing." Welty's encounters with African American culture, from her passing conversations to her personal photographs influence her writing of Black characters and Mississippi environments.

Welty's preoccupation with African American characters and cultural traditions appears in her literary environments, especially within greenery—forests, hedges, and trees. Her enviro-centric representations of Black characters intersect the urgencies of the U.S. Popular Front, offering one example of how a socially privileged Caucasian woman from Mississippi abuts the political urgencies of African American literary traditions. This paper will build on my book *Labor Pains: New Deal Fictions of Race Work and Sex in the South* to explore how the stories “Livvie” (1942) and “Shower of Gold” (1949) reflect Welty's desire for interracial cultural understanding and a quest for environmental equity and justice.

**Christin Marie Taylor** is an associate professor of English at Shenandoah University where she teaches topics in American literature, Africana Studies, and Gender and Women's Studies. Her book *Labor Pains: New Deal Fictions of Race, Work, and Sex in the South* (UP Mississippi) was awarded the Eudora Welty Prize for Southern and Women's studies in 2019. Her writing has appeared in *Fourth Genre*, *Southern Quarterly* and *Southern Cultures* among others.

- **Rebecca Mark** (Rutgers University, US), “It was a mixed train’: Trans/portations in Eudora Welty's Fiction”

Eudora Welty writes in “The Wanderers” that Virgie, who has just jumped off the train on her way home, “never doubted that all the opposites on earth were close together” (452). Welty follows Virgie's observation throughout her fiction by collapsing male and female binaries and using trans/portation—driving, rowing, riding in trains, swimming, and walking—as a metaphoric transgendered bridging. Her characters literally transport out of the southern binary of master/ belle to embrace a multiplicity of gender fluid identities.

Trans characters abound in Welty's fiction: In “Moon Lake” Easter transports herself, with Exum's help, from air to water to be resurrected as male/female Easter/ Esther—not Christ. Little Lee Roy in “Keela the Outcast Indian Maiden” rides with the circus and performs male and female Keela. Riding the train with Laura McKelva from Jackson to Shellmound, or queer Lilly Daw from home to asylum or marriage, or driving with queer Narciss and Uncle Ponder back and forth from asylum to plantation home, walking along the “wild and narrow” path with the Spaniard and Eugene in “Music From Spain” we enter a fictional world of trans fluidity: “once the Spaniard's hands met on top of his head to clamp his hat, his elbows bent outward. It was the lumpy pose of a woman, a ‘Nude Reclining’” (419).

In fact, Welty collapses such symbolic opposites as “sun=male/moon=female” to orchestrate instead an erotic sexuality of interpenetrating gender opposites. In *Delta Wedding* butterflies fly in and out of phallic trains “while Laura brought up her saved banana, peeled it down, and bit into it. Her nose in the banana skin as in the cup of the lily, she watched the Delta” (3). The banana and the lily in erotic motion on the train generate the imaginative trans space that makes *Delta Wedding* possible.

**Rebecca Mark** is the Director of the Institute for Women's Leadership and a Professor in the Department of Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies at Rutgers University. She was the Chair of the English Department, Associate Dean, and Director of the Center for Academic



Equity at Tulane University. She is a scholar and professor whose research addresses southern writing and cultural representations of trauma. Her books include: *The Dragon's Blood: Feminist Intertextuality in Eudora Welty's Fiction* (University Press of Mississippi 1994), and *Ersatz America: Hidden Traces, Graphic Texts, and Mending of Democracy* (University of Virginia Press, 2014). Professor Mark is presently completing *The Radical Welty: A Private Address*. Professor Mark received the Public Humanities Achievement Award from the Mississippi Humanities Council for directing the civil rights conference *Unsettling Memories* (2004).

## **Panel 10, The Transforming Power of Words and Images.**

**Chair: Christine Chollier (Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne, FR)**

- **Eva Gourdoux** (Université Toulouse II Jean Jaurès, FR), “From Pen to Eye: Writing and Reading the South”

In *Mystery and Manners*, Flannery O'CONNOR ponders upon the Southern label that was pasted onto her work by critics and readers alike. The author failed to understand what made her stories *Southern*, and interrogated the criteria used to categorize such texts. However, as John M. Grammer notes, “[n]ot everybody, of course, feels quite so lost in the woods of Southern literature” (Grammer, 132). Some authors, like Katherine Anne Porter, even claimed this profitable label: indeed, according to Don Graham, “since the late 1920s it has been an advantage for a writer to be identified with the South. For more than half a century now, the South has enjoyed a privileged status in American literature” (Clark and Machann, 58). Finally, other writers have expressed their ambivalent feelings towards their homeland—like Kathryn Stockett in “Too Little, Too Late” (*The Help*, 2009)—when in fiction itself, some characters like William Faulkner's Quentin Compson (especially in *Absalom, Absalom!*) came to embody this virtually inescapable and everlasting ambiguity.

If the writers' (position towards) southernness has been largely discussed by Southern authors themselves and by scholars, it seems that not so much has been said about the *readers* of Southern literature. To what extent is Southern literature impacted by the stereotypes associated with the culture it is said to depict? Could these expectations—whether conscious or unconscious—be a way to deal with the South's history and legacy? This paper will focus on the dynamics of writing *and* reading Southern literature. It will also seek to study the role of the reader in the making (and in the preservation) of Southern literature so as to determine whether he or she holds any form of transformative power over Southern texts. All in all, this analysis will try and question the “labeling” O'Connor so firmly condemned in her time.

**Eva Gourdoux** is a doctor in American literature, and she currently teaches English for non-specialists at the INSPE Toulouse-Occitanie. Her doctoral dissertation focuses on the dynamics of seclusion in the works of William Faulkner, Eudora Welty and Flannery O'Connor. Her research interests include Southern literature and Southern studies, the representations of marginality and marginal characters, the rewriting of archetypes and the depiction of space.

- **Ashley Massey** (University of North Alabama, US), “Transformations and Transgressions of the Prison Industrial Complex in the U.S. South”

The prison industry has a unique chokehold on rural, Southern spaces in the United States. The hold the prison industrial complex has had on the South has transformed over time, with prisons now primarily being placed in small communities and subsequently transforming a small town's economy. Companies like private prison giant CoreCivic have spread in Southern states just like kudzu, quickly expanding and taking hold in small communities. Much like kudzu, CoreCivic can stifle the growth of anything and anyone underneath its control without much recourse. Rural Southern communities are especially at risk of the infiltration of prison industries due to lack of employment opportunities, poor leadership, and the communal shame surrounding people who are incarcerated. Shame is a tool of incarceration used to prevent a person from rehabilitating the identity imposed upon them by their community following arrest. Shame from incarceration can transform how a person is viewed by their community, their family, and even how they view themselves. By analyzing texts of Southern Gothic writers such as William Gay, whose fictional work is based in the same rural Middle Tennessee region where I reside and where a CoreCivic prison currently exists, the relationship between private prison and private citizen can be further uprooted and examined. How shame is weaponized has also transformed over time, shifting from mugshots in newspapers to social media, phone applications, and more. Technology is used to not only shame those with incarcerated pasts, but also to promote the private industrial complex in small, rural towns via those same digital mechanisms and digital billboards. As the daughter of someone formerly incarcerated in a CoreCivic prison, I offer a personal as well as research-informed perspective on the impact the private prison industrial system can have on families, particularly in rural places where prisons and jails serve not only as sites of revenue for the community but also as sites of harm.

**Ashley Massey** is a graduate of the Master of Arts in English Literature program at the University of North Alabama where she focused on Southern Gothic literature and Critical Prison Studies. She currently teaches writing and literature courses in jails and prisons in Tennessee and Alabama, including through the University of North Alabama's Restorative Justice Lab. She resides on a farm in rural Middle Tennessee where she is a small business owner and cattle caretaker. She previously helped organize the Alabama Death Row Archive housed at UNA. Her poetry has appeared in *The Red Branch Review*, *Lights and Shadows*, and the self-published chapbook titled *Keep the gate open*.

- **Ben Robbins** (University of Innsbruck, Austria), “Southern Flight, Southern Return: Queer Mobilities in Patricia Highsmith's *Strangers on a Train* (1950) and *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1955)”

The American novelist Patricia Highsmith was born in Fort Worth, Texas in 1921; she left the Southern state with her mother for New York at the age of six, returning at intervals

during her childhood (Wilson 12). She would go on to live a highly transnational life, journeying around the world to Mexico, Germany, Italy, England, France, and Switzerland, and she would describe herself as “the forever seeking” (Wilson 12). Her mobility was, in part, informed by her lesbian identity, since homosexuality in the early decades of the twentieth century in the United States was largely criminalized (D’Emilio 10). Highsmith’s “search” in Europe was partly for more tolerant climes where homosexuals did not face the same degree of oppression.

This paper will explore the mobilities of queer protagonists from two of her mid-century crime thrillers within and away from the US South. In *Strangers on a Train*, the architect Guy Haines returns to his southern roots in Texas in order to secure a divorce from his wife. During the journey, Haines enters into a homoerotic connection with the playboy Charles Anthony Bruno, who makes the psychopathic proposal to kill Haines’s wife in exchange for the murder of his own father. The character of Bruno provided a model for the criminal protagonist of *The Talented Mr Ripley*. Highsmith stated in her diaries that “Like Bruno, [Tom Ripley] must never be quite queer—merely capable of playing the part if need be to get information or to help himself out in an emergency”(622-23). Performativity is crucial to Ripley’s success as a criminal, as in the novel he murders a rich American expatriate in Italy, takes on his identity, and will go on to lead a life of luxury in France. In this paper I will first show how both novels present national and transnational mobility as an essential component of queer identities in the mid-century US. Second, I will demonstrate that, through these characters, Highsmith was indirectly able to investigate the criminalization of her identity as well as the currents of migration that have reshaped the American South and the identities of queer Southerners.

**Ben Robbins** is a senior postdoctoral researcher in American literary studies within the Department for American Studies at the University of Innsbruck and project leader of “Queer Exile Literature 1900-69,” which is supported by the Austrian Science Fund. His work in the research areas of modernism, popular culture, and queer and gender studies has appeared in the *Journal of Screenwriting*, *Faulkner Journal*, and *Genre*, and in the edited collections *Faulkner and the Black Literatures of the Americas* and *Hipster Culture*. He has been a visiting fellow at the University of Virginia, the EHESS in Paris, and the Huntington in California.

## **Panel 11, Transforming Regional Identities.**

**Chair: Constante González Groba (University of Santiago, Spain)**

- **Gina Caison** (Georgia State University, US), “‘Tears Over Fallen Hungary’: A Transnational Question of Region”

In his address, “What, to the Slave, is the Fourth of July,” Frederick Douglass chastises his audience: “You shed tears over fallen Hungary, and make the sad story of her wrongs the theme of your poets, statesmen and orators, till your gallant sons are ready to fly to arms to vindicate her cause against her oppressors; but, in regard to the ten thousand wrongs of the

American slave, you would enforce the strictest silence, and would hail him as an enemy of the nation who dares to make those wrongs the subject of public discourse!” Now often reduced to a footnote about the Revolution of 1848-9, the Hungarian cause appeared across nineteenth-century American literature as a flashpoint for what many white Americans interpreted as a just cause against tyranny. Hungary often presented itself as the beleaguered internal colony of the Austrian empire even while oppressing non-Magyars (e.g., Jewish and Slavic peoples) within its borders. Recently, Hungary has found a troubling renaissance of attention among far-right causes in the United States, with the Conservative Political Action Conference hosting their 2022 gathering in Budapest with plans to return in May of 2023. This paper proposes that these moments are not discrete events but rather are tied together in a long discourse of ethno-nationalist beleaguerment that produces an uncanny resonance between the history of Hungary and the history of the U.S. South. In each case, appeals to the ideas of the internal colonies of empire, anxieties over “others,” revisionist narrative histories, and a romantic sense of loss dominate the rhetorical and literary landscape. More than simply a comparative exercise, this presentation explores how the U.S. South and Hungary have served as illuminating foils for one another’s political identities and struggles, demonstrating how each has been drawn into the other’s aura of exceptionalism.

**Gina Caison** is the Kenneth M. England Associate Professor of Southern Literature at Georgia State University. Her first book *Red States: Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, and Southern Studies* (UGA Press, 2018) won the 2019 C. Hugh Holman Award for the best book in southern literary studies. Along with Lisa Hinrichsen and Stephanie Rountree, she is co-editor of *Small Screen Souths: Region, Identity, and the Cultural Politics of Television* (LSU Press, 2017) and *Remediating Region: New Media and the U.S. South* (LSU Press, 2021). From 2020-22, she served as president of the Society for the Study of Southern Literature, and during the 2020-21 academic year, she was a research fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study at Central European University in Budapest where she completed a new book titled *Erosion: American Literature & the Anxiety of Disappearance*.

- **Elizabeth Hayes Turner** (University of North Texas), “Juneteenth and the Meaning of Citizenship”

In July 1865 an item appeared in the *Clarksville*, that began with a question. “What will become of the negro race then?” The writer launched into his own answers, calling on the divine and using all the logic of a southern slaveholder:

This, indeed, is a serious question, and one which Mr. Chas. Sumner, and his followers had done well to consider six years ago. ... By this sudden abolition of slavery, they have paved the way to the critical extermination of the black race in America . . . . At all events, the two races, both free cannot live together. The negro can never become a citizen at the South. ...The negro can never compete with the white race, either in intellectual, or in the agricultural field of labor; the freed negro must be restrained, and kept in tutelage... The negro’s freedom cannot be entrusted to his own keeping ... and his nominal freedom must be ...controlled. God has so ordained it, and man cannot alter the decree of God.

Needless to say, these predictions became moot. For all the bluster that supporters of slavery put forth, for all the calls for gradual abolition, for all the violence used against slaves when leaving their masters, and the brutality perpetrated against freedmen during Reconstruction, emancipation prevailed, and black Texans have memorialized this event annually in every sizable city and in remote counties ever since.

This paper argues that annual Juneteenth celebrations, patronized by white Texans while created and enjoyed by black citizens during “Reconstruction” and beyond, hid the intent of Juneteenth organizers to politicize the event. Unbeknownst to white Texans, freedpeople campaigned for office, and urged black citizens to vote. Since most whites did not attend Juneteenth celebrations, they did not observe the passionate political language that inspired black revelers. These celebrations culminated in a form of political subversion, the purpose of which was to gain access to legal and constitutional rights.

**Elizabeth Hayes Turner** received the Ph.D. in United States history from Rice University in 1990. She is currently Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus, at the University of North Texas (UNT). She is the author of *Women, Culture, and Community: Religion and Reform in Galveston, 1880-1920* (Oxford UP, 1997), *Women and Gender in the New South, 1865-1945* (Wiley, 2009), and is co-author of *Galveston and the 1900 Storm: Catastrophe and Catalyst* (U of Texas P, 2000). Dr. Turner has authored thirteen anthology chapters/articles and co-edited six anthologies, including: *Hidden Histories of Women in the New South* (U of Missouri P, 1994), *Beyond Image and Convention: Explorations in Southern Women’s History* (U of Missouri P, 1998), *Clio’s Southern Sisters: Interviews with Leaders of the Southern Association for Women Historians* (U of Missouri P, 2004), *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas* (Texas A&M, 2007), *Texas Women: Their Histories, Their Lives* (U of Georgia P, 2015), and two revisions of *Major Problems in the History of the American South* (Cengage, 1999 and 2012). In 2003 she was a Fulbright Lecturer to the University of Genoa, Italy. In 2011 she was awarded the William P. and Rita Clements Center Fellowship for the Study of Southwestern America, Southern Methodist University, and elected Fellow of the Texas State Historical Association. She retired from UNT in 2014.

- **Clara Juncker** (University of Southern Denmark, Odense), “Telling About the South: Clint Smith’s *How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* (2021)”

In *How the Word Is Passed*, which topped the *New York Times* bestseller list and won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction, as well as many other prizes, New Orleans native Clint Smith engages with a project that began with the removal of the statue of Robert E. Lee, close to downtown New Orleans. He decided to seize the moment when his country was grappling with slavery, its monuments, and memorials by locating the history of slavery hiding in full sight across the US. He visits in his book eight locations, mostly in the South, to trace a history that needs to be acknowledged and passed on. His sections on the Louisiana State Penitentiary, aka Angola, or Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, to name a few examples,

reveal hidden stories of the South that Smith wants us to know. He tells these darker histories differently, by engaging in communication strategies that will educate the people he meets on his travels as well as his readers, who are invited to come along on his journey. He mixes in his transformations of Southern history a number of discourse and genres that together strengthen his educational project, most prominently his use of embedded journalism, which has the readers follow Smith into the Angola prison, built on top of a former plantation, and walk from the impressive Monticello grounds and buildings to the cabins where enslaved people, including Sally Hemings, lived their lives. He stresses the prominent role of tour guides at the sites he visits and also includes historians, statistics, descendants of enslaved persons, and character sketches of unknown historical actors. In the process, Smith transforms the history of slavery and points to its contemporary relevance, as the South and the US engage with a past that reverberates in contemporary conflicts and crises.

**Clara Juncker** is Associate Professor of American Literature and Culture at the University of Southern Denmark, Odense. She is the former Director of the Center for American Studies, President of the Danish Association for American Studies, and President of the Nordic Association for American Studies. She has published widely on American literature in journals on both sides of the Atlantic and is the author of books that include *Trading Cultures: Nationalism and Globalization in American Studies*, *Through Random Doors We Wandered: Women Writing the South*, *Transnational America: Contours of Modern U.S. Culture*, *Circling Marilyn: Text, Body Performance*, and *Black Roses: African American Women Writers*.

## **Panel 12, Performing Southernness.**

**Chair: Michał Choiński (Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland)**

- **Susan V. Donaldson** (College of William and Mary, US), “Remapping Southern Visual Culture: From Charles W. Chesnut’s Protest Novels to Black Lives Matter, Kehinde Wiley, and Lost Cause Monuments”

On June 10, 2020, demonstrators in Richmond, Virginia, protesting the murder of George Floyd in police custody, tore down one of the city’s most conspicuous and controversial landmarks—the statue of Confederate president Jefferson Davis on the city’s famous Monument Avenue. The Davis statue was one of four huge public monuments erected in the early twentieth century to celebrate Lost Cause military leaders and to reinforce the ideological triumph of white supremacy through racial segregation and black disfranchisement. The other monuments were spray-painted with antiracist slogans and repurposed as community parks and gathering sites for Black Lives Matter protestors. Within a month three other statues—of Stonewall Jackson, J. E. B. Stuart, and Mathew Fontaine Maury—removed on orders from Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney. The last, oldest, and largest statue—of Robert E. Lee—erected in 1890 before a huge crowd of Confederate veterans and supporters was removed in 2021 to the cheers of an exuberant crowd. What remained were

empty, spray-painted pedestals and repaved traffic circles where the monuments once stood—as though to underscore their irrelevance.

It was a transformation of the city’s visual and political coordinates made possible in part by public response to the 2015 massacre of black churchgoers in Charleston by a white supremacist and the 2017 riot in Charlottesville between white supremacists and protestors over yet another statue commemorating Robert E. Lee. Even earlier, though, this remapping of regional visual culture was anticipated by African American novelist Charles W. Chesnutt, who responded to the deeply racist and nostalgic Lost Cause narratives of Thomas Nelson Page and Thomas Dixon with penetrating critiques of white nostalgia and racism in his 1898 novel *The Marrow of Tradition* and his 2005 novel *The Colonel’s Dream*, both of which exposed the violence and deceit required to maintain Confederate nostalgia and the political power of white supremacy. Paralleling that critique is the sculpture “Rumors of War” by artist Kehinde Wiley purchased by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, signifying on the city’s traditional icon of J. E. B. Stuart on a horse, and installed in front of the museum—just around the corner from Monument Avenue.

**Susan V. Donaldson** retired in 2020 as National Endowment for the Humanities Professor of English and American Studies, Emerita, from the College of William and Mary, where she had taught since 1985. Donaldson is the author of *Competing Voices: The American Novel, 1865-1914*, which won a *Choice* “Outstanding Academic Book” award, and some sixty essays and book chapters as well as co-editor of *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts* and editor and co-editor of several special issues of *The Faulkner Journal* and *Mississippi Quarterly*. She has an essay titled “Witnessing Jim Crow: Three Mississippi Writers and the Politics of Critical Race Theory,” in the forthcoming collection on William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, and Richard Wright issued by the University Press of Mississippi.

- **Annette Trefzer** (University of Mississippi, US), “White Women in the Darkroom: Transforming Mississippi Through Photography”

The writers Florence Mars and Eudora Welty both photographed in Mississippi during times of social turmoil: Welty documented the Depression years of the 1930s and early 1940s; Mars documented the civil rights movement between 1954 and 1964. Both women captured the dramatic social transformations that engulfed their communities: Welty in Jackson and small towns in Mississippi; Mars in her hometown of Philadelphia, Mississippi. Neither photographer had formal training; both used technology not only to record and document the social changes they witnessed, but more so, I argue, to intervene in the politics of the Jim Crow South with their sharp photographic vision.

In the introduction to *Mississippi Witness: The Photography of Florence Mars* (2019) James T. Campbell notes their shared vantage point: “Single white women, they lived at once inside and outside the confines of a conservative, racist, patriarchal society” (13). The photographs of Welty and Mars reveal surprising continuities in subject matter, style, and focus. Although

Mars could not have been familiar with Welty's photographs because *One Time, One Place* was not published until 1971, the photographs share a striking visual language.

Welty and Mars's photographs constitute a chronological sequence, however, when examined side by side they seem to reveal a world that has not changed much. In the small town south of the early 1960s the processes of social, racial, and economic transformations of the previous decades were barely visible. As Joseph Millichap writes, "while the South became a different place after World War II, it also remained southern in a very real sense, a region determined as much by its history as by its geography" (23). The lack of socio-economic change becomes glaringly evident in a quick comparison of the photographs by Welty and Mars. When regarded without reference to captions it is often entirely unclear to an observer whether the photographs were taken during the Depression or post-World War II. And yet, examined more carefully, Mars's documentation of social and racial transformations in her hometown embeds the emerging tensions of the civil rights movement. This paper then argues that the atmosphere of racial change visible in Mars's frames becomes retrospectively legible in Welty's exposures as well. Thus, Eudora Welty's photographic vision is prescient and powerfully prophetic of what was to come.

**Annette Trefzer** is Professor of English at the University of Mississippi where she teaches American literature. She is the author of *Disturbing Indians: The Archaeology of Southern Fiction*, and *Exposing Mississippi: Eudora Welty's Photographic Reflections*. She is co-editor of *Global Faulkner*, *Faulkner's Sexualities*, *Faulkner and Mystery*, *Faulkner and Formalism: Returns of the Text*, *Faulkner and the Native South* and currently she is at work on *Mississippi Confluence: William Faulkner, Eudora Welty and Richard Wright*. Her work has appeared in many journals. In addition to working on fiction, she enjoys directing a small community art gallery.

- **Mikaël Toulza** (Université de Lille, FR), "Who Will You Do Voodoo to?": (Trans)Forming the Myth of the Voodoo Doll in Louisiana Voodoo Films and Series"

In history, the religion of voodoo has been constructed as a dangerous and evil force by whites intent on maintaining the plantation system in Saint Domingue (late 18th century) and, two centuries later, US hegemony over the Caribbean. The sensationalistic form of voodoo that is widespread in popular culture ensues from the hegemonic discourse of such powerful white people. While sensationalistic portrayals of Haitian vodou were gaining momentum, the Louisiana tourist industry capitalized on ghost stories and tours revolving around New Orleans' reputation as the voodoo capital of the United States. There, voodoo dolls are sold to tourists along with flashy tags that read "Who will you do voodoo to?". These artifacts have become the paragons of the tourism industry's marketing of voodoo and are believed to be effigies of ritual magic in which a practitioner sticks pins to achieve the same effect on their victim. Hence, voodoo dolls appear to be symptomatic of the treatment of Louisiana's Afro-diasporic heritage, which is Southernized, and sometimes even Americanized, so as to be turned into a product of consumption.



As Natalie Armitage argues, “[the] link between the use of dolls and Vodou magical practice has been forged through myriad representations in popular culture; from travel writing during the marine occupation, between 1915–1934, [...] to filmic representations such as Victor Halperin’s *White Zombie* (1932) and Jacques Tourneur’s *I Walked With A Zombie* (1943)” (Armitage, 2015: 87). A simplification of actual voodoo practices, this “imagined voodoo” (McGee, 2013) is perpetuated in movies and TV series which draw inspiration from the Louisiana tourist industry’s active commodification of its voodoo lore. And while classical voodoo zombie films tend to be set in exotic Caribbean islands, what I call Louisiana voodoo films and series (*LVFS*) envision voodoo, and voodoo dolls, as being part of beliefs and practices of Louisianans. From *Chloe, Love Is Calling You* (Neilan, 1934) to *American Horror Story: Coven* (FX, 2013-2014) and *Apocalypse* (FX, 2018), these productions have been particularly influential in the audiovisual mythification of the voodoo doll, in light of this object’s previous commodification by the tourism industry. Thus, I intend to focus on the extent to which Louisiana voodoo films and series’ setting in the contiguous United States has contributed to the (trans)formation of the audiovisual lore attached to voodoo dolls.

**Mikaël Toulza** is an Associate Professor (MCF) of films studies and American civilization at the University of Lille. His doctoral dissertation sought to interrogate the political implications of the representation of Louisiana voodoo in cinema and television through an intersectional approach. Currently he studies questions of religious identities, Southern identities and intersectionality in film and television.

Friday night:





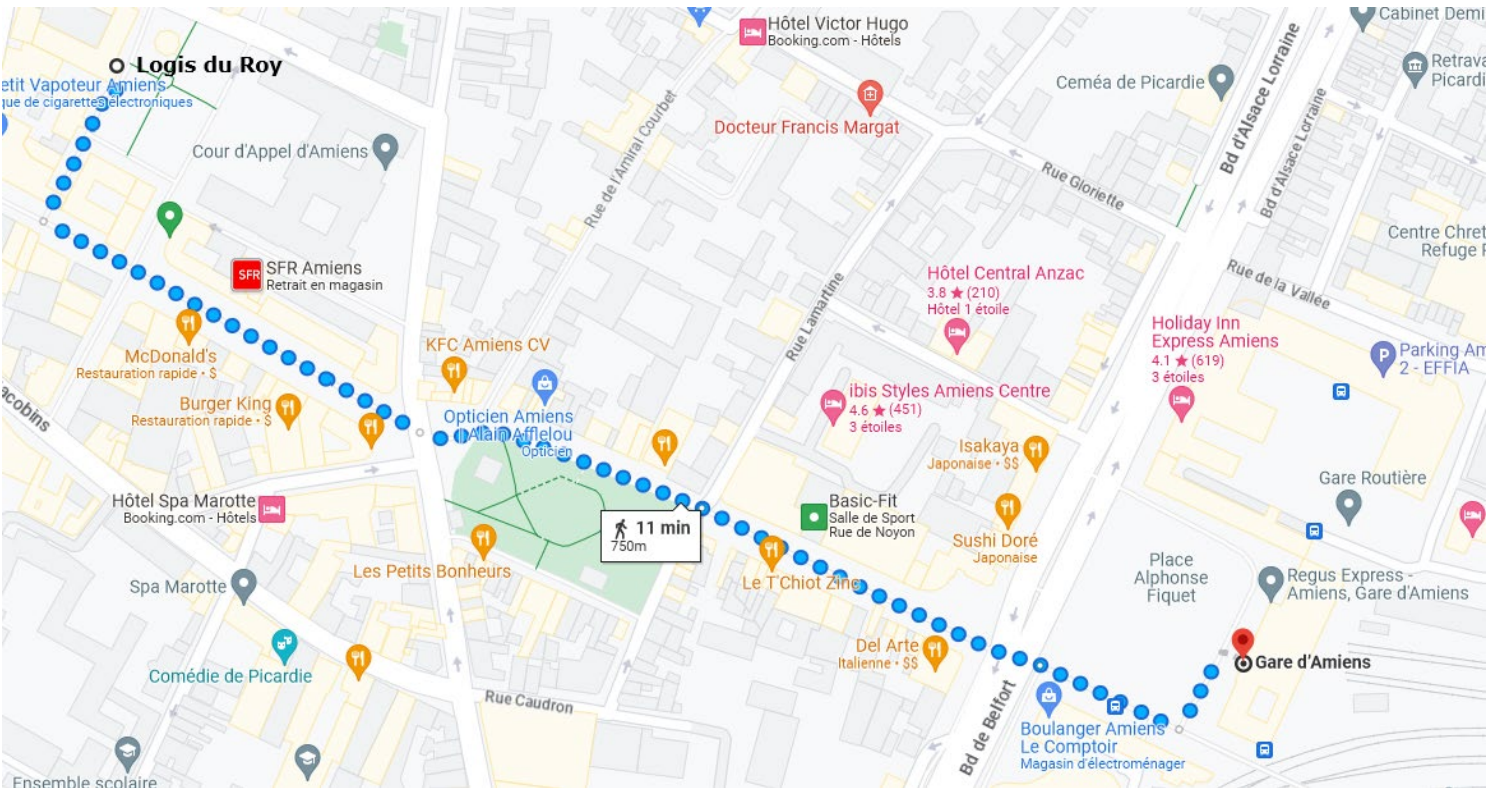






## How to go...

... to the Logis du Roy from the train station in Amiens :



... to the university from the train station in Arras :

