

February 5 '009

click [here](#) for text of Fall '008 message following up to the Albuquerque A.S.A., along these lines: “[let’s] **make sure the Program Committee receives a number of substantive proposals, plural, on early-American topics**”

Dear colleagues in the A.S.A.’s EARLY AMERICAN MATTERS Caucus,

Greetings, Happy New Year, and here we go: descriptions of the SEVEN early-American-flavored proposals that we know of that have made their way to the A.S.A.’s '009 Program Committee. You’ll see numerous pointed references, herein, to the '009 conference’s stated theme --

“Practices of Citizenship, Sustainability and Belonging”

-- and as for the timing of notifications, here’s part of an e-mail the A.S.A. command module has sent to people who had met the January 26 deadline:

Once the Committee has finalized the program, all persons who have submitted proposals will be notified by email of the Committee's decisions. Session organizers are responsible for notifying the members of the proposed panel of the Program Committee's decision. If you do not receive an official e-mail by April 30, please contact [. . .]

As a reminder, the A.S.A. does not guarantee any of its caucuses a slot on the program. Once this year’s program.comm has decided which proposals to accept, our caucus will presumably have the opportunity to designate one panel as the one we prefer to designate the EAM Session. We’ll keep you posted, and meanwhile here’s a list of the proposals that we know about.

*--Dennis Moore
Paul Erickson
Sally Promey
Sarah Rivett
Karen Salt,
members of our Caucus’s ad hoc Working Committee,
which grew out of our business meeting in Albuquerque,
October '008*

Note: this first pair of linked panels grew directly out of a collaboration between our caucus and the A.S.A.’s Environment and Culture Caucus, an approach suggested by one of our Caucus’s original co-proposers, Annette Kolodny:

Sustaining Ecological Citizenship in a Transcultural World: From Colonial History and Literature to Contemporary Film (I and II)

Co-organized--and maybe co-sponsored--by the Early American Matters Caucus and the Environment and Culture Caucus

Session I Chair and Commentator: T.V. Reed

Session I Presenters: Karen Salt, Monique Allewaert, Ivan Grabovac

Session II Chair and Commentator: William Gleason

Session II Presenters: Susan Scott Parrish, Joni Adamson, Kimberly Ruffin, Kristen Crase

ABSTRACT:

Questions of citizenship have been at the heart of American Studies scholarship, yet they have long been subject to profound redefinition in response to changing national and geopolitical realities. As Lauren Berlant notes in her entry on citizenship in Burgett and Hendler's Keywords for American Cultural Studies, "originally the *citizen* was simply a certain kind of someone who lived in a Greek *city*. . . . But the ancient history of the term tells us little about the constellation of rights, laws, obligations, interests, fantasies, and expectations that shape the modern scene of citizenship" (37). Notions of ecology and sustainability have transformed the theory and practice of citizenship for people in the U.S, which in turn has global consequences. The papers proposed in these two linked sessions, which are jointly sponsored by the EAM and the ECC, bring these two pillars of the ASA's tripartite theme together. Within each session's trans-historic discussion, papers offer ways to recognize early modern debates about the establishment of New World plantation monoculture regimes and notions of racial nativism, and the ways in which these legacies are still with us in locations as diverse as Barbados, Haiti, New Orleans and Washington, D.C.

Papers in the first session (I) move throughout the Atlantic World, the US and Canada. These papers discuss nineteenth-century Haiti as it came to be marketed to free people of color in the Americas as a way to entwine ecological bounty with issues of African hemispherism, citizenship, and soil; the ways [West-Indian] folk tales detailing cross-species interactions challenge the destructions of the body and personhood in the eighteenth-century plantation zone; and US/Canadian migratory bird preservation movements and their links to nativistic early-twentieth-century immigration law. Papers in the second session (II) move from colonial Barbados to contemporary New Orleans and Washington, D.C. The first two papers examine the ways in which natural history was used to find models of social organization in New World colonies and how Letters From An American Farmer, set into the context of what Arjun Appadurai has called globalization from below, can be read for what it offers modern readers interested in ending contemporary human trafficking. The second two papers examine how documentary film reveals the collision of discourse around race, ecology, and citizenship that occurred during Katrina and the Levee Disaster that followed, and how exploring the potential of the concepts of place, home, and environment offers social power to communities experiencing environmental duress such as Anacostia, in Washington D.C, and mining towns in Appalachia.

Within these linked sessions, audience members will encounter a transcultural and transhistorical examination of ecological citizenship and its complicated history within societies aimed at sustaining, and competing within, a globalizing world. Presenters hope to

promote new understandings of ecological citizenship and new forms of dialogue between academics, public intellectuals, activists, policymakers and the general public. Although submitted with a common session abstract, we understand that each session will be judged on its own merits by the Program Committee.

-- Karen Salt and
Joni Adamson, guiding force within the Environment and Culture Caucus

Early America, Asia, and the Pacific

Chair: Martha Rojas, English, University of Rhode Island

Papers:

“A Slave Woman’s Transpacific Journey”
-- Tatiana Seijas, History, Miami University

“What’s Chinese About China in Revolutionary America? Benjamin Franklin’s Fine and Noble China Vase”
-- Jim Egan, English, Brown University

“Visions of Empire in the Pacific World: Russia’s Colonial Stages in North America”
-- Gwenn A. Miller, History, The College of the Holy Cross

“Trade and Time in Eighteenth-Century Pacific Travel Writing”
-- Michelle Burnham, English, Santa Clara University

ABSTRACT:

The study of colonial and early national America has been shaped for well over a decade now by a transatlantic studies paradigm that emphasizes the movement of peoples, goods, texts, and ideas across and around the Atlantic world. Meanwhile, current scholarship in transpacific studies and in relations between Asia and the Americas has been dominated by a focus on more recent historical periods, especially the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. By contrast, there has been relatively little attention paid to the circulation of peoples, goods, texts, and ideas between the Americas, Asia, and the Pacific world in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. This session remedies this silence by bringing together historians and literary scholars whose recent work uncovers and examines the remarkably complex, fascinating, and diverse world of the early American Pacific and of early America’s interest in and connections with Asia.

Traversed by Spanish, French, English, American, and Russian ships -- as well as by Indians, Chinese, and the indigenous inhabitants of the western coast of North America, the North Pacific, and the Pacific islands -- the early American Pacific was a transnational and multilingual world. The four papers that make up this session reveal the significant role that Asia played in the development of early America, and they do so by recovering texts that have seldom received close scholarly attention or identifying moments in canonical texts that have gone largely overlooked. They focus on moments that emphasize the multilingual,

transcontinental, and globalized networks in which early America was situated: on the lives of slaves transported from India to colonial Mexico, Chinese porcelain imagined in revolutionary Philadelphia, the use by European travelers of Polynesian natives in the pursuit of furs and silks, and the establishment of fur posts by Russians in the American far northwest.

Through the story of Catarina de San Juan, Tatiana Seijas represents the experience of forced migration in the early Pacific slave trade, which left few historical records. The Manila galleons that transported San Juan and other slaves from Asia to the Americas operated in the service of bringing luxury items such as porcelain, silk, and spices from China and India through Mexico to Spain. These commodities embodied both material and metaphorical value in early America, and Jim Egan explores these in his study of Benjamin Franklin's references to China and Chinaware in his revolutionary-era writings. The discovery that there was a highly profitable trade in China for furs trapped in the Pacific northwest brought numerous expeditions through the Pacific in the late eighteenth-century. Michelle Burnham examines the negotiation of trade and time in the travel narratives produced by these voyages. Russia remained a central force in the Pacific fur trade in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and Gwenn Miller surveys the frontier outposts established in Russian America -- on Kodiak Island and Sitka in the north Pacific--and the meaning those trade posts held for Russia's relations with both Europe to the west and America to the east.

The session provides an opportunity to discuss how Asia and the Pacific in early performances of empire around the globe, an opportunity to discuss how these texts and figures might alter the Atlantic-focused field of early American studies, and an opportunity for American studies scholars working in more recent historical periods to consider the value and import of earlier texts and materials on the developing field of Pacific studies. The panelists represent an interdisciplinary mix of junior and senior scholars whose work shares an interest in the ways in which the early circulations of bodies, goods, and ideas between America and Asia both constituted and disrupted markets, discourses, and empires.

Paper Works in the Classroom: Teaching with Prints, Photographs, and Ephemera

Chair: Georgia B. Barnhill, Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Graphic Arts and
Director, Center for Historic American Visual Culture at the AAS

This round table addresses strategies for teaching courses on American prints as well introducing prints, photographs, and ephemera into more traditional courses in history and American studies. The participants are:

Joni Kinsey, professor of art history at the University of Iowa. Joni has taught a chronologically arranged seminar on nineteenth-century American prints; her students had the option of writing essays or crafting exhibitions. She drew heavily on web-based resources for prints.

Nancy Siegel, associate professor at Towson University will offer a course to studio art majors and art history majors and will integrate work in the studio with more traditional course work.

Kevin Muller, assistant professor in the department of art history at Utah State University, will discuss his courses that seek to develop his students' awareness of the many ways Americans of diverse ethnicity, class and gender have used visual culture to bring order to the uncertainties of everyday life.

Kristina Wilson, assistant professor of art history at Clark University, has used the resources of the museums and libraries in Worcester, Massachusetts, to engage her students in close visual analysis of art objects. At AAS she selected illustrations from Harper's Weekly.

Katherine Grier, professor of history at the University of Delaware, has encouraged her students to collect ephemera and to use these examples of material culture in their research. Again, they had the option to create exhibition proposals and scripts or to craft illustrated lectures or web pages for their final projects.

We hope for a lively discussion about other strategies to use visual materials in the classroom.

Death, Destruction, and Ruin in Nineteenth-Century America

Chair: Paul J. Erickson, American Antiquarian Society

Papers:

“Incomplete Men: Dismemberment and the American Civil War”

-- Megan Kate Nelson, Cal State-Fullerton

“Death, Nature, and Indian Mounds: The Ideological Origins of Mount Auburn Cemetery”

-- Aaron Sachs, Cornell University

“Haunted Frontiers: Ruins, Relics, and 'Lost' Civilizations in the Backcountry”

-- Sam Truett, University of New Mexico

Comment: Sarah Purcell, Grinnell College

ABSTRACT:

This session brings together three papers that examine the ways that death, destruction, and ruin shaped traditions of citizenship and belonging in nineteenth-century America. Megan Kate Nelson's paper, “Incomplete Men: Dismemberment and the Civil War,” evaluates the impact of mangled corpses and amputees on commonly held notions of male citizenship during the Civil War era. In “Death, Nature, and Indian Mounds: The Ideological Origins of Mount Auburn Cemetery,” Aaron Sachs investigates how Mount Auburn signaled a distinctly American ecology of death, rooted in democratic access to natural spaces and in Native American burial traditions; this cemetery thus redefined Americans' kinship with the land. Sam Truett argues in “Haunted Frontiers: Ruins, Relics, and 'Lost' Civilizations in the

Backcountry” that nineteenth-century U.S. Americans looked to the ruins and relics of “other” civilizations in order to establish themselves in a global community of empires. Sarah J. Purcell, who is working on a book on the politics and spectacle of mourning during the Civil War, will provide the comment. Together, these three papers and the comment illuminate how the cultural practices and landscapes associated with death, ruination, and the cultural meanings of the body’s destruction compelled nineteenth-century Americans to reevaluate their ideas about national belonging. This panel is proposed by the American Antiquarian Society.

Performing Publics and Counterpublics: Belonging and Boundaries in Early American Theatre Culture,

proposed by Peter Reed, University of Mississippi

Chair and Commentator:

Annemarie Bean, Wesleyan University

Papers:

“Specters of Insanity: The Delirium Tremens Reprised and Recycled on the Antebellum Stage”
-- Amy E. Hughes, City University of New York, Brooklyn College

“Wandering Jews and Strangers in Strange Lands: Representing the Jew in the Early National Theatre”

-- Heather S. Nathans, University of Maryland, College Park

“Recruiting Counterfeit Blackness in T. D. Rice’s Virginia Mummy”

-- Peter P. Reed, University of Mississippi

ABSTRACT:

The actors and audiences of early American theatre trafficked in community and exclusion. Circulating among established venues, expanding into new circuits, and building Atlantic entertainment industries, performance molded dynamic spaces of representation. Theatre articulated modes -- elite and popular, local and transnational, new and old, American and English, “insider” and “outsider.” The stage also featured variegated forms, and this panel engages evidence coded in what Diana Taylor has fruitfully characterized as intertwined archives and repertoires. Bodies on stage acted through networks of related textual and visual forms; textuality, ritual, spectacle, dance, and song all coexisted in the playhouse.

This panel examines histories of the theatre, its acts, and its constituent audiences. Who was in, who was out, and how did the theatre stage the lines between and the connections amongst various members of the early American public? How did the stage embody and perform race, ethnicity, or subcultural group? What gestures did it recycle, reuse, or condense into newly powerful moves? What kinds of emotions and identifications did it encourage? How, we ask, did theatre acknowledge its authorizing affiliations and nod to its subversive counterpublics?

The three papers on this panel examine various modes and sites of performance, with attention to problem areas between, for example, sane and insane, coreligionist and outsider, white and black. We take as our common thread the stage’s self-conscious exploration of its makers, its

audiences, and its outsiders. Together, these papers examine the various publics imagined in and structured by American theatre. The stage displayed acts shaped by bodily discipline and medical epistemology, by religious affiliation, and by racial identification. Such forms, we argue, remain important markers of the way people stage themselves, become spectators to others' acts, and reenact such social knowledge.

Colloquy with Stephanie Smallwood on [Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora](#),

proposed by Dennis Moore, Florida State University

Panelists:

Thadious M. Davis, University of Pennsylvania
Mary C. Kelley, University of Michigan
April C. Langley, University of Missouri
Dennis Moore, Florida State University, moderator
Stephanie Smallwood, University of Washington, Seattle
John Wood Sweet, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

ABSTRACT:

Historian Stephanie Smallwood's Frederick Douglass Prize-winning [Saltwater Slavery](#) makes clear that, for Africans brought to chattel slavery in the North American colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both belonging and sustainability had severe limits. Belonging amounted to being part of the "commodity chains set up by English merchants," and sustainability was not simply a matter of physical survival but also depended on the "captives' will to remain fully recognizable as human subjects." Rather than presenting a paper, each participant in this interdisciplinary roundtable, including Professor Smallwood, will make a four- or five-minute opening statement that lays out a specific issue or question related to the book. That round of brief opening statements frees up time for lively, substantive discussion that engages members of the audience as well as panelists. In setting up and occasionally chairing sessions along these lines . . . , the session organizer has learned to work hard at avoiding two extremes: on the one hand, assembling a tablefull of sycophants ready to drool on cue and/or the author, and, on the other, assembling a lineup that would include someone intent on an academic ambush: trashing author over his or her methods, conclusions, and maybe parents. No fan club, then, and no food fights. [Note: if you'd like to see what's in that ellipsis, i.e., examples of earlier colloquies at the A.S.A., SEA, ASECS, and so on, e-mail me at dmoore@fsu.edu. Thanks.]

revised Feb 5 '009, based on follow-ups to our January 30 posting. Thanks!