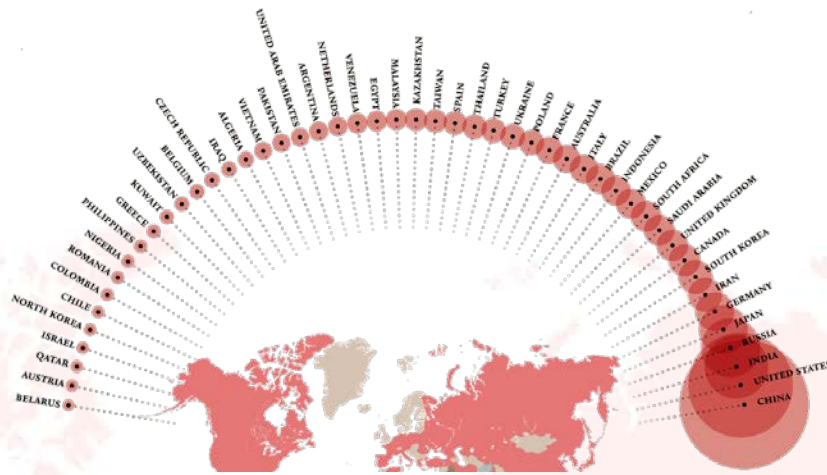
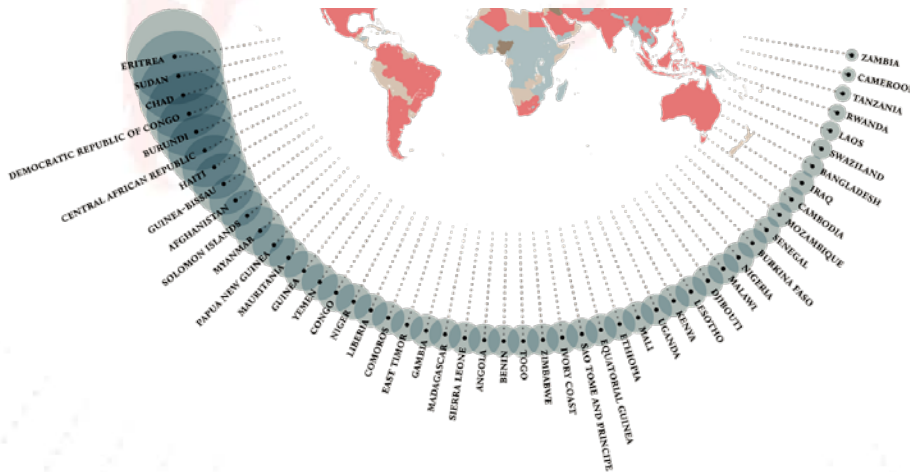


24th AISNA Biennial Conference
University of Milan, September 28-30, 2017
The US and the World We Inhabit



PANELS
and
CALL FOR PAPERS

Paper proposals (max. 300 words) should be submitted, together with a brief biographical note, to the Workshop Coordinators and carbon copied to the Conference Organizer, Paola Loreto (paola.loreto@unimi.it), by June 15, 2017. Successful proponents will be notified by June 30, 2017. Workshops exceeding four participants will be split into two sessions.





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In collaboration with
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1. *The Wor(l)ds We Inhabit: Modes and Moods of Reading*

Coordinator:

Manlio Della Marca, LMU Munich, Germany (manlio.dellamarca@lmu.de)

Discussant:

Giorgio Mariani (“Sapienza” University of Rome, Italy)

Over the past two decades, technology has infiltrated almost every aspect of our lives, dramatically reshaping our behavior and the way we engage with literary and nonliterary texts—in and outside the American Studies classroom. This panel brings together scholars in the fields of American literary studies, Classics, and Media Ecology to reflect on reading as both a cultural practice and a valuable cognitive and emotional experience. Exploring different modes and moods of scholarly and lay reading, panel participants will reflect on the future(s) of *Homo legens* and the enduring value of literary studies in an increasingly technologized, fast-paced, and hyper-stimulating world.

Papers:

- Manlio Della Marca (LMU Munich, Germany): “Modes and Moods of Reading”
- John Paul Russo (University of Miami, USA): “The Fate of Reading”
- Elena Lamberti (University of Bologna, Italy): “Living in a Déjà-Vu: Literature, Cognitive Pollution, Mediated Societies”
- Klaus Benesch (LMU Munich, Germany): “A Matter of Scale: Is Close Reading to American Studies What Place Is to Space?”



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2. Next of Kin? Physiological Attachments in American Literature and Culture

Coordinators:

Serena Fusco, University of Naples “L’Orientale” (serenafusco@gmail.com)

Elisabetta Marino, University of Rome “Tor Vergata” (marino@lettere.uniroma2.it)

Discussant:

Fiorenzo Iuliano, University of Cagliari

Accompanying a general “wearing out” of cultural constructivism, a renewed interest in biology, animality, humanity and its limits, and related topics has made its appearance in the humanities. This “turn” can be productive as well as problematic: while it is, in theoretical terms, related to the emergence of ecocriticism, it also speaks to some nowadays hotly debated topics in the public sphere – such as identity and belonging in the context of migration as (humanitarian) crisis, the validity of science, medicine and its others, and the practices and meanings of parenthood.

We invite proposals that explore how biology - and physiology - related topics are played out in American literature and culture, how they vary in different historical moments, and how they create and/or hinder structures of relations, but also more fluid/informal/chaotic types of exchange. We suggest that the renewed interest in “life” in biological/natural terms, and in the physiological components underlying social life, actually accompanies a very cultural, even political, preoccupation for the range, scope, and limits of the attachments felt by living beings for their various “kindred”. “Kindred” can be conceived of as corporealized or decorporealized, across time, space, and species. Ties of kindred may encompass various human and non-human domains, blood- versus law-regulated relations, can be broadly or narrowly conceived, in essentialistic as well as non-essentialistic terms. We propose to explore how biology- and science-related paradigms interact with cultural dimensions and foreground the problem of scales, namely, local/global, small scale/broad scale tensions between communities and systems, and how a wide range of attachments come into being and/or are severed. Related sub-topics may include, while not being limited to: bodies, blood and other bodily fluids, and organs; fertility and reproduction; the role of different regimes of scientific and non-scientific knowledge; and the relation between different kingdoms, species, and subspecies.

Papers:

- Serena Fusco (University of Naples “L’Orientale”): “Attachment, Parenting, and the ‘Meddlesome Earth’ in (Post)Ethnic American Literature”
- Elisabetta Marino (University of Rome “Tor Vergata”): “Language for Women or Women’s Language? Botany and Flower Language in Nineteenth Century America”

3. The Subject of Nature in the Ecopoetry of the African Diaspora

Coordinator:

Katherine R. Lynes, Union College, Schenectady, NY (lynesk@union.edu)

Discussant:

Sonia di Loreto, University of Turin

In conversation with fellow poet Tracy K. Smith in 2015, Gregory Pardlo echoed WEB Du Bois's famous phrase about the problem of the 20th century, the problem of the color line: "the problem of the 21st century will be figuring out how to dismantle the mythology of race while honoring the real relationships and histories that we constructed while under the spell of that mythology. And there is something about the ways our attitudes toward nature are bound up in the impulse to dehumanize others through, for example, the mythology of race — in the impulse, even, to place nature in the service of humanity."

This panel invites papers on the topic of ecopoetry of the African Diaspora, with a particular focus on the relationships between other-than-human nature and human subjects. Among the questions this panel seeks to explore are: How might human language aid in dismantling the mythologies of race while also dismantling the power structures that have led to our current ecological crises? What are the potentials for translations of the voices of other-than-human nature when poetic language is itself already oriented toward human-centered thinking? To what extent are ecological crises calling out for an examination of the problem of the subject line? Proposals focusing on any historical time period are welcome, as are proposals that include creative performance.

Papers:

- Katherine R. Lynes (Union College, Schenectady, NY): "Words fail me here': The Subject of Nature in Black Ecopoetry"

4. Migrating Food Culture between Italy and America

Coordinators:

Andrea Ciribuco, National University of Ireland in Galway
(andrea.ciribuco@nuigalway.ie)

Perri Giovannucci, American University in Dubai (pgiovannucci@aud.edu)

Discussant:

John Paul Russo, University of Miami

Among the different signs of the presence of Italians in America, food is one of the most relevant, pervasive and recognizable. This workshop aims to discuss the manner in which food has channeled and facilitated moments of cultural difference, intercultural dialogue, and assimilation of the Italian community in the United States. Such moments have taken place through a broad range of media (material culture, literature, advertising, film) throughout the history of Italian emigration, from great waves of post-1861 migration to the global flows of today. Cuisine, eating practices and social discourse about food reflect both the emigrants' socio-economic situation and the many ways in which Italians reacted to the American environment, often managing to make an impact in that environment. This impact is measured in terms of material culture and social practices. In turn, food names and advertising also reflect the Italian language (with its many dialects) and the English language interacting to exchange words and create meaning together. The linguistic landscape of America shows several contributions from Italian, through decades of shared environment and intercultural dialogue. Literature and cinema narrating and portraying the Italian-American experience make countless uses of food as symbols to describe the socio-cultural situation of Italian immigrants to America, and reflect on their reaction to the American environment.

This workshop welcomes submissions from scholars from a variety of backgrounds – literature, film, cultural studies, and applied linguistics – to reflect on food as a cultural marker and a meaning-making process for Italian culture in America, considering both its importance in the cultural history of the Italian America and its relevance nowadays. Possible topics include, but are not restricted to: food in Italian American literature, cinema and television; oral narrative about food in the Italian America; material culture, popular culture and advertising relative to Italian food in America.



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5. *Gardens / Parks / Landscape / Environment*

Coordinator and discussant:

Francesca Orestano, University of Milan (francesca.orestano@unimi.it)

The terms chosen suggest a panorama of interactions with nature, which involve humans, animals, plants, across a considerable span of time, in the United States. The perspective of Ecocriticism can be viewed as the main avenue to the issue, but at the same time it may encompass literature and poetry, visual texts and photography, architecture and landscape planning, travel and earth sciences.

The workshop welcomes proposals on the subjects of Ecocriticism and Geocriticism, Green Cultural Studies and Environmental Literary Studies, Ecofeminism and non-anthropocentric Humanism.

Papers:

- Anna Rudelli (University of Milan): “Nature’s Cathedrals, Stone Temples and the Dawn of Conservationism: John Muir’s *My First Summer in the Sierra* and the Birth of National Parks”
- Anna Zappatini (Independent Scholar): “Painting the Wilderness: Marianne North in America”

6. *Out of Time: Anachronisms Old and New*

Coordinators:

George Blaustein, University of Amsterdam (G.H.Blaustein@uva.nl)

Nicholas Stangherlin, University of Venice “Ca' Foscari” (nick5705@gmail.com)

Discussant:

George Blaustein, University of Amsterdam

This workshop is about anachronism, and how anachronism flourishes in literatures of ecological or civilizational collapse. 19th-century stories of time travel are the most obvious examples. Historical settings become habitats into which temporally foreign agents are introduced. Mark Twain’s *Connecticut Yankee* (1889) brings modern civilization to Arthurian England; farce and disaster ensue. Anachronism juxtaposed different temporal scales: the human scale of the novel collided with, say, the supra-human scale of Darwinian evolution. H.G. Wells’s time machine (1895) allowed a supra-historical glimpse of evolutionary time. The ideological implications varied. Darwinism wrought “social Darwinism,” but also the asocial prospect of species extinction: to realize it, one had to travel in time and space. Nor was this limited to fiction. Faith in progress vied with gloomier parables of limited resources, such as Frederick Jackson Turner’s lament of the closed frontier. We might all be anachronisms. We have all arrived too late. If the nineteenth century was the first age of anachronism, ours might be the second. Anachronism flourishes in contemporary literatures of race and ethnicity. Racial slavery is a too-close, too-far anachronism approached earnestly (alternate histories like Colson Whitehead’s *Underground Railroad* and Ben Winters’s *Underground Airlines*) and uproariously (Paul Beatty’s *The Sellout*). Contemporary American narratives of lateness and environmental collapse gravitate toward experiments in time. Archaic forms return in Emily St. John Mandel’s post-apocalyptic *Station Eleven*. This anachronistic turn includes subtler meditations on time and habitat erosion, from the not-too-distant future of Jennifer Egan’s *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, to the temporal layers of Ben Lerner’s *10:04*, to the proleptic narration of the podcast *S-Town*. These narratives register the conquest of the “seasonal” by the “unseasonal,” as these terms themselves become anachronisms.

We invite papers that consider anachronism as topic, narrative device, theme, ideological strategy, or point of departure for theoretical inquiry.

7. New Position[ings] of Italian/American Studies: Re-readings and Re-viewings

Coordinator:

Fred. L. Gardaphé, Queens College, CUNY (Fred.Gardaphe@qc.cuny.edu)

This workshop intends to suggest modes of interrogating Italian/American cultural products with the aim of preparing the terrain for new paradigms as to (a) the place of Italian/American studies and where it might reside in the academy, its intellectual home, and (b) new perspectives in the interrogation of said cultural products, which may very well be determinant as to the place of Italian/American studies within a less hegemonic cultural landscape. This workshop explores how the cultural products of Italian/American writers and artists were forged from the tension between immigration and assimilation, and offers a backdrop against which contemporary developments in the current U.S. administration can be viewed, criticized and acted upon through a transnational lens. The motivation behind this workshop has its origins in the wake of recent international meetings (e.g., Bellagio [2014]) and conferences (e.g., *Re-mapping Italian American Culture* [2017]), as well as a recent series in Italy dedicated to Italian/American studies (e.g., *Americana* published by Franco Cesati Editore). Hence, riding the wave of more novel and thought-provoking intellectual inquiry of the past two decades in the United States (e.g., Steven Belluscio, Mary Jo Bona, Fred L. Gardaphé, Edvige Giunta, Ilaria Serra, Anthony Julian Tamburri, Robert Viscusi, etc.) and, more recently in Italy (Leonardo Buonomo, Francesco Durante, Carla Francellini, Donatella Izzo, Cristina Lombardi-Diop, Martino Marazzi, Alessandro Portelli, Caterina Romeo, Sabrina Vellucci, Vito Zagarrio, etc.), the presentations in this section offer yet further suggestions for how we might re-interrogate Italian/American cultural products, be they written, virtual, or performative in light of the historically evolving processes of U.S. Americanization that have occurred from 19th to 21st centuries. Workshop presenters will offer fresh looks at texts in a variety of media using different methodologies in order to demonstrate the complexities and richness of contemporary Italian/American studies.

Papers:

- Carla Francellini (University of Siena): “The Subversion of Nature in Contemporary Italian/American Literature. *Uno sguardo mobile* on the most Compelling Sceneries of Italian/American Identity”
- Anthony Julian Tamburri (Queens College, CUNY): “Signing Italian/American Cinema, Code-switching in the City: *Mean Streets, Big Night, Dinner Rush!*”
- Sabrina Vellucci (University of Rome Three): “‘The Environmental Imagination’ of Contemporary Italian American Literature and Documentary Film”
- Fred Gardaphé (Queens College, CUNY): “Taking Humor Seriously: Irony and its Deficiency in Italian/American Culture”



8. Sacred Landscapes: The Role of Religion, Spirituality and Faith in Landscape Morphology

Coordinators:

Daniel Cooper, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford
(cooperwave@gmail.com)

Jonathan Turnbull, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford
(jonathon.turnbull@chch.ox.ac.uk)

Religion, spirituality and faith play integral roles in landscape transformation. Not only do spiritual beliefs and religious institutions inform individual and collective perspectives and engagement with each other and the land, but they also influence concepts of morality and justice in government, non-government, private, multilateral, and academic organizations. The fields of historical ecology, political ecology and spiritual ecology represent important frames of reference for understanding the complex dialects embedded in landscape. Most of the scholarship in these fields focuses on the nature-culture ontological continuum and biocultural integrity, often framing spirituality as an aspect of culture. However, many individuals and communities, including most indigenous populations, see beyond this binary framework to a deeper and more holistic understanding of landscape that includes a metaphysical or spiritual dimension. In such ontologies, social and environmental ethics are often dictated and enforced by other-than-human beings/biospiritual agents and interlocutors such as shamans, priests or priestesses. These beings and practitioners influence the way people perceive, feel and behave, often determining how and where resources are extracted and cultivated. The objective of this workshop is to bridge the gap between science and religion in pursuit of a more integrated and holistic understanding of landscape, resource exploitation, conflict, governance, development and climate change.

Papers:

- Daniel Cooper (University of Oxford): “Historical spirituality: a synthesis of spiritual, political and historical ecological landscape approaches”
- Jonathan Turnbull (University of Oxford): “Religion and spirituality in the midst of climate change: learning from indigenous perspectives”

9. *Talking Climate: The Discourse(s) of Climate Change*

Coordinators:

Fritz Fleischmann, Babson College (fleischmann@babson.edu)

Cinzia Scarpino, University of Milan (cinzia.scarpino@unimi.it)

The discourses on climate change include many voices, ranging from the scientific to the religious, and including an extraordinary number of academic, journalistic, legal, business, and social participants. They also range across a variety of media (documentary films, radio and television shows, numerous websites and blogsites) and a variety of organizations (from recently founded local discussion circles and groups fighting pipeline or fracking projects to more established organizations like churches and synagogues). And they struggle with a large variety of questions: how to communicate effectively; how to build community; how to deal with climate deniers; how to lobby legislators. There are no definitive answers on any of these questions, which means that a conference panel on the general topic might be primarily descriptive and informative, but also feature Americanists who contribute a historical or sociological perspective that illuminates such questions.

Paper proposals may address issues like the following:

- The Keystone XL and/or the Dakota Access Pipeline; their political handling by the Obama and Trump administrations; local and national resistance; indigenous rights and resistance, etc.
- The environmental consequences of fracking projects; their representation in various media (such as *Gasland 2* by Josh Fox)
- The journalistic, intellectual and artistic covering of environmental disasters, such as the Deepwater Horizon Disaster
- The literary representation of post-apocalyptic scenarios (e.g. Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*; Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*, or her Maddaddam Trilogy)
- Films (e.g. Roland Emmerich's *The Day after Tomorrow*; Behn Zeitlin's *Beasts of the Southern Wild*; Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*; or popular documentaries like Franny Armstrong's *Age of Stupid*, or Josh Fox's *Gasland 2*), documentary television series and television shows (e.g. *Years of Living Dangerously*, Showtime), comics and graphic novels tackling the consequences of climate change and environmental disasters (e.g. Seth Tobocman's *Disaster and Resistance*)



10. (Dis)Location: Identity And Language In Multicultural American Literature

Coordinator:

Silvia Guslandi, University of Chicago (sguslandi@uchicago.edu)

Discussant:

Mirella Vallone, University of Perugia

Immigration, travel, tourism, political exile, the refugee crisis: whether individually or in ethnically marked groups, trans-national mobility has been one of the most pervasive phenomena of modern times. Among the consequences of this mobility, one that greatly affects writers is multilingualism. A possible effect of physical displacement is also intellectual and emotional dislocation: namely, the feeling of not belonging to either context – the one left behind and the one found upon arriving. On the other hand, in some cases a compromise is successfully achieved between different cultures and the result is a new sense of belonging to multiple contexts at once, in a movement toward a global perspective. How do literary texts reflect this condition? What kind of language results from the negotiation between mother tongue and second language? To which, if any, literary traditions do migrant authors belong to? And what about second-generation immigrants and other writers born directly within multilingual or multi-cultural contexts? How does their geographical and cultural location inform their identity as authors? Papers will explore the specific modes of expression of migrants, exiles, so-called hyphenated-American authors, and others working in between languages and traditions, with particular attention to issues of identity and language, such as self-translation and bilingualism.

Papers:

- Silvia Guslandi (University of Chicago): “Emanuel Carnevali: The Making of an ‘American poet’”



11. *Media Ecologies in Contemporary American Fictions*

Coordinators:

Cristina Iuli, University of Eastern Piedmont (cristina.iuli@uniupo.it)

Elena Lamberti, Università di Bologna (elena.lamberti@unibo.it)

With the arrival of cybernetics and the ensuing digital reorganization of life within communication systems, the notion of media as environments associated to Marshall McLuhan, Neil Postman, Fredric Kittler, Siegfried Zielinski and others has not simply intensified, making the status of the mass-media as second nature visible in unprecedented ways, but has paved the way to a new technological condition of experience in which the contemporary integration of technology, information, life, and experience has become ubiquitous. In this context, information is “the point of mediation”, the operator that, as Eugene Thacker has argued, “can produce the material, the embodied, the biological, the living – ‘life itself’” (2005, xviii), complicating descriptions about “The World We Inhabit” and adding new shades and conceptual consistency to the provocation that “nature is not natural and can never be naturalized” (Graham Hartman). The conceptual scenario framed by this condition has solicited speculative forays on the present and future evolution of planetary life, ecologies and human and non-human memory by literature and philosophy alike.

This panel invites proposals that interrogate how questions of media ecologies and the cybernetic condition of experience have entered literary narratives and American contemporary fictions about the world we inhabit. Proposals may discuss media specific or trans-medial explorations of topics that include, for instance:

- “Life” and “environments” in media systems
- Experience, consciousness and cognition in ambient media
- Cyberecologies, network cultures and evolutionary narratives
- Narrative agency and distributed information
- Paleofuturism and media ecologies
- Digital dystopias
- Speculative remappings of the subject/object distinction onto human/non-human (technical, informatics, animal) formations and networks
- Medium-specific ways of constructing human/non-human ecologies
- Narrative consciousness in/and cybernetic environments and media systems
- Artificial “nature” and evolution
- Pattern Recognitions: data, control, and numeric rationality
- Scaling entropy and catastrophe: science, media, discourse
- Scaling life in narrative and digital art (photography, film, virtual environments, games)
- Inhuman narratives

12. *Cultural Consumptions in/of America*

Coordinators:

Giulia Iannuzzi, University of Trieste (giannuzzi@units.it)

Elisabetta Bini, University of Naples “Federico II” (elisabetta.bini@unina.it)

Discussant:

Leonardo Buonomo, University of Trieste

This workshop critically assesses the role that different forms of cultural consumption have played in shaping ideas of the present and possible future scenarios of American society, contributing to – or calling into question – coeval conceptualizations of “center(s) and margin(s), subject(s) and object(s) in terms of relation”, within American power(s) and governance, and the economic and cultural relations that locate the US as part of a planetary system. Through the lens of cultural studies and transnational history, this workshop explores the influence that cultural circulation and consumption have had (and have) in defining the American way(s) of life. Each paper should assess the functioning of powerful and complex communication devices such as advertisements, television series, and soft power practices. The cases analyzed should cover the decades between the post-World War II years and today – a chronological range spanning from a “short American century” to our post-industrial, digital age. Particular attention will be paid both to the circulation and reception of cultural products within the US, and to the paramount presence of American political culture and its entertainment industry in societies abroad, focusing on cultural circulation in transnational markets, and on specific case studies.

Papers:

- Carla Konta (University of Trieste): “Soft Power Commodities in Cold War Battlefields? Images of The United States at the Yugoslav Exhibitions and Trade Fairs (1955-1969)”
- Elisabetta Bini (University of Naples “Federico II”): “Back to the Future, Changes in Energy: Cultures and Patterns of Consumption in the US, 1973-1986”
- Giulia Iannuzzi (University of Trieste): “Consumptions of American Futures: Dubbing US Science Fiction on Italian Small Screens”
- Annalisa Mogorovich (University of Trieste): “Women, Race, and Power in American TV Series”



13. *West Coast, Left Coast*

Coordinators:

Fiorenzo Iuliano, University of Cagliari (iuliano@unica.it)

Stefano Morello, The Graduate Center, CUNY (s.morello@me.com)

In the days following the 2017 Presidential Inauguration, presaging years of bitter conflict between the White House and the state that rejected the newly elected president by a landslide, California governor Jerry Brown delivered what the media labeled an “anti-Trump manifesto.” In the following weeks, Seattle’s mayor Ed Murray echoed by openly and repeatedly defying Donald Trump administration’s policies on immigration, eventually leading to Washington State’s lawsuit against Trump’s travel ban. From the sun-drenched valleys of Southern California to the rain-drenched inlets of Puget Sound, the West Coast has always been at the forefront of political dissent, resistance and activism. As evident in works as diverse as Ernest Callenbach’s *Ecotopia* and John N. Smith’s *Dangerous Minds*, Sherman Alexie’s *Reservation Blues* and Green Day’s multiplatinum record *American Idiot*, the local cultural production has insistently reflected on themes such as working class values, American imperialism, LGBTQ rights, gender inequality, race relations, suburban alienation, environmental issues, and youth disenfranchisement. As scholar Lisa Chalkyoff has pointed out, “what is exciting about literatures of the West Coast [...] is how powerfully this concentration draws together key politico-cultural experiences we continue to think through [...] and situates them in an environment of tremendous aesthetic interest and ecological complexity.” A pilgrimage beyond the frontier, a tribute and an attempt at deconstruction of the role it has taken up in the common imaginary – this panel will investigate how the cultural and countercultural production from the “Left Coast” have reflected on/perpetuated political resistance and presented alternatives to the mainstream. This panel invites contributions from an array of historical periods and ranging across different fields, and it welcomes conversations about American, Canadian, and Indigenous literatures as well as a diverse range of cultural productions (including, but not limited to film, television shows, music records, and the arts).

Papers:

- Fiorenzo Iuliano (University di Cagliari): “Specters of the 1990s. Seattle as Archive City”
- Stefano Morello (The Graduate Center, CUNY): “Mapping the Punk Rock Commons: Unity and Dissent in the East Bay”



14. The Fictional Worlds We Inhabit: New Directions for the Contemporary US Novel

Coordinator and discussant:

Pia Masiero, University of Venice “Ca’ Foscari” (masiero@unive.it)

Contemporary US novels compose a heterogeneous territory whose contours are intertextual, intermodal, and interdisciplinary: at their center there lies American reality and the challenge of representing it. Novelists have long been reality hunters: how does the present debate regarding the construction or removal of barriers as well as the interrelated issues of a powerful center and dispossessed peripheries impact the ways in which the novel invents story-worlds? In the age of post-post poetics, where, arguably, everything has already been told, such authors as Chabon, Danielewski, Díaz, Egan, Eggers, Foer, Franzen, Saunders, Strout, Vollmann, Wallace wonder how the already told concerning US landscapes and society, politics and communal belonging may be told anew.

“The Fictional Worlds we Inhabit” attempts to map the forms contemporary novels take, as far as core narratological categories are concerned—voice, characters, time, space, plot—as well as generic crossings and various forms of transmedial experimentation. The deeply interrelated nature of form and content calls for a reflection on how contemporary US novel responds to present tense America.

We witness, among others:

- the return to realism with magical or science-fiction insertions;
- the re-appropriation of contextual and historical underpinnings;
- the return of omniscient narratorial voices and the centrality of character;
- a new readerly-oriented writing that re-negotiates postmodernist innovations;
- the conjugation of escapist with ethical trajectories;
- the coexistence of maximalist with minimalist tendencies.

We invite papers that address one or more of the new directions listed above or/and others, so as to help mapping the territory of contemporary US fiction with the strong belief that the safe exposure to US realities fiction guarantees may contribute to the necessary debate concerning what lies ahead of us.

15. *Readings of Wilderness in Ethnic Traditions*

Coordinator:

Paola A. Nardi, Catholic University of Milan (paola.nardi@unicatt.it)

The American wilderness, together with other categories such as the frontier or the conquest of the West, is one of the founding myths of the United States. Writings on the wilderness have recently departed from traditional Western male, white, middle-class readings whose stereotyped, partial and illusory representations of untamed nature have been extensively criticized in the last thirty years. New perspectives like those of Native Americans, feminist theorists or ecocritics have suggested interpretations of the wilderness different from those that see it as “the province of white heterosexual masculinity” (Mei Mei Evans, 2002). Less attention has been given to African Americans and other ethnic perspectives on wilderness so far, although this field is being more and more investigated by literary critics. Melvin Dixon’s ground breaking *Ride Out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in Afro-American Literature* (1987), focused on the relationship between African Americans and landscape with specific reference to wild nature, has contributed to change the impression of the “whiteness of the wilderness” (Daegan Miller 2013) created by influential and widely quoted texts such as *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967) by Roderick F. Nash or William Cronon’s critical “The Trouble with Wilderness” (1995).

The workshop invites papers that present readings of the American wilderness from various ethnic traditions such African American, Latino, Asian American in a variety of areas, literary, visual, theoretical, historical, political.

Papers:

- Paola Nardi (Catholic University of Milan): “You are nothing but wilderness. No constraint. No mind’: Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy*”



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16. Climate Changes: The Cultural Reciprocity of Environmental Effects

Coordinators:

Pasquale Verdicchio, UC San Diego (pverdicchio@ucsd.edu)

Giuseppina Botta, University of Salerno (giuseppinabotta@gmail.com)

While the impact of environmental degradation has long been the subject of science-fiction and fantasy literature by authors such as Octavia Butler and Ursula Le Guin, other and more recent manifestations of such impact in works, ranging from the novels of Margaret Atwood to works of cli-fi, highlight the well integrated relationship between cultural and environmental changes. Playing on the transitive nature of the title, this panel proposes to explore these inter-relationships as a way of suggesting innovative approaches toward furthering an inter-disciplinary engagement of these and similar pressing issues of our age.



17. *Orbis Americanus: A New Imperialistic Discourse?*

Coordinators:

Albert Latorella Lehner, University of Fukui, Japan (albert.lehner@gmail.com)

Nicolangelo Becce, University of Fukui, Japan (bekken@gmail.com)

In the 1990's, there was a decisive recognition of the fatal impact on local languages and cultures by English linguistic imperialism across the globe. From varied disciplines, a strong pushback occurred, thereby revealing and rejecting the destructive nexus of asymmetrical power relations (within societies, among races, and between nations), an emerging global neoliberalism, and a deteriorating language ecology worldwide that was becoming more "American" and hegemonic. The role of the English language, now most closely associated with the United States, was implicated, as globalization – economic, political, cultural, and linguistic – metastasized. A generation earlier, the seeds had been sown to organize and resist neoliberal pedagogies and political realities. As a result of well-conceived praxis for the past thirty years, the English language has witnessed radical deconstruction as world englishes and critical literacy emerged from among disquieted academics and grassroots organizations. In the fall of 2016, the newly elected president of the United States, in a perilously threatening discourse, enunciated reckless slogans – about the greatness of the United States, about Mexican and Muslim immigrants, and about the use of English within the United States – slogans that shattered a developing and advantageous language ecology both within and beyond the borders of the United States. To that end, the new president's most imperialistic proclamation – about building a border wall – was heard with disbelief and apprehension in nearly every capital of the world. One inescapable question materializes at present: Is a new American imperialism – with its neoliberal, colonizing, and deadly impact on the linguistic ecology of the world – now emerging through the birth of an *Orbis Americanus*?

This panel will focus on the language ecology of English in the post-2016 American election. This topic can be approached from different perspectives: North American studies, U.S. literature, U.S. history, multilingualism, immigration/diaspora, language, borders and mobility, etc.

Papers:

- Albert Latorella Lehner and Nicolangelo Becce (University of Fukui): "Global Ecologies of Language and Culture at a Moment of American Resurgence"



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TO ITALY

18. Black Mountain College: Removing Barriers, Eco/Echoing the World

Coordinator:

Marina Morbiducci, “Sapienza” University of Rome
(marina.morbiducci@uniroma1.it)

Sixty years after its definite closure, Black Mountain College still propagates waves of energy, avant-garde, research, and innovation, framing its history and peculiar academic experimentation in a utopian – “globalized” (*ante litteram*) – vision of education and cultural growth. Born from the daring experimental project of a handful of rebels, BMC’s “exploration in community” – and the development of its progressive arts curriculum – remains as a unique example of creativity, iconoclasm and empathic understanding of the surrounding environment (immersed in the Blue Ridge Mountains landscape, extracurricular activities such as trekking, growing vegetables, milking cows, or recycling chicken bones to make hanging mobiles, were common practices). Much more distinctively, though, the first historical performance which ever took place should be mentioned, the famous “1952 Untitled Event”, which imprinted all contemporary art, with Charles Olson, Merce Cunningham, Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, among the others. Black Mountain attracted and invited excellent personalities from the international artistic scenario (from Nazism fugitives and ex-Bauhaus artists in the ’30s, to counterculture and restless experimental figures in the ’50s), removing all the barriers which existed between academic disciplines and creative arts, in favour of self-expression, welcoming students and professors of different nationalities, without race or gender discrimination. The anticipation of such an open-minded, decidedly subversive vision of education through the arts, and the creation of an academic system where the neck would not represent the “dividing line between the intellect and the emotions”, are key features of its experimentation.

Workshop participants are invited to focus on the processes and products of those forms of art which implemented the creative and ecosystemic vision of education thriving at BMC. From pottery to painting, from poetry to criticism, from music to dance, in all the multifaceted and innovative artistic expressions performed, a propagating explorational atmosphere emerged, and a luminescent vision of culture ec(h)oes.

Papers:

- Ann Charters (Professor Emeritus, University of Connecticut, Storrs)
- Mary Emma Harris (University of North Carolina at Asheville)
- Hitomi Nabae (Kobe City University of Foreign Studies)
- Matt Theado (Kobe City University of Foreign Studies)



19. The Self and The Other in Relational Terms

Coordinator and discussant:

Melis Menent, University of Sussex (M.Menent@sussex.ac.uk)

Thinking about the self in national and international terms has become more challenging than before. The interconnectivity of the world society, which has been built for a long time by the cosmopolitan society, is now under threat. While the process of mutual understanding has been established through the efforts of those practicing as well as writing on issues of cultural communication, the criticism of this interconnectivity, mostly, belongs to the practical domain. Rendering public spheres more responsive to one another is made possible through the medium of language as a tool: it opens the door to culture and to the politics of culture. Translation, a process which is carried out both knowingly and unknowingly, runs through the channels of communication both within and among nation-states. It is through a process of interpreting that understanding is possible. Once the channels of communication are open, more comes in with it: different identities, packed into the names that surround and shelter them, bring forms and clusters of 'meaning'.

In this workshop, we invite scholars to unpack different aspects of social and political culture. Forms of relating to the other without relativising the perspective of the self, thinking about the centre and the periphery of knowledge and the difficulties of rendering these understandable to one another will be discussed with a view to the natural as well as the social habitat. Scholars researching interdisciplinary topics are specifically invited to this workshop, as its scope is not limited to the areas mentioned.



20. Open Spaces and Common Places: Cultural Representation of America's Shifting Geographies

Coordinators:

Ugo Rubeo, "Sapienza" University of Rome (ugo.rubeo@uniroma1.it)

Marco Petrelli, "Sapienza" University of Rome (marco.sal.petrelli@gmail.com)

Discussant:

Ugo Rubeo, "Sapienza" University of Rome

Charles Olson's statement "I take SPACE to be the central fact of America's shifting Geographies", in his renowned *Call Me Ishmael*, stands as a synthetic formula to read American literature and culture in spatial terms. Later critics, from E. Soja to B. Jarvis, and F. Jameson have further developed that approach, together with philosophers like Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who, in his *A Thousand Plateaus*, suggests a classification of spaces based on a fundamental distinction between "smooth" and "striated" ones: "the two spaces [...] exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to smooth space". This dynamic relationship between an open, unsystematic space as opposed to an artificial, socially constructed one, has come to play a significant symbolic role in the way America has conceived, inhabited and represented its spaces. The workshop's aim is to discuss the co-existence of heterogeneous spaces as they are represented in American culture, with a particular emphasis on the semiotic variations of space in relation to the ever-changing geography of social relations, characteristic of the global world we inhabit. Paraphrasing Faulkner, geography is never merely something to walk upon, it is always a medium – a central notion for a tradition that, starting with its Puritan origins, and all the way to Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer* (1961) or Paul Auster's *City of Glass* (1985) – not to mention Steinbeck's, West's and Pynchon's California – has always attributed social and political implications to the representations of its indigenous spaces.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Global city vs country space
- Horizontal and vertical: social and geographic grids
- Thirdspace, cognitive mapping and spatial alienation
- Myth of space and space of myth
- Contemporary Frontiers
- Lost and/or reconquered space

Papers:

- Marco Petrelli ("Sapienza" University of Rome): "Out of Eden: Old Southm Post-South and Ur-South in Sara Taylor's *The Shore*"

21. Evolving Beliefs and Ideologies: Religion, Nature, and Place in North American Literature

Coordinators:

Alana Dagenhart, Johnson & Wales University, Charlotte
(alana.dagenhart@jwu.edu)

Ginevra Paparoni, University of Milan (ginevra.paparoni@unimi.it)

The panel aims at investigating how conceptions of Judeo-Christian origins affected the perception and the representation of nature in the prose and poetry of American writers throughout history. From the 17th century on, Judeo-Christian ideas about nature were treated by American authors according to their philosophical beliefs, their political and ideological aspirations, their ethics, or simply their personal sensibility and experience. In different historical ages, authors as various as Mary Rowlandson, Jonathan Edwards, Herman Melville, Robert Frost, and Marilynne Robinson supported, questioned or creatively elaborated in their work notions and conceptions such as the demonization of nature as a place of spiritual trial; its sacralization as a source of revelation and regeneration; the panentheistic interpretation of nature; the belief in a governing design presiding over nature; the idea of fallen nature; the view of the human being as either legitimate exploiter or guardian of nature deriving from the Genesis and the anthropocentric perspective implied in it. Papers are invited addressing the treatment and development of these and further ideas about nature in the production of North American writers.

Papers:

- Alana Dagenhart (Johnson & Wales University, Charlotte): “The Mountains as Sacred Spaces: Church, Place, and Culture in Appalachian Poetry”
- Ginevra Paparoni (University of Milan): “Contemplating the Gardener’s Mysterious Design: the Life of Plants in Theodore Roethke’s Greenhouse Poems”

22. Breaking the Barriers: US Ecopoetry as a Means to Reconnect Humans and the Earth

Coordinator:

Anastasia Cardone, University of Leeds, UK (goodriddance.anak@mail.com)

Discussant:

Amedeo Trotta, University of Milan

The different definitions of ‘ecopoetry’ proposed by several scholars, from John Elder to Scott J. Bryson, frame this poetic genre as a subcategory of Environmental poetry that aims at overcoming the existing and yet rusted barriers between human beings and other-than-human beings to reconnect humans, the earth, and its inhabitants. While some key authors have been consecrated as ‘ecopoets’, many have expressed similar ecopoetic ideas without being directly defined so. A common feature of these writers is the emphasis on the porousness of the border between humans and other creatures, as well as the search for the best poetic translation of the life of another. On these premises, ecopoetry can represent a meaningful interpretative tool for breaking the notorious Emersonian barrier between the ‘ME’ and the ‘NOT ME’, therefore between human beings and the physical, tangible world we inhabit. In the face of the current ecological crisis, the US controversial and ambivalent role in the care and exploitation of the environment, and the future catastrophic scenarios that might display in front of us, this workshop aims to provide possible solutions through the reading and understanding of ecopoems as a means to re-establish a balanced, fluid, and respectful relationship with other living beings. In a time when the scientific discourse on climate change seems to have failed in affecting Western governments and their politics, a poetic discourse may continue doing its job in trying to affect readers’ conscience and perception of themselves as participants in an ecosystem.

The workshop welcomes proposals on the subjects of Ecopoetry and Ecopoetics, Environmental Poetry, Animal Studies, Human-Animal Studies, Ecofeminism, Biosemiotics, and Environmental Literary Studies.

Papers:

- Anastasia Cardone (University of Leeds, UK): “The Bridge of Understanding: A Biosemiotic Reading of Mary Oliver’s Ecopoetry”

23. Spaces of Protest: AISNA Graduate Students Forum

Coordinators:

Virginia Pignagnoli, University of Turin (virginia.pignagnoli@unito.it)

Marta Gara, Independent Scholar (marta.gara85@gmail.com)

This panel invites contributions on contemporary spaces of protest in the United States. In particular, we invite articles focusing on the relationship between social movements and the specific sites where the protests take place, e.g. Anti-Trump muslim ban/US airports; The Occupy Wall Street movement/Zuccotti Park in New York City; Hippy movement/Haight Ashbury in San Francisco; Racial riots from 1965 to 1968/Watts (Los Angeles), Harlem (New York City) and other inner cities; labour protests in 1886/Haymarket Square (Chicago). These sites acquire symbolic meaning and become inevitably intertwined with the narratives of protest they accommodate. For instance, it is significant that many of the most famous protest marches have been aimed at the seats of local, state, and national power, while some sites have become synonymous of protest and resistance over the years, despite the original activists' intentions, e.g. Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. The panel invites reflections not only on the geographical, social, economic significance of the protest environments and their connection with the strategy of protest, but also on the politics of memory or oblivion over sites of historical relevance connected to opposition and protest, with the objective of exploring their current social and cultural meaning.

Contributions are welcome on topics including, but not restricted to:

- Contemporary spaces of protest and their narratives, e.g. Standing Rock, Black Lives Matter, Women's March;
- Social media as space for self-empowerment;
- Environmental activism;
- Urban spaces vs. non-urban spaces of protest;
- Representations of spaces of protests in different media (e.g. novels, plays, movies, digital fiction, art, etc.);
- Critical examinations of the relationships of political, economic, and social power, expressed in performative and representational forms;
- Facts and fictions in the narratives of protest;
- Sites of historical relevance connected to opposition and protest.