

26TH AISNA BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

Call for Papers

Crossing Territories.

Recognition across Time, Space, and Textuality in the US and Beyond

Department of Humanities, L'Aquila, September 23-25, 2021

Paper proposals of around 300 words should be submitted, along with a short bio, to the panel coordinator(s), to the conference organizing committee (aisna2021univaq@gmail.com), and to the AISNA Secretary, Anna De Biasio (anna.de-biasio@unibg.it) by June 27, 2021. Acceptance will be notified by July 5, 2021. Panels exceeding four participants will be split into two sessions.

For any general query about the conference, please contact the organizing committee (aisna2021univaq@gmail.com)

N.B.: We hope that we will be able to meet in L'Aquila for the 2021 AISNA conference.

However, should the COVID-19 crisis not allow safe traveling and participation in face-to-face events, the conference will move to a digital format (blended or fully online). We will keep you updated as to the developments of the pandemic and the applying public health guidelines.

1. Recognizing Fractures before and after the Civil War: Gender, Race and Class in the Making of the Global America

Coordinators:

Matteo Battistini, University of Bologna (m.battistini@unibo.it)

Serena Mocci, University of Bologna (serena.mocci2@unibo.it)

Before and after the Civil War, the United States underwent an outstanding economic and political transformation in which gender, race and class fractures played a crucial role in reinforcing and strengthening the social and institutional hierarchies of the nation. Bringing together interdisciplinary approaches, this panel aims at analyzing the consequences of the recognition, legitimation, or denial of such fractures upon the national making of the American State and its empire building on a global level. It will explore the multiple ways in which gender, race and class shaped the historical building of the Global America.

This panel welcomes papers from all academic disciplines that address questions including, but not limited to:

- how did U.S. political and economic thought face the unruly questions of gender, race and class in the context of westward expansion and the rising of a national market?
- how did the issues of race and class affect the economic and political rising of the nation on the international stage and on the world market?
- what role did gender play in the process of continental expansion and empire building on a global scale?
- how did the recognition of the intersection of gender, race and class influence the process of state and empire building?
- how did the recognition of gender, race and class fractures challenge U.S. exceptionalist narratives before and after the Civil War?
- how did literature portray gender, race and class? How did it contribute to shape the process of expansion and the definition of the U.S. role at the global level?
- how did social scientists and intellectuals, writers and journalists (from both the United States and abroad) discuss, contest or attempt to legitimize fractures of gender, race and class in the tumultuous making of U.S. nation and nationalism before and after the Civil War?
- how did intellectuals, writers and public opinion recognize, criticize, or advocate the unprecedented role of the American State in governing economic and political transformation throughout the Civil War and beyond, and in promoting the imperial role of the nation as the leading republican model throughout the world?

2. Claiming the Global City: Transformation and Racial Conflict in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Coordinators:

Vincenzo Bavaro, University of Naples, “L’Orientale” (vbavaro@unior.it)

Elisa Bordin, Ca’ Foscari University, Venice (elisa.bordin@unive.it)

This panel aims at investigating cities as spaces of conflict in a national and transnational perspective. Especially during the 20th century, the migration which invested urban areas created zones of contact that resulted in forms of synergies but also of struggle, of both visionary creation and hopeless destruction. While concepts of modernity are connected to the metropolis as a space of empowerment, the transformation of cities in the US, enhanced by the movement of capital, bodies, and imaginaries, has often created enduring tensions. Both domestically and transnationally, that is, within the spatial boundaries of the US and abroad through forms of neo-coloniality, American culture has been characterized by such negotiations, which have catalyzed class and racial conflicts or enabled heated debates on issues of spatial and environmental justice. While creating the possibilities of unprecedented hybridization, they have also contributed to enforce ideas of center and margin, dramatizing the fractures

which undermine essentialist or conservative understandings of national or local identity. This panel aims at exploring how, in the 20th and 21st centuries, urban areas have been stages for repressing and articulating such efforts; alternatively, how the global circulation of American goods, political power, and ideas of “Americanness” have impacted other urban spaces in the world. We welcome literary, cultural, historiographical and sociological approaches that examine these issues.

Keywords: city space and urban transformation, race, violence, resistance, transnational

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Racial conflicts in American cities
- Old and new migrations in American cities
- American presence and social/racial conflicts in the Global South
- Spatial and environmental justice

3. Construction and Reconstruction of the Nation: Restyling the Past and Re-adapting the Future

Coordinators:

Enrico Botta, University of L'Aquila (enrico.botta@univaq.it)

Nicola Paladin, “G. d’Annunzio” University, Chieti-Pescara (nicola.paladin@unich.it)

In *On the Art of Adaptation* (2004), Linda Hutcheon describes the effect produced by an adaptation over a spectator as it follows: “For us in the audience, part of the very real pleasure of watching adaptations lies in recognition and remembrance. But it is equally true that part of the also very real masochistic fear provoked by adaptations lies in recognition and remembrance”. The fear of remembering a piece of work and the pleasure of recognizing it in an adaptation generate an epiphany through which the spectator experiences an operation of cultural *restyling* that incorporates structural, thematic, and ideological components. Such a restyling fluctuates between a quotation from the original and its critical revisitations. One of the most significant examples in this sense is D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), a relevant yet extremely problematic opus in the development of the US culture. Originally adapted from a novel and a theatrical mise-en-scene, Griffith’s movie has become a palimpsest for several recent reformulations – including Aaron McGruder’s graphic novel (2004) and Nate Parker’s cinematic remake (2016). The collision between adaptation and recognition in Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* seems to delineate a connection among an artistic and ideological recovery of the past, its critical interpretation as well as its cultural re-actualization. This transformative artistic trajectory exemplifies an intrinsic bond between the notions of birth and renaissance, construction and reconstruction, staging and adaptation, and it functions as a rhetorical strategy whose employment is not relegated to the realm of fiction but has, in fact, involved several spheres of the contemporary age.

This collision intersects with the idea of exceptionalism which, in its several declensions, has consistently innervated a national form of self-recognition (thus defining several versions through which the US imagined itself from inside) and recognition (prescribing models in light of which to be imagined from outside); as Donald E. Pease has recently argued: “One of the ways to describe what you do when you construct an alternative America is that you particularize a version of a universal concept called ‘America’.” Because of the adhesions and the distortions that characterize the relationship between an original and its adaptation (both in terms of artistic depictions and historical contextualization), our panel encourages to cross-read literary and visual arts representations in which past epochs and events are recognized and adapted through imaginative constructions of the nation – or “state fantasies”, as Jacqueline Rose (1996) and Donald Pease (2007) would have it – which are transformed by a multilayered historical truth and, at the same time, transform it.

4. Intersections of Human/Non-human/Artificial Intelligence in American Science Fiction

Coordinator:

Iren Boyarkina, Sapienza University, Rome (estel20@mail.ru)

Rapid advancement of biotechnologies and their merger with recent developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), as well as the development of implantation raises many technological, moral, philosophical, ethical, legal, as well as other questions. The rise of such technologies, like cloning or Artificial Intelligence, to name only a few, has faced different, sometimes completely opposite reactions, ranging from very positive and enthusiastic to very hostile ones. At present, there is a lot of relative research going on, which tries to estimate potential risks and advantages of these developments, as well as bioethical and legal issues involved. Needless to say, that also leading thinkers and leading protagonists of science fiction show their concern about the latest advances in biotechnologies, AI, their merger and its potential implication for the human species. The merger of artificial implants of any nature (AI included) and the human body raises also a legitimate question as to what a degree such a being (cyborg, i. e. cybernetic organism) is human and where is the borderline beyond which it's not human anymore. At present, they distinguish three types of products of human/machine hybridization. The first one, *medical cyborgs* – people with prosthetic limbs or pacemakers, has been known already for a long time. The other two groups up to now inhabit only science fiction worlds: functional cyborgs are people modified mechanically to perform specific tasks, usually a job; adaptive cyborgs are people redesigned to operate in an alien environment, sometimes so completely that their humanity becomes problematic.

The present panel analyzes intersections of human/non-human/artificial intelligence in American science fiction through the prism of bioethical, moral, philosophical, and other issues related to biotechnological sciences, cyborgs and AI. The panel aims at both recognizing the phenomenon of merging human/non-human and AI (i.e. acknowledgement of existence, validity or legality), as well as recognizing the wide range of problems related to it.

5. Recognizing Fair Play in American Narratives

Coordinator:

Cristina Di Maio, University of Macerata (dimaio cristina@gmail.com)

In January 2021, a large number of nerdy Reddit users hijacked the markets with the dual goal of scoring individual profits and saving a struggling company beloved by all gamers: Gamestop. Thanks to the sudden surge in stock sales, Gamestop stocks became the most traded on the planet overnight. However, this clever financial maneuver provoked the backlash of institutional investors, who pressured Robinhood (the app through which small investors buy and sell shares) to halt purchases: in this way, the only players left in the field were the usual, professional Wall Street brokers.

This recent and controversial episode, so rich in ludic overtones, serves the purpose of introducing a crucial issue in contemporary culture on which this panel aims to reflect, in particular in the American context: the idea of fairness in play, and the recognition of the rules regulating its dynamics. The United States has in fact been defined by several scholars as a country in which play is pervasive, to the point of colonizing its political sphere (Huizinga, 1938), as well as its culture and literature (Oriard, 1991); yet, a certain balance of power and adherence to the normative code are required for play and games to be recognized as *fair*. Recognition of the rules and mutual respect for the other players' performance are therefore key to the activation of a fair mode of playing; nonetheless, to what extent does playing fairly correspond to playing by the rules, when structural inequalities related to race, gender, class, and ethnicity contaminate the field?

This panel will address literary and cultural representations of fairness in play, focusing on the role of players vis-à-vis the rules and institutional frameworks. Themes may include, but are not limited to, the reversal of unfair societal dynamics through the theme of play in narratives; mutual recognition of players as fair/unfair.

6. Los Angeles and the Shades of Noir: Rewritings and Recognition in the U.S. Contemporary Noir Narratives

Coordinator:

Antonio Di Vilio, University of Trieste / University of Udine (antoniodivilio95@gmail.com; divilio.antonio@spes.uniud.it)

Since the 1930s Los Angeles has become synonymous with crime, in terms of both reality and fictional representations, thus earning the status of "Capital of noir". From the Black Dahlia to the Manson Family, from the hardboiled novels by Raymond Chandler and James M. Cain to the Hollywood classic film noir directed by filmmakers such as John Huston and Billy Wilder, the city of Los Angeles has been narrated and configured through different shades of noir (detective novel, film noir, neo-noir), which contributed to shaping the image of the city and its perception.

Passing through the symbolic exhaustion of film noir via Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955) and the counter-narrative of the anti-detective fiction represented by Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965), the aesthetic of Los Angeles narration has also changed over time; as the city becomes the postmodern metropolis par excellence, the detective's role and identity are challenged. In the 1970s, Robert Altman operates an ironic deconstruction of film noir adapting Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* (1973) while Robert Towne's *Chinatown* (1974) reconstructs the aesthetic of film noir recalling what Frederic Jameson identified as "nostalgia movie". In a similar way, the post-postmodern narratives – including literature, cinema, television, videogames – continue the narration of L.A. Noir, sometimes reflecting the past representations of the city and the genre – *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1990, 1995), *L.A. Confidential* (1990, 1997) – and at other times operating a parodic and more aware recognition – *Inherent Vice* (2009, 2014), *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (2005).

This panel aims to explore the ways in which these rewritings construct a complex dialogue with the history of Los Angeles as well as the history of L.A. Noir, addressing not only the questions of gender, race, ethnicity and socio-political issues inherent to Los Angeles crime narratives but also the questions of recognition and development of the genre.

7. Cognition, Recognition, and Acknowledgment. Documenting and Fictionalizing the Struggle from Ethnics to Americans

Coordinators:

Carla Francellini, University of Siena (francellini@unisi.it)

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

Ethnic groups in modern settings are constantly recreating themselves: ethnicity is continuously being reinvented in response to changing realities both within the group and in the host society. The continuous negotiation and renegotiation of an ethnic group's boundaries bring about new expressive symbols or traditions, to be constantly reinterpreted. Once viewed as primordial, unchanging, inherent in a group's blood, or misty past, ethnicity is now more often defined as a process of cultural construction or invention grounded in a real-life context and social experience.

Literary documentation of the metamorphosis, disappearance, and reappearance of ethnicities is at the core of this panel, aiming at providing an extensive analysis of the processes accounting for periods of florescence and decline, for continuities and innovations, for phases of saliency and quiescence, in the histories of particular ethnic groups. Furthermore, the notion of "invention of ethnicity," proposed by K.N.Conzen, D.A.Gerber, E.Morawska, G.E.Pozzetta e R.Vecoli (1992), suggests the immigrants' active participation in defining their group identities through a continuous process of negotiation, not just between each immigrant group and mainstream Anglo-American culture, but also between the various immigrant groups.

This panel seeks contributions investigating the process through which migrant and immigrant groups have struggled for recognition and, eventually, for the public acknowledgment of their Americanness.

Ethnoracial short stories and novels, most recent strands of archival literature, indigeneity, map-mindedness, world-literary cartography are just some of the fields to be investigated in this panel.

8. Refracted Recognitions? U.S. America as/in World Literature

Coordinator:

Serena Fusco, University of Naples, “L’Orientale” (sfusco@unior.it)

Starting with the work of the “New Americanists” in the mid-1990s, discourses on U.S. American Literature have, for the past two-three decades, articulated themselves as part of a global dimension. A little over one decade ago Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell proposed to consider American Literature “as World Literature”, in the sense of reading it as a phenomenon that cannot, by definition, be contained in the space/time of the U.S. nation. This entails doing without the (U.S. American) nation as the ultimate frame of reference of American literature. (Whether this eventually amounts to a deterritorialization of the signifier “American”, thus ultimately reconstituting a culture-based form of U.S. exceptionalism, is a matter open to debate.)

Traditionally a field of debate within Comparative Literature, World Literature has experienced a revival in the past few decades. Reflections on World Literature at the turn of the millennium have articulated the necessity to overcome an ingrained Eurocentrism. In an effort to decenter Europe, other continents have been increasingly “involved” and regarded as being able to contribute to a patrimony – both literature per se and the debate on literature – to be shared by a planetary humanity beyond borders. Interestingly, what remains especially problematic – a kind of blind spot, taken for granted and under erasure at the same time – and perhaps (taking the cue from Donatella Izzo and Giorgio Mariani’s pioneering work in the early years of the new millennium) warrants further reflection and historicization, is the position of both U.S. American literature and the U.S. academia in old and new discourses of World Literature. If, as Piero Boitani and Emilia Di Rocco suggested in 2013, recent reflections on World Literature originate as an Anglo-American discourse, in what ways has an American perspective channeled not only new perspectives, but also older perspectives on a global *république des lettres*? On the other hand, is the Eurocentric prejudice of World Literature discourses to be regarded as “Euro-American centrism” – or has American *literature* rather occupied a mostly peripheral position, seldom attaining (with a few notable exceptions) the “worldly status” that many European works seem to occupy almost by default? What may these discrepancies reveal about the politics of World Literature and/or about U.S. American self-representation on the world stage?

Attempting to raise such questions but not limited to those, this panel invites proposals that reflect on the role of America, American Studies, and/or American literature with relation to discourses of World Literature, analyzing the historical dimension and transformations of this entwinement from past to present.

9. Historical Paths of Recognition: Black and Mixed-Black Reversed Narrative in Public and Private Spaces, in the Wake of the Civil Rights Movement

Coordinator:

Marta Gara: Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan (marta.gara@unicatt.it)

The present panel means to explore the different meanings that the term "recognition" has acquired for Black and Mixed-Black Americans in the post-Civil Rights social context and how this concept has intersected and problematized the distinction between public and private spaces. Indeed, during the late 1960s and the 1970s Black and Mixed-Black Americans had to maintain, defend, and extend their milestone legislative achievements both in the social and political spheres and in the sphere of everyday life. The challenges posed to the integrationist ideal by the emergent cultural nationalism and identity politics surely added complexity to the picture. Furthermore, public places, monuments, political institutions, historical narratives were appropriated and claimed as part of the Black heritage. Therefore, the term "recognition" did not only concern the processes that broke social and political barriers to the public sphere, but also the narratives of re-appropriation of the previously expropriated spaces. Indeed, rural, urban areas and the space of private residencies were redefined by the legal and social "visibility" of Black and Mixed-Black Americans, as well as the discursive space was dramatically revised. The proposed panel therefore – by mainly using historical and interdisciplinary analysis - intends to inquire the strategies implemented by Black and Mixed-Black Americans to achieve self-determination and self-reliance in the wake of the Civil Right Movement, in the institutional, cultural and sentimental spheres. Especially, the panel aims at raising questions about the way those processes of recognition and re-appropriation affected the Black and Mixed-Black Americans' geography of identity.

Themes:

Private and public spaces

Multiracial identity

Minority identity in public space

Self-Determination

Mixed-race identity

Family as a place of identity development

Minority narratives and National memory

Dissonant heritage

10. Re-cognitions: The Ethnic Afterlives of *The Great Gatsby*

Coordinator:

Donatella Izzo, University of Naples, “L’Orientale” (dizzo@unior.it)

F. S. Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* has long been universalized as a racially and ethnically unmarked celebration of the transformative power of the “American Dream.” Even before critics began to discuss the crucial importance of issues of ethnicity and race in the novel, however, many writers had recognized the novel’s relevance to the immigrant’s predicament and inscribed it overtly or covertly within their own works: examples range from Hisaye Yamamoto to Ernesto Quiñonez and from Chang-rae Lee to Joseph O’Neill. Such literary rewritings simultaneously mobilize several different meanings of the term “recognition”: acknowledgment of the virtual impossibility *not* to know *The Great Gatsby*, due to its status as a classic; endorsement of that classic status by way of its parodic re-inscription; revisionary re-cognition of the novel’s disavowed layers of significance; appeal to the readers’ capacity to realize its generative intertextual presence; voicing of a demand for social visibility and inclusion. This panel invites papers that discuss literary rewritings of *The Great Gatsby* along the axes of race and ethnicity, addressing their significance and implications along any of these or other trajectories.

11. Recognizing Agentic Capacity: Translating the “Earth” Others in Literature and Art

Coordinators:

Paola Loreto, University of Milan (paola.loreto@unimi.it)

Pilar Martínez Benedí, University of L’Aquila (mariapilar.martinezbenedi@univaq.it)

The panel aims to explore the ways in which the posthuman turn is reconceptualizing subjectivity and agency in our time, with particular attention to its effects on the new ecocriticisms (Greta Gaard) and on the “indistinction approach” in animal studies (Matthew Calarco). From Cary Wolfe’s *infrahuman*, to Jane Bennett’s *vibrant matter*, from Karen Barad’s *intra-actions* to Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann’s *storied matter*, from Bruno Latour’s *actants* to Diana Coole’s *agentic capacity*, new notions of a more diffused, porous and relational agency are developing “an enlarged sense of interconnection between self and others, including the non-human or ‘earth’ others” (Rosi Braidotti).

Starting from the given fact of the *impossibility* of transcending the human point of view in any discourse—literary, cultural or theoretical—about the nonhuman, we will reflect upon literature’s (and other arts’) potential for a “leap of the imagination” that may allow humans to focus on the cognitive and emotional experience of nonhuman animals, or on the agentic capacity of matter, and to represent it faithfully in a literary work or in a work of art.

We invite paper proposals in the animal studies and posthuman perspectives, with recognitions in the fields of translation and transcodification (including adaptation), narratology (and narrative empathy), affect theory, object-oriented ontology, the new materialisms, the arts.

12. Characters in U.S. Narratives after Postmodernism: Situating Selves, Recognizing Inequalities

Coordinators:

Pia Masiero, Ca' Foscari University, Venice (masiero@unive.it)

Virginia Pignanoli, University of Zaragoza (vpignagnoli@unizar.es)

American fiction after postmodernism attends to the exploration of “the problem of character as a knowable human self” (Dawson 2013: 166), an exploration that can be considered “urgently existential” (Shamsie and Mishra 2014), especially when characters “confront the challenge of situating themselves in relation to a world made strange by unanthropomorphisable hypercapitalist and technocratic forces” (Hodgson 2019). This “problem” is also evident from recent developments on the “autofictional phenomenon” (Worthington 2018: 21). Such phenomenon, according to Alison Gibbons, is affective and situational, as it includes an affective (social) process between subjects and a narrativization of the self that seeks “to locate that self in a place, a time and a body” (2017: 118). Investigating characters in contemporary U.S. narratives, therefore, is helpful to explore a post-postmodern discourse “as it attempts to document a new kind of subject, one that is both invested in the authenticity of emotion (nonfiction, sincerity) and the necessity of representation (metafiction, irony)” (Dinnen 2019). Characters and selves not only represent a way for contemporary narratives to attend to the current interests in “the dialogical and the relational” (Elias and Moraru 2015: xii). They also provide a means to recognize how these narratives engage with the structural inequalities affecting contemporary U.S. society.

This panel seeks contributions investigating how characters in contemporary US narratives across media attend to the emerging urgency to engage with the present socio-cultural context both formally and thematically, within textual dynamics at the intersection of earnestness, ethics, and situatedness. This panel, in other words, seeks papers exploring characters in texts (of any medium/media) to attend to the multiple ways in which narratives in the United States represent/respond to the challenges of the contemporary moment.

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

- Characters engaging with political activism and the recognition of structural inequalities in contemporary U.S. society.
- Theories and approaches to characters and selves in contemporary texts (of any media) attending to ethics (of care), intersectionality, authenticity, ecofeminism, critical race theory and the post-postmodern.
- Contemporary U.S. narratives focused on the dialogical, the relational, the post-ironic, and the narrativization of the self within genres such as autofiction and memoir.

13. Atlantic Crossings. Transatlantic Networks, Cooperation and Political Exchange

Coordinators:

Emanuele Monaco, University of Bologna (emanuele.monaco2@unibo.it)

Alice Ciulla, “Roma Tre” University (alice.ciulla@uniroma3.it)

This panel explores dynamics of recognition in US history and politics through the analysis of circulation of ideas across the Atlantic. Modern history is full of examples of how political concepts and practices were influenced by an endless flow of ideas travelling through the Atlantic space. Many broad concepts like race, capitalism, internationalism, cooperation, reform came to be defined in the last decades thanks to a deeply intertwined process of mutual acknowledgement and recognition between different political and social realities in the context of the Atlantic crossings. Putting political theory in the broader context of the global 20th century allows to appreciate the full impact that this had on practices, imaginary, ideas, identities on both Europe and the United States.

This panel invites papers that investigate the role that the flow of ideas across the Atlantic had in creating, refining, changing and ending political movements, trends and approaches; that address the issue from a long-term perspective, spanning from the late 19th century to the 1970s and deals with it in a wide range of historical research fields. Themes that we seek to analyse include recognition in social and political thought, globalism in the analysis of US politics and its position in the world, new geographies of political activism, transatlantic exchanges, exceptionalism vs. globalism studying the American political experience, the construction and reconstruction of American social and political identities from a transatlantic point of view. These issues may be addressed using different sources, methodologies, and points of view. Moreover, the contributions will try to deepen the recognition of different cultures and political practices through the people and groups who promoted them. The exchange and intertwining of different identities and subjectivities represents, in fact, one of the most significant aspects of these Atlantic crossings.

14. Fluxus Perennis: Detecting Waves, Recognizing Motion, Uncovering Meanings

Coordinator:

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

This workshop focuses on the notion of flux and on its capacity for generating continuous movement. Contributions are invited from a variety of disciplines including but not limited to critical theory, philosophy, art criticism and the visual and performing arts, literary studies, translation studies. The workshop is attuned to the widespread demand, after poststructuralism, that we raise the question of what the real world is really like. We welcome the current interest in relational ontologies (Latour; Harman; Felski), but we also wish to examine this shift critically, taking the opportunity to reconsider the temporalities of intellectual history and its possible occlusions by the key words through which we found and stabilize our fields (for example, concepts like work of art, modernism, text, and so on).

By way of example, we suggest the following possible lines of reflection, and invite all sorts of work that might enter the conversation:

- New waves of Theory: the emergence of theoretical discourses that reject the logic of rupture and stake the appearance of the “new” in the crosstemporal logic of circulation, inviting a dynamic description of the movement of ideas toward an outside that is wider than a local or national one and an interrogation of the epistemic boundaries of constituted fields of inquiry;
- The status of the object, especially in art: considering, for example, the return of contemporary artists (Tracy Emin, Enzo Cucchi and others) to *objet trouvé* effect as “modality” of making art that applies pressure on the disappearance of the object in favor of concepts, relations, systems, thus calling for a redefinition of the work of art that might uncover, track down, investigate that “fluxus” of events which reshape, in recurring waves, the recognition of art;
- Phenomena of virtuous literary circulation: considering, for example, how rewritings of literary works might have taken translation to a new level as literary texts no longer simply originate, but rather circulate (as Susan Sontag first acknowledged), moving internationally and intersemiotically into new media and forms. Such a virtuous circulation might profitably be examined from a translational point of view to help us interpret the irresistible intricacies of our current networked artistic scene.

15. Me as the Not-Me: Difference, Recognition, and Identity Formation in US Culture

Coordinators:

Stefano Morello, The Graduate Center, City University of New York (veritas44@gmail.com)

Marco Petrelli, University of Turin (marco.petrelli@unito.it)

In his introduction to *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall writes that “it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, [...] that the 'positive' meaning of any term—and thus its 'identity'—can be constructed.” According to Hall, this kind of “radically disturbing recognition” is key to understanding how identities can function only because of their capacity to exclude. Every act of identity formation, then, always operates through a process of negation, of refusal and rejection of an Other that, regardless of its constitutional value, becomes the very condition of possibility for one’s own self-affirmation.

From representations of race, class, and gender in US literature (examples can be found in Henry James’, Ralph Ellison’s, and Nella Larsen’s novels) to contemporary subcultural formations; from on-screen representations of race and race relations, to both canonical and experimental poetry, US culture abounds with examples of identities coming into being by means of negation. While the dichotomy between identification and counter-identification has been complicated by scholars such as Judith Butler, José Esteban Muñoz, and Eric Lott—who have proposed that, for both minoritarian and majoritarian subjects, identity formation is a dialogical process that produces intended and unintended structures of fantasy, and relies on strategies to interrupt, bypass, or reproduce the

hegemonic order—this panel inquires into moments of recognition in North American literature, popular culture, and visual art that generate the self, its identity, and the narrative structures that make it, unmake it, and redeem it. We are interested in both how (and what kind of) identities are produced through the encounter with (and the recognition or mis-recognition of) the Other and, in turn, how the Othered resist, by negating that which negates them, to riff off of Herbert Marcuse's articulation of refusal in *An Essay On Liberation*. We welcome contributions looking at texts from across time periods and relying on different methodological approaches to analyze the ways in which marginalized and non-marginalized subjects produce their individual and collective identities through their relationship with the Other.

16. Presidents, Rhetoric, and the Power of Definition

Coordinator:

Anna Romagnuolo, DEIM Department, University of Tuscia (romagnuolo@unitus.it)

In a well-known article on the nature and effects of Presidents' rhetoric, David Zarefsky asserts that a key function of presidential rhetoric is to define social reality. Several other scholars have phrased it similarly, both before and after the publication of James Ceaser et al.'s seminal article on the rise of the rhetorical presidency. As early as 1990, Richard Neustad asserted that "presidential power is the power to persuade"; later on, other scholars have observed how the effectiveness of a great "public communicator" (Greenstein, 2000) is a President's main reason for success, granting them the ability to (re)define reality. Indeed, Mary Stakey labels the President as an "interpreter-in chief and Evan Carnog sees the essence of their leadership in "the ability to tell the right story and to change the story as necessary" (p.2).

Presidential politics must reckon with the changing needs of changing times and has to build its rhetorical success on the recognition, acceptance and re-definition of new identities and social realities. How does it work?

Sometimes presidential rhetoric performances rely (un)knowledgably on well-resounding sound-bites: so it is that Wilson's catchphrase "America First" becomes the epitome of Trump's politics, or Martin Luther King's dreams are recognized and used by Reagan "to justify his administration's reversal of civil rights policies and social programs" (Bostdorff & Goldwig, 2005, p. 667) or Nixon's "silent majority" is voiced again in the 45th presidential inaugural vow that "the forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer".

At other times, Presidents' rhetoric recognizes ignored or neglected identities, which need to be re-defined to conform to socially acceptable roles: so it is that Andrew Jackson's "native savages" [...] unwilling to submit to the laws of the states" become "the most deprived and most isolated minority group" in Nixon's 1970 annual message, and the consequences of the Founding Fathers' "peculiar institution" are acknowledged as a (nonexclusive) "negro problem" in Lyndon Johnson's "We shall overcome" speech, and further inscribed some 40 years later in wider social issues by senator

Obama's memorable keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention "There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America". And they remain on Joe Biden's progressive "whole-of-government equity agenda", enriched with LGBT+ protections, which aims to amend a political past of quite homophobic senatorial voting. This is quite surprising for a country whose Supreme Court still upheld in 1986 the constitutionality of colonial Sodomy laws. By the same token, rhetorical transformation allows a president who has declared that "Islam is part of America" to have a successor who suggests a Muslim travel ban.

The purpose of this seminar is to explore the different rhetorical strategies used by US presidents to interpret and (re)tell history, to account for and control social changes in a more diverse union, which struggles to become "more perfect". Contributions may want to focus on texts and narratives explicitly recognizant of previous, similar, or dissimilar discussions, and/or unadmittedly exploiting extratextual resources for the same or opposite purpose.

17. Narrators Like Me: Recognizing the Human within the Non-Human Subject in Contemporary Fiction

Coordinators:

Valentina Romanzi, University of Bergamo (valentina.romanzi@unibg.it)

Serena Demichelis, University of Verona (serena.demichelis@univr.it)

Pressing world issues have always influenced the modality, subject-matter, and form of fiction writing. Yet, recent times are positing a new challenge to authors, demanding that many give up speaking with voices that do not correspond to their "biographical identity." Cases of authors criticized for appropriating themes, issues, and tropes of cultures to which they do not belong abound (consider, for instance, the controversy surrounding Jeanine Cummings's 2019 novel *American Dirt*).

While this attitude reflects a much-needed wish for more inclusiveness and diversity in the panorama of arts and culture, it also tackles some fundamentally *literary* issues – the relation between author, subject and narrator being of paramount importance. In this light, recent experiments in speculative fiction by well-established authors such as Ian McEwan (*Machines Like Me*, 2019), Joyce Carol Oates (*Hazards of Time Travel*, 2018), Colson Whitehead (*Zone One*, 2012), Cormac McCarthy (*The Road*, 2006), and Philip Roth (*The Plot Against America*, 2004) might be understood as an attempt at escaping contextual judgment when dealing with *contemporaneity*. By appropriating a space, time, and voice *other* than the immanent human one, authors can move in dimensions which allow for comment, reflection, and development in an *ad hoc* environment – while retaining the specifically human quality of voice and hence putting in practice more or less effective forms of *anthropomorphization*.

We welcome contributions that explore how the human subject has been displaced onto a different narrative voice: alien forms of life, an animal or vegetal creature, an artificial intelligence, or even just an evident *Other* with respect to the author of the fictional work. We especially invite papers discussing the human author/non-human narrator relationship and its influence on agency.

This Call for Papers is open to submissions that analyze any work of fiction, regardless of the medium. We aim at starting a conversation on a little-debated topic at the intersection of narratology and speculative fiction, while also welcoming discussions on other types of narratives, as long as they present a significant and meaningful dissonance between the author and the narrator.

18. Debunking the Myth: Pan-Africanism in African American Movements

Coordinators:

Bruno Walter Renato Toscano, University of Pisa (bruno.toscano@phd.unipi.it)

Emanuele Nidi, University of Naples “L’Orientale” (enidi@unior.it)

The idea of a shared African ancestry has been pivotal in shaping a peculiar African-American identity since the inception of the first black movements in North America. In the early Black Nationalism’s rhetoric the historical realm of the African continent, fragmented by cultural, linguistic and religious boundaries, often disappears, replaced by the pacified image of a mythical motherland.

In 20th century Pan-Africanism, for the very first time ideologies are conceptualized in organizations bound each other in a global network; yet, debates around the function of homeland Africa often ended up in harsh political conflicts. Indeed, groups sharing common Pan-Africanist outlook might nonetheless engage in opposite agendas. A case in point is the 1920s’ classical dichotomy in the New Negro Movement between the Du Boisean Pan African Congresses and Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA); half a century later, such contrasts might be found into the revolutionary and cultural nationalism during the Black Power era.

Different conceptions of Pan-Africanism are at stake. Eradication of colonial order or negotiation with colonial powers? Anti-imperialist insurrection or search for ancient racial roots?

On the one hand, Black Nationalist movements use Pan-Africanism as a strategic tool to underline how blacks worldwide have been oppressed by White Supremacists. In this sense, Pan-Africanist movements are at the origin of a global perspective that aimed to create political ties to liberate global non-white community from Imperialism. On the other hand, some African American organizations are critical toward the creation of a worldwide Pan-Africanist movement, especially after World War II.

The panel aims to explore the relationships between African American movements and Pan-Africanism and the outcomes of all Pan-African meetings in Black activism in the United States.

We are looking for papers that intend to analyze from an interdisciplinary perspective the role played by Pan-Africanism in African American history, political thought, literature, arts, etc., both in local, national and global perspective.