

# Reconstruction at 150: Amnesty or Internal Combustion?

*final program*

Friday, November 18

## Poetry and its Uses (8:30-10:00)

*Elizabeth Young, Mount Holyoke College (chair)*

### Fertile Borders: Landscapes and Self-Determination in the Poetry of the *Colored American*

In reading the nature-focused poetry that appeared in the weekly *Colored American*, a Black-owned and edited newspaper published in New York City from 1837 to 1841, my talk will consider two closely related questions about the rhetorical function of these pieces. First, I ask how these poems, some of which are white-authored, represent the possibilities for Black Americans' relationship with nature. Second, I examine how these poems use representation of the natural environment to call for African American citizenship rights. Focusing on representative examples from the *Colored American*, my paper analyzes poems representing natural landscapes in the context of editorials arguing that Black Americans should take up farming. In reading a group of explicitly abolitionist poems, I argue that these pieces present the continuation of slavery on US soil as a practice that does irreparable harm both to the natural environment and to the nation.

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### Still Loaded: William Gilmore Simms's Confederate Poetics

In his preface to the 1866 anthology *War Poetry of the South*, William Gilmore Simms used a striking metaphor to justify gathering so many unapologetically "sectional" works in a volume intended for a national audience: however refractory, these pro-Confederate poems were as much the property of the reconstituted Union as "the captured cannon which were employed against it during the progress of the late war." The grammatical ambiguity of this phrase is, indeed, quite loaded: Did he mean the metaphorical "cannon" was originally the property of the Union or the Confederacy? Who is firing the cannon and who is its target? In this paper, I make sense of Simms's enigmatic phrase as a statement of a *poetics of civil war*, in which lyrical language is conceived as being both weaponized *against* the enemy and willingly *handed over* to them. I then "test" this poetics in a reading of some of Simms's own contributions to his anthology.

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### Woolson's "Rodman the Keeper" and the Uses of Poetic Quotation

In Constance Fenimore Woolson's short postwar story, a government placard hanging in the cemetery office gives an exact count of the dead followed by the first two stanzas of Longfellow's "Psalm of Life." This excerpt from one of the most frequently quoted (and parodied) poems in the American canon exemplifies the cultural practice of quoting poetry in non-literary domains or occasions (here, a government office) and non-literary genres (here, a commemorative plaque). My paper explores this practice of literary quotation and what I will call the paraliterary genre of the poetic excerpt. Instead of the taxonomic or hermeneutic approaches taken by literary genre theory, I will analyze the excerpt genre through the lens of Rhetorical Genre Studies, which treats literary and nonliterary genres alike as forms of social action (Carolyn Miller), that is, "types of rhetorical

actions that people perform in their everyday interactions with their worlds” (Amy Devitt). Repeated uses of the same excerpt, as I argue elsewhere, begin to form traditions of citation. Keeping in mind the histories of quotation from “Psalm of Life,” we can explore the multiple purposes, ironic and sincere, to which Woolson imagines the poem is put—complicated by the fact that these ostensibly nonliterary purposes are contained within a literary frame, a short story.

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### **In the Haunted Mind’s Eye (10:15-11:45)**

*Samuel Graber, Valparaiso University (chair)*

#### Valentine’s Day, 1848: The Literati, Professional Intimacy, and Cultural History at Anne Lynch’s Salon

On Valentine’s Day in 1848, the poet Anne C. Lynch hosted a party in her Manhattan home. The attendees included a who’s who of New York letters of the time, as Bayard Taylor breathlessly described to a friend: “Halleck, Bryant, Willis, Morris, Hoffman, Parke Goodwin, ...Tuckerman, ..Mrs. Kirkland, Grace Greenwood, Mrs. Smith, Miss Sedgwick, Mrs. Osgood, Mrs. Ellet, Mrs. Hewitt, and a host of others. What a constellation!” George “Gaslight” Foster wrote a profile of the party for the *Home Journal*, offering the proceedings as evidence of New York’s status as capital of American culture. The party and most of its “constellation” of writers have become footnotes in U.S. literary history, but this paper will reconstruct the party as a microcosm of a literary world where gender distinctions were far less relevant than we now assume and scales of intimacy (homosocial, homo- and heterosexual) were complexly entangled. From Taylor’s homoerotic Valentine to an exoticized Herman Melville, to the poet Helen Sarah Whitman’s Valentine to an absent Edgar Allan Poe, which initiated a romantic relationship between the two before Poe’s death, the party revealed the complex social and sexual registers within the New York literary community. I will argue that recentring mid-nineteenth-century U.S. literary history around events like Lynch’s Valentine Party is also a way to re-envision U.S. gender, sex and cultural history in the period.

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#### A Fiction of Wholeness: Amputation and the Nation in the Diaries of George Templeton Strong

My paper takes up work that Erica Fretwell and Megan Nelson have conducted on the connection between Civil War amputation and individual bodily identity, what Fretwell refers to as a “fiction of wholeness.” This paper, however, considers how this “fiction of wholeness” maps onto the pre- and post-Civil War nation as a body. In his 1860 diary, George Templeton Strong uses a metaphor of amputation when speaking about the inevitability of secession: “Amputation weakens the body, and the amputated limb decomposes and perishes. Is our vital center North or South? Which is Body and which is Member? We may have to settle that question by experiment.” Strong considers here whether the North or South is *the* essential part—the vital part—of the nation. This surely refers to the looming war, but it also poses a crisis of national identity: an “amputated” nation is forced into an architecture of “body” and “members,” a metaphor that urges readers to consider the lasting effects of that amputation. Put another way, what happens to the identity of the nation (the body) before and after it is amputated from its members? After all, as Nelson explains, the American public “invested the core of citizenship in the whole, white male body.” To this point, I use Strong’s 1860 diary to explore this pre-war anxiety of body, citizenship, and nation by examining his preoccupation with amputation metaphors alongside the contemporary medical discourse surrounding amputation.

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### American Dreaming: Reverie, War, and the Industrial State

This paper is part of a larger inquiry into how the family of psychological experiences grouped under the umbrella term “reverie” – especially dissociation and deep absorption – related to the development of American culture from roughly the Civil War through World War I. The early Romantics had already championed the individual’s contemplation of nature as a path to wisdom, but later writers articulated a distinctive new form of reverie, one in which a temporary suspension of the analytical and verbal faculties enables both a phenomenological release from the pressures of industrial modernity and a reoriented perspective on the cultural sphere. What I focus on here is the relationship between reverie and traumatic experience in literary (and other cultural) texts concerned with human responses to war, grief, and violent loss. This is connected in turn to the rise of the industrial state and its “war machine,” and I argue that the cognitive caesura of reverie helps to compensate for the routinization, self-regulation, and alienation from nature that U.S. modernity brought about or accelerated. In some texts there is also an effort to draw the reader into a state of reverie, encouraging a fuller awareness of the self’s embeddedness in history, culture, and human relations. The heightened urgency of this moral project in American literature tracked with the perception of industrial capitalism as a threat to social and psychic integrity.

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### Phoebe Yates Pember’s Southern Stories; or, How a Diehard Confederate Learned to Love Reconciliation

Phoebe Yates Pember, remembered for her 1879 nurse narrative, aspired to a literary life. In 1863, a few months into her tenure as chief matron at Richmond’s sprawling Chimborazo Hospital, she explained to her sister that she spent her evenings “writing for the magazines.” Whether those stories found their way into print is unclear. Sixteen years later, however, and only four months after she published *A Southern Woman’s Story*, Pember placed a story in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Over the next few years, three of her stories appeared in *Harper’s Monthly*.

In her memoir, Pember presented herself as a competent, no-nonsense nurse who challenged authority when the well-being of her patients was compromised by the incompetence of male doctors or by hospital regulations that no longer served their purpose. Equally important, Pember presented herself as a committed Confederate, one who had no patience for Yankees or their sympathizers. That position had served her well in the 1860s. The 1880s, however, were another matter.

This paper examines Pember’s navigation of the northern publishing world at a time when the Lost Cause myth was beginning to change from a combative articulation of Confederate grievances to a reconciliationist narrative that drew in white northerners. Pember was not a conciliationist by inclination. But she learned for the sake of publication.

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## **Black Songs Traveling across Space, Time, Geography, and Print (2:15-3:45)**

Timothy Sweet, West Virginia University (chair)

### “Faint shadow of the original”: Transcribing the Spirit of Emancipation in the Sea Islands

In April of 1867, the Boston *Watchman and Reflector* published correspondence from Harriet Beecher Stowe under the title “Among the Freedmen in Florida.” Therein, Stowe recounts her visit to a Black worship service and the disappointment of her aesthetic expectations. By her account, the liturgical constraints of the Methodist hymn book had ostensibly tamed the irregular excitation of “the peculiar religious melodies [sung] in their own way.” Stowe speculates that the Black worshipers chose the repetitious structure of the hymns believing them to be “more dignified... as being a closer imitation of white, genteel worship.” Corrupted by this imitative impulse, Stowe dismisses the performance as having “as little soul as most stereotyped religious forms.”

Lamenting the potential loss of a Black past expressed in songs did not preclude investing in cotton futures. Stowe’s reason for being in Florida, visiting her son’s free-labor cotton plantation in which she had invested, casts an ironic light on her complaint about Black imitation of White standards. After emancipation, in what was voluminously reported as the “free-labor experiment,” a calculus of emulation and progress towards standards of civilization defined by market culture, provided the framework for highly politicized judgments about the capacity of African-descended people to step into the imagined future of the postwar U.S. This paper examines emancipation era commentary on “negro spirituals” (Stowe, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Thomas Ware, Lucy Miller McKim, John Greenleaf Whittier) in order to understand the importance of the premature nostalgia of abolitionists in the modernizing and racializing discourse of free labor.

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### From Concert Halls to Drawing Rooms: The Fisk Jubilee Singers’ Songbook in Translation

Much has been said about the Fisk Jubilee Singers’ performances during the 1870s. Thinkers as prominent as W. E. B. Du Bois and Zora Neale Hurston have written about the significance of their performances of African American music in England. Less analysis has been given to the continental leg of their tour, which included performances in some of the grandest concert halls in Central Europe. To that end, Kira Thurman’s *Singing Like Germans: Black Musicians in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms* (2021) seems poised to open a broader conversation about Black musicians in nineteenth-century German-speaking countries, including the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Drawing on original research as well as Thurman’s excellent scholarship, this talk will analyze the cultural importance of the Fisk Singers’ performances in German-speaking Europe. In addition to discussing the performances, the talk’s main intervention is its analysis of the textual production that followed in the wake of the Fisk Singers’ concerts, namely, the translations of their songbook. Close reading of these translations, and consideration of the contexts in which they were compiled, will offer a view of the Fisk Singers’ significance beyond the concert halls and into the drawing rooms of Central Europe. The proliferation of songbooks in translation, I argue, is a significant and lasting aspect of the Fisk Singers’ transatlantic legacy.

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## Railroad Folk: Train Songs and Black Futuring

Following Mark Dery's argument that "If there is an Afrofuturism, it must be sought in unlikely places, constellated in far-flung points," this paper offers part of a larger project seeking the origins of "African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and prosthetically enhanced future" in early Black literature. Inasmuch as Dery reads Afrofuturism in "images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future," we must also consider "old" technology and its uses toward intergenerational address as a gesture of Afrofuturistic literary and cultural engagement. Early African American literature was already engaging the (proto)Afrofuturistic as it employed deliberately the technology of their times to project Black futures. One place this is evident is in early African American technologies of and networks for Black movement.

This paper takes up a dually constructed "vehicle" for Afrofuturist imaginings in folk songs about trains. I read the revisionist antislavery lyrics of Joshua McCarter Simpson and the ballad of folk legend John Henry to examine the merging of the technological and the human in this genre. While Simpson uses ekphrastic descriptions of the railroad car as a kind of techno-speculative apparatus for his freedom songs, the John Henry ballad centers the human cost of transportation technology. In both examples, railroad folk songs project speculative futures for Black childhood as the folk ballad form is intended for or perpetuated within children's educational contexts.

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## Lessons and Legacies: Periodical Studies and the Civil War Era (4:00-5:30)

*Jane E. Schultz, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (chair)*

### From Cause to Camp: Illustrating the Photographic Kinship of Union and Confederate Soldiers

My emphasis on the "photographic kinship" of opposing Union and Confederate forces demonstrates the ways in which visual media intervened to preserve fraternal bonds in the midst of devastating battlefield casualties. Predictably, this type of kinship depended on the erasure of Black bodies as markers of a "Cause" over which two competing "families" fought. To make this point, I look at James F. Gibson's well-known photograph of Confederate Lieutenant James Barroll Washington and Union Second Lieutenant George Armstrong Custer. In this portrait of former West Point classmates, Custer and his "prisoner" pose with a Black child, and according to the diary account of Custer's wife, Elizabeth ("Libbie"), it was this specific image that was reprinted in *Harper's Weekly* under the title "Both Sides, the Cause." Many scholars who have commented on the photograph and its relation to the Battle of the Seven Pines echo Libbie's claims, insisting that it circulated in *Harper's Weekly* under a slightly different title, "Both Sides and the Cause." Reprints of the image are seemingly nonexistent. What my archival research has revealed, however, is that a sketch of the photograph did appear in the *New-York Illustrated News*. Contrary to diary accounts of the incident, the sketch artist removed the "contraband" child, which I argue reaffirms the idea that the "family" drama of property and rights was complicated by a third subject whose visual presence frustrated the fraternal kinship at the heart of the war in late spring of 1862.

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## From Edgier Claims to Bolder Prose: Assessing 19th-Century Periodicals

In this paper, I discuss some unusual protocols for making use of nineteenth-century periodicals, including assembling materials from differing venues, acknowledging their varying agendas and audiences, and developing an argument within that communication process. I also explore the value of sharing periodical research on websites and in social media postings, where surprising connections and networking opportunities may arise. In particular, I concentrate on the rewarding risk of using creative prose to make ambitious claims when the rehearsal of facts and discoveries is comparatively simpler. This paper encourages exploring the boundaries of what we think we can do and who we think we can reach when we write about periodicals.

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## From Close Reading to Reading Closely: Towards a Method for Periodical Studies

This paper explores a method for reading periodicals that moves away from the traditional literary method of close reading and privileges the people who made the print. When working with periodicals, often times the most basic information can seem elusive. Questions of who wrote which article, who read such pieces, and where those readers were located can prove vexing to the point that scholars simply sidestep them. The newspaper, rather than a specific writer, speaks, and its words are heard by a mythical intended reader. Such shortcuts reflect the standard techniques of close reading, where a text, rather than an author, is the typical subject of analysis. But an ethical periodical studies demands that scholars focus on the people, and so requires a different approach to the print. Through a case study of uncovering the identity of a correspondent to the *New National Era* writing under a pseudonym, this paper suggests a method anchored in the practice of reading closely rather than close reading, one better suited for telling the stories of the people who made and engaged with the periodicals we study.

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## From Undereducated Grad Student to Overeducating Undergrads: Periodical Pedagogy in Context

When I entered my PhD program at the turn of the twenty-first century, the most I could have said about nineteenth-century periodicals was that I was aware they existed. Much to my chagrin, I soon discovered that novels and poems by the likes of Stowe or Whitman could not be understood in their context without fine-grained knowledge of periodical history. Thus, my own path to periodical research began from nowhere, and quickly suggested the need to comprehend more than I could possibly hope to learn without an abundance of time and resources. Once I became a professor teaching exclusively undergraduates, usually in general education courses, I realized that my graduate school transition (from total ignorance to a grasp of my total inadequacy) mirrored an important pedagogical puzzle: how does a professor account for the historical importance of periodicals given the finite resources of student time and interest available in a typical undergraduate course? This paper addresses that question with some provisional suggestions drawn from failures and successes in the undergraduate classroom.

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Saturday, November 19

**Defamiliarizing Reconstruction** (8:30-10:00)

Ian Finseth, University of North Texas (chair)

From Rags to Uniforms: Representations of Black Boys in the Civil War

This paper explores the archival record of images of Black boys who participated in the Civil War. I'm particularly interested in the trope of "rags to uniforms": formerly enslaved boys who crossed Union lines to freedom and then into the Union Army. I ask how these boys are enlisted not just in the military but also into a narrative of emancipation *as* military service.

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Anecdotal Evidence: Flash Fictions in the *New (National) Era*

In my ongoing study of Civil War echoes in the Washington weekly (1870-74) that Frederick Douglass acquired halfway through its inaugural year, three not-quite-stories have surfaced. The only one long enough to approximate a robust narrative is more sketched than plotted, while the other two are brief, episodic, anecdotal. Without much narrative heft, these glimpses of a DC boarding house, a Boston streetcar, and a backwoods Virginia apparition seem particularly vulnerable to the disdain of historians: too fleeting individually to make waves and too slight collectively to count as a broad sample or a measurable influence. Even adding two genuine stories fails to rescue the chief postwar African American paper from imaginative lightweight status, if page count, publishing run, and outsized audience are the only metrics that matter.

But "anecdotal evidence" also conjures up *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), where Thomas Kuhn observed sixty years ago that "anomalies," which Ian Hacking describes as "contrary to lawlike regularities...contrary to expectations," can eventually accumulate into a changed world view, even into a revolution in contemporary thought and perception. What Frederick Douglass in his first weekly issue called "the tumultuous waves of the grand revolution," prompted by the Civil War and the Reconstruction amendments to the Constitution, could thrive on the anomaly of African American volunteers in regimental uniforms on their way to a postbellum revolution in social justice. I argue that the weekly's Civil War anecdotes, even when slight, rolled into Douglass's "tumultuous waves," not because they challenged "normal" social practices in a Kuhnian model but because they strove to be commensurable with that model on behalf of those whom the country's founding commitment to liberty and justice had customarily shunned.

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Prophesying Citizenship in Edward A. Johnson's *Light Ahead for the Negro*

In Edward A. Johnson's speculative novel *Light Ahead for the Negro* (1904), protagonist Gilbert Twitchell departs New York City in 1906 aboard a dirigible airship bound for Mexico and awakens in Georgia one hundred years later. He finds that a century's worth of changes include electric cars, an abolished Congress, and a form of Black citizenship still lacking "social equality." Johnson, born enslaved, published his novel while working as assistant to the U.S. attorney in North Carolina. His text centers the arguments and events of the

latter half of the long Reconstruction era during what he describes as the “re-reconstruction” of the southern states that completed the “decitizenization” of African Americans. Within his multilayered text, Johnson embeds both actual and fictional historical documents that outline Reconstruction’s failures, name white supremacists like Thomas Dixon “false prophets,” and figure Reconstruction as its own hypothetical moment. While written as a futuristic text for readers in the present day, *Light Ahead for the Negro* also functions as a counterfactual history narrative, complicating its temporality further. This paper argues that the formal features of Johnson’s chronologically complex, generically hybrid text reveal the temporal elasticity and contingency of the Reconstruction period as well as the contested nature of citizenship both during Reconstruction and at the time of the publication. The tension Johnson creates between the imagined worlds of 1906 and 2006 functions as a place of both persuasion and hope.

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### Translating Turner: The Significance of the Frontier beyond Our Borders

This paper examines the Spanish-language translation history of Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 lecture “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” That lecture, as Brook Thomas has lately reminded us, ought to be considered as a response to the Civil War and Reconstruction, for it proposes western migration as a remedy for North-South conflicts while also affording many of its readers a chance to imagine themselves as inhabiting a cohesive, continent-spanning nation. Yet we might well ask, how have those from beyond U.S. borders, especially denizens of the lands ostensibly incorporated into the U.S. amidst its nineteenth-century colonial expansionism, responded to Turner’s statement? The late-twentieth-century Spanish translations of Turner’s lecture that were published in Mexico, Spain, and Costa Rica begin to suggest some answers. Especially significant, I offer, is the difficulty of rendering Turner’s keyword into Spanish. “Frontier” indeed approaches untranslatability in this context. I read that linguistic crux, and translators’ different navigations of it, as highlighting the geopolitical conflicts and institutional incommensurabilities that emerged amidst the nineteenth-century collisions of U.S., Mexican, and Indigenous polities and that have persisted long after Turner’s moment. My paper thus uses translation study to bring into focus a set of geopolitical fault lines that persisted amidst post-Civil War efforts at national consolidation.

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### **What the Carers Carried: War, Medicine, Texts (10:15-11:45)**

*Sarah E. Chinn, Hunter College, CUNY (chair)*

### The Metaphysics of Boredom and Frenzy: Coping with Surgical Extremes in the Field

Medical and surgical work in the Civil War was characterized by periods of boredom followed by unanticipated periods of frenetic activity. The antipodal range of these alternating states took a psychic toll on surgeons in camp and field, which they record in letters and diaries and the occasional memoir. Given the institutional adolescence of medicine in the 1860s and its masculinist culture of competition, few practitioners gave vent to the psychological challenges of professional performance, despite their presentation of classic trauma symptoms.

This study, based on the language and textual nature of first-person surgical accounts, explores how the war’s medical practitioners encountered long stretches of boredom and the mental stasis that plagued periods of



inactivity, even as military camps functioned as small cities and surgical routines were closely followed. By the same token it considers the sudden shift into battlefield care, which surgeons describe as fracturing their equanimity, given the dynamic range between boredom and frenzy that ensnared them. It was far more common for regimental surgeons—the vast majority of the surgical corps—to experience these extremes in contrast to more elite and powerful surgeons. Contextualizing the vulnerability of those at the base of the professional pyramid cracks open the hierarchical heart of medical professionalization in an examination of biographical surgical language.

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### Healing Words: Black Medical Providers and the U.S. Civil War

This presentation examines the writings of Black authors who served or were commissioned in the U.S. Civil War such as Susie King Taylor, Charlotte L. Forten, and Martin Delaney (among others). The U.S. Civil War was a period in American history known not only for political and martial upheaval, but for the collapsing of formerly well-guarded social categories. As the delineations between such binaries as enslaved and free, civilian and soldier, men's and women's work started to cloud, formerly marginalized individuals found themselves occupying social positions that, a few years before, would have seemed nearly or clearly impossible.

With this in mind, "Healing Words" examines the significance of such categorical ambivalence as it played out in areas dedicated to healing—hospitals, field hospitals, navy floating hospitals, etc.—where Black soldiers and medical practitioners sought to provide physical recovery, often in company with white counterparts. Drawing on contemporary scholars who theorize pain as not only a corporeal phenomenon, but a state of liminal and changing (perhaps even "post") existence, this presentation argues that the collective pain exemplified in these environments opened the door for imagined futures based on mutual and shared experiences of loss and rejuvenation.

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### "What a tell-tale thing is an empty sleeve": The Narrative Act of Amputation in Popular Civil War Music

By the end of the Civil War, surgeons from both the North and South had completed approximately 60,000 amputations, which made up nearly three-fourths of all operations during the war. Amputation became so ubiquitous in Civil War culture that cultural reception of disability shifted drastically from an antebellum climate that marginalized and ostracized disabled bodies to a postbellum sense that embattled bodies were heroically, having answered their nation's call with a full measure of devotion. As the war dragged on, dismembered bodies moved from the periphery of cultural focus to its center, and communities in both the North and South had to reconceive earlier priorities. Wartime media became a vehicle leading this shift as stark images such as "the empty sleeve" became commonplace in popularly circulating music, art, photography, and poetry, where amputation became a mark of valor and a narrative trace of sacrifice for nation.

This paper focuses on the Henry Badger and David Barker song and poem, "The Empty Sleeve," which was listed for sale in an 1864 music flyer from W.W. Whitney in Toledo, Ohio. Reading closely, the paper considers how the empty sleeve becomes a site of embattled narrative and the ways popular music immerses its listeners in the widely circulating amputation narrative and reshapes cultural perception of lost limbs as evidence of national valor.

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### **The Civil War's New Ways of Seeing (2:15-3:45)**

*Brigitte Fielder, University of Wisconsin-Madison (chair)*

#### The Sea as Monument: Matthew Fontaine Maury and the Global Dimensions of Confederate Commemoration

This paper focuses on the commemoration of the early oceanographer and senior Confederate naval officer Matthew Fontaine Maury. Taking seriously 19th and early 20th century claims that “the sea is his real monument,” it asks why Maury’s scientific work resulted in the ownership of oceans and the monumentalisation of the sea. Pairing the notion of a “self-made monument” with sculpted equivalents, it approaches Confederate monuments from a transatlantic perspective, highlighting the history of the slave trade in the process and, in doing so, counteracting that of the Lost Cause. Frederick William Sievers’s monument to Maury, previously located on Monument Avenue in Richmond, will center this discussion. The statue commemorates Maury as a scientific genius, but its Southern location and recent removal, in June 2020, were a result of his Confederate leanings. The paper explores this perceived conflict of identities and how Maury’s international reception interacted with sectional loyalties and ideas about scientific neutrality. Drawing on the large dataset of ship logs gathered under Maury’s name and the sculptural design of Sievers, it makes a case for viewing the present-day monument and climate crisis in parallel.

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#### Voyeuristic Narration in the Postbellum Novel: From Eavesdroppers to Spies

With an anchor in the fiction of Henry James (particularly *The American* [1877] and *The Princess Casamassima* [1886]), this paper explores the connection between a narrator who acts as an eavesdropper and a narrator who acts as a spy. In promoting Nathaniel Hawthorne’s work in his 1879 critical biography, James privileged a spectatorial style that verges on voyeurism; Hawthorne, who had literally been a “surveyor” (or inspector), was fond of peeping through windows, both in real life (as in his “Night Sketches”) and in his fiction (as in *The Blithedale Romance*, when Coverdale studies “the backside of the universe” by looking out from his hotel room and through the windows of the building across the street). James took a cue by suggesting that the “house of fiction” is made up chiefly of “watchers” staring out of windows upon human affairs.

However, drawing from recent scholarship by Carrie Hyde, Pardis Dabashi, and Rivky Mondal, among others, I argue that narration in James’s novels (and in other novels of the time) may also be profitably understood in the context of the Civil War spy--the secret agent, such as Martin Delany’s Blake, who brokers information and traffics in counter-narratives, as well as characters in lesser-known works, such as Epes Sargent’s Civil-War novel *Peculiar* (1864). The voyeuristic narrator slides from spectator, to inspector, to investigator, to infiltrator--from passively overhearing to actively spying.

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## Soldiers, Flowers, Fruit, Flies: Charles Ethan Porter and Nineteenth-Century African American Still Life Painting

Charles Ethan Porter (1847?-1923) was the only known nineteenth-century African American painter working in the still life genre. Born into a family of free people of color in rural Connecticut, he trained formally as an artist in New York and Paris and owned a studio in Hartford, where he was patronized by Mark Twain; but he struggled constantly against racism and poverty and died in obscurity. Porter was deeply affected by the Civil War: two brothers enlisted in African American regiments (one killed in battle, the other debilitated by illness), and his work includes a striking drawing of a Civil War soldier. The majority of his paintings, however, depict fruit and flowers and are seemingly divorced from social issues. In this paper, I reexamine two of Porter's still lifes, setting them in conversation with his figurative images, conventions of the still life genre, racist stereotypes, and African American culture. His *Cracked Watermelon* (1890) offers indirect but pointed political critique, adapting a longstanding still life focus to contest the racist imagery of watermelon consolidated in this era. *Four Flies* (1877), an extraordinary trompe l'oeil painting of flies on a plate, both lends itself to and resists symbolic interpretations, whether of flies seen as pejorative markers of decay and contagion or, more affirmatively, as isolated emblems of difference against a white background. Porter's still lifes, I suggest, are important not only in themselves but for the ways they elicit and test interpretive assumptions about nineteenth century Black artistic practice.

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## Toppling the Statues

What does it mean to confront a public space where a memorial statue used to stand? What happens when you kick a toppled statue lying on the ground? This paper looks at Civil War memory in terms of the 21st century refusals to commemorate. Confederate soldiers are obviously part of it, but so is Abraham Lincoln. Many of the statues associated with the Civil War were erected decades later, some at the instigation of the Daughters of the Confederacy through projects investigated by the historian Karen Cox. Bringing together the discomfort associated with the display of male bodies as historical artifacts and the ongoing hagiography associated with Abraham Lincoln's stone body in the national mall, this talk considers the haunting associated with the Civil War and the ongoing, probably futile, attempts at exorcism.

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## **Archival Innovations: A Workshop** (4:00-5:30)

*Kathleen Diffley, University of Iowa (chair)*

## Chasing Newspapers across the Confederacy and the Archive

Peripatetic newspapers were a fact of life during the Civil War, most famously romanticized in stories of the *Memphis Daily Appeal's* narrow escape across the Pearl River outside Jackson in 1863, Jackson being the *Appeal's* second stop after leaving Memphis in 1862. Other Southern dailies, like the *Knoxville Daily Register* and the *Chattanooga Daily Rebel*, led a similar refugee existence in order to survive, publishing irregularly and from a range of locations over the course of many years. One such newspaper challenges us to rethink how we conceive of the newspaper as well as the archive. Our presentation will focus on the sporadic, peripatetic publishing history of the *Missouri Army Argus* (1861-1862), which fled Corinth in 1862 only to

reemerge as a daily in Jackson (the *Daily Southern Crisis*) in 1863 before transforming itself into a weekly literary and news journal (the *Army Argus and Crisis*) from 1864-1865 in Mobile, Alabama. We will first focus on the travels and travails of this newspaper from 1862 to 1865, before turning to its evolving readership and what we can glean from the regular subscription lists it published at the end of the war. We will end our presentation by discussing the ad hoc protocols we have developed to track down the many iterations of this endeavor in wartime newspapering (especially during the pandemic) as well as share our reflections on how we have collaborated on shared and individual projects as a faculty member and undergraduate researcher.

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### Civil War Disability in the Archives

This paper brings together research from several different archival repositories to reflect on how researching Civil War disability allows us to pose questions about archival research practices. The paper pays particular attention to the collection of Civil War hospital newspapers held at the American Antiquarian Society. As texts produced for, and sometimes by, wounded and sick soldiers, hospital newspapers constitute a genre that noticeably triangulates reading, writing, and disability. Hospital newspapers do not allow for the simple recovery of disabled voices, however, as they often make it difficult to discern the extent to which disabled soldiers are speaking or being spoken for. They thus raise questions about the importance and viability of centering individual voices in archival “recovery” work. Particular issues of the papers also raise questions about representativeness and access. For example, an article by the chief surgeon at the Ward Hospital in Newark, New Jersey, in mocking the Black patients and ward master at the hospital for U.S. Colored Troops where he previously worked, suggests the extent to which the community of disabled soldiers invoked by the newspapers was implicitly racialized. Finally, an issue of *Voice of the Soldier*, published at Sloan U.S.A. General Hospital in Montpelier, Vermont, raises questions about normativity and access, with the digitized (and thus more accessible) version of the paper silently correcting the upside-down printing of half an issue—a detail that I argue has relevance for our reading of the text, whether or not we assume it was intentional.

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### Enlarging a Civil War Lens: A Massachusetts Town and University Reckon with Slavery through the Archives

As my collaborator and I have looked in the town and university archives for evidence of the people of color who lived in Bridgewater during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and as we’ve shared our findings with the community, we have repeatedly confronted assumptions shaped by how the Civil War has been historicized and memorialized in Massachusetts. Our university president was comforted when the university historian assured him that none of the institution’s founders “owned slaves.” But our research has shown that different questions yield more fruitful answers about enslaved people, their lives, and their considerable social agency as it is relevant to a context such as ours, a regional state regional university founded well after the end of legal slavery in Massachusetts. Instead of centering white people, we have turned to the archives with questions like, “Who were the African Americans and Native Americans who lived here? Where can we find records of their lives? How did they navigate the social and legal structures of the town?” Whereas the question of whether any

of the founders were enslavers produced a reassuring one-word answer that our university was on the right side of history, these questions have yielded a more nuanced picture of people navigating the social and legal structures of Revolutionary-era unfreedom in Massachusetts, right on the land where our university now stands. My talk explores several stories of the people we have been researching and discusses some of our public engagement strategies.

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