

American Fiction:
Forms, Genres, and Traditions
A Symposium Sponsored by the American Literature
Association

October 16-18, 2025

Drury Plaza Hotel in Santa Fe
828 Paseo de Peralta
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Conference Director:
Alfred Bendixen, Princeton University

Keynote Speaker:
Hertha Dawn Sweet Wong, UC Berkeley

Acknowledgements:

The Conference Director wants to express his appreciation to all of those who have organized panels and/or agreed to present their work at this symposium. Special thanks are due to Professor Olivia Carr Edenfield, Director of the ALA, who has provided invaluable advice and managed almost all the financial arrangements. The American Literature Association is also extremely grateful for the superb work provided by our Executive Assistant, Savannah Barrow, who has ensured a smooth registration process and handled countless logistical details with good humor and great efficiency.

Land Acknowledgment:

The Drury Plaza Hotel, in which we have gathered to share our scholarly explorations of American literary history and culture, sits on unceded ancestral Tewa Land, specifically O'gha Po'oge, now present-day Santa Fe. The descendants of O'gha Po'oge, the modern-day Tewa people, still exist and live in Santa Fe and the local Pueblos of Nambe, Pojoaque, San Ildefonso, Ohkay Owingeh, Santa Clara and Tesuque. We pay our respect to the Indigenous caretakers of these lands and waters, those who came before and those who remain present today.

Audio-Visual Details:

All sessions in Rivera B and only those sessions have audio-visual equipment – a digital projector and screen. Participants need to bring their laptops and any special connecting cables needed to hook up to the digital projector.

Thursday October 16, 2025

**Conference Registration, Welcoming Reception,
and Opening Plenary Panel**

5:00-7:30 pm (Palace A)

**Opening Roundtable on the
Forms, Genres, and Traditions of American Fiction**

Moderator: Alfred Bendixen, Princeton University

Oliver Scheiding, University of Mainz

Thadious M. Davis, University of Pennsylvania

Robert Levine, University of Maryland

Hertha Dawn Sweet Wong, University of California, Berkeley

Wendy Martin, Claremont Graduate University

Friday, October 17

Registration: 8:00 – 10:00 am (Hotel Lobby)

8:30-9:45 am

Session 1-A Native Traditions and Revisions (Rivera A)

Chair: Hertha Dawn Sweet Wong, University of California, Berkeley

1. “Too Good for a Boy’s Book’: *Long Lance*, Literary Redface, and American Fictions of Race,” Alicia Carroll, UC Irvine
2. “Institutional Violence and Regenerational Storying in Tommy Orange's *Wandering Stars*,” Angela Mullis, Rutgers University
3. “The New Indigenous Gothic: Native Crime Fiction and Feminist Traditions,” Alfred Bendixen, Princeton University

Session1-B Cormac McCarthy Session I (Rivera B)

Organized by the Cormac McCarthy Society

Chair: Olivia Carr Edenfield, Georgia Southern University

1. “Cormac McCarthy's Library Project,” Stacey Peebles, Centre College
2. “Only nature can enslave men”: The Judge as Language in Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian*,” Jonathan Elmore, Louisiana Tech University, and Rick Elmore, Appalachian State University
3. “Landscape and the Contours of Divinity: Cormac McCarthy and the Tradition of American Nature Writing,” Steven Frye, California State University, Bakersfield

AV Provided

10:00-11:15 am

Session 2-A Cormac McCarthy Session II (Palace A)

Organized by the Cormac McCarthy Society

Chair: Steven Frye, California State University, Bakersfield

1. "Dead Girlfriends in *No Country for Old Men*," Nell Sullivan, University of Houston-Downtown
2. "Blood Meridian as American Prophecy," Vernon W. Cisney, Gettysburg College
3. "They Seldom Mention the Good": Marriage and the Good in Cormac McCarthy, Brent Walter Cline, Hillsdale College

Session 2-B Unhomely Heroines: Rewriting the Female Gothic in American Fiction (Rivera B)

Organized by Cindy Murillo

Chair: Wendy Martin, Claremont Graduate University

1. "All This for 'a bijou of a place': An Uncle's Menacing Scheme to Circumvent the Married Women's Property Act Laws and the Silencing of Women in Alcott's 'A Whisper in the Dark,'" Jen Nader, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.
2. "The Rise of Chick Schlock: Contemporary Feminist Horror in America's Rightward Turn," Alex M. Anderson, University of Minnesota, Crookston.
3. "Rewriting the Haunted: Black Feminist Power and the American Gothic in Tananarive Due," Cindy Murillo, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Session 2-C Crossing Borders and Transnational Issues (Rivera A)

Chair: Oliver Scheiding, University of Mainz

1. "Hannah Crafts, Harriet Jacobs, and the Functions of British Fiction in African-American Slave Narratives," Amanda Louise Johnson, Pitzer College
2. "Why Did Jack London Haul a Copy of *Paradise Lost* to the Klondike?" Jeanne Campbell Reesman, University of Texas at San Antonio
3. "Cosmopolitanism in Oscar Cásares's Borderlands Fiction," Juan Alonzo, Texas A&M University

11:30 am-12:45 pm

Session 3-A Eudora Welty and Genre (Rivera A)

Organized by the Eudora Welty Society

Chair: Olivia Carr Edenfield, Georgia Southern University

1. "Eudora Welty's Puzzletexts and Her Signature Play with Genres," Harriet Pollack, College of Charleston
2. "Eudora Welty and Film Genres: Ensemble Narrative and An Unexpected Pedagogy," Jacob Agner, University of Mississippi
3. "Eudora Welty as an American Protest Writer," Rebecca Mark, Rutgers University

Session 3-B American Fiction beyond the Nation (1) (Rivera B)

Organized by Robert Levine and Russ Castronovo

Chair: Russ Castronovo, University of Wisconsin

1. "Inventing Fictions: Franklin becomes America," Caroline Levander, Rice University
2. "Beyond the National Body: Media Prosthesis, Affect, and Poe's 'The Man That Was Used Up,'" Paul Hurh, University of Arizona
3. "Hemispheric Hauntologies: Fictions from the Dead," Jesse Aleman, University of New Mexico
4. "Passing and Cuba in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Pearl of Orr's Island*," Robert S. Levine, University of Maryland
5. "Aquinas in America? Fictions of the Common Good," Elizabeth Duquette, Reed College

Lunch 12:45- 2:15 pm

New Mexican Buffet (Lamy Room) and special presentation on "Editing the American Short Story for the Library of America,"

John Stauffer, Harvard University, and John Kulka, Library of America

2:15 – 3:30 pm

Session 4-A American Fiction beyond the Nation (2) (Rivera A)

Organized by Robert Levine and Russ Castronovo,

Chair: Robert S. Levine, University of Maryland

1. "Fictions of Early California," Kirsten Gruesz, University of California, Santa Cruz
2. "Caste, Class, and Race in Mark Twain's *Following the Equator*," Susan Gillman, University of California, Santa Cruz:
3. "The Sovereignties of Vulnerability: Framing In Our Time," Anna Brickhouse, University of Virginia:
4. "The Vulnerabilities of Sovereignty: Ursula K. Le Guin's 'Mr. No-Skin,'" Russ Castronovo, University of Wisconsin, Madison:
5. "Speculative Orientalism: Race and the Wish Fulfillment of Fantasy," Leslie Bow, Madison, University of Wisconsin

Session 4-B Women's Voices in American Jewish Literature (Rivera B)

Organized by Victoria Aarons

Chair: Sharon Oster, University of Redlands

1. "Shapes of Memory in Leela Corman's Collection of Graphic Narratives, *We All Wish for Deadly Force*," Victoria Aarons, Trinity University
2. "Divine Ironies: Muriel Spark Between American Modernity and Jewish-Catholic Allegory," Holli Levitsky, Loyola Marymount University
3. "Who's to Blame: Moral Complexity in Adele Waldman's *Love Affairs of Nathaniel P.*" Hilene Flanzbaum, Butler University

3:45- 5:00 pm

Session 5-A Making “Elbow Room”: Expanding the Range of Black Characters and Black Life in African American Literature. A Discussion of the Short Stories of James Alan McPherson. (Rivera A)

Chair and Organizer: Allen Gee

1. John McCluskey, Jr., Indiana University
2. ZZ Packer, Vanderbilt University
3. Rachel McPherson (James Alan McPherson’s daughter).
4. Allen Gee, Columbus State University,

Session 5-B Women’s Narratives (Rivera B)

Chair: Wendy Martin, Claremont Graduate University

1. “Edith Wharton’s Fictions of the University,” Meredith Goldsmith, Ursinus College
2. “‘Conniving and Surviving’: Naturalism and Women’s Narratives of the Pre-Code Era,” Donna Campbell, Washington State University
3. “‘My Fortunes Have Corrupted Honest Men’: Exploration and Materialism in Cather’s *The Professor’s House*,” Jim Barloon, The University of St. Thomas

5:15-7:30 Welcoming Reception and Keynote Address

“The Vitality of Indigenous Storytelling: Place, Time, Being/s”

Hertha Dawn Sweet Wong, University of California, Berkeley

Hertha D. Sweet Wong is Professor Emerita in the Department of English at the University of California, Berkeley. She is author of *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years: Tradition and Innovation in Native American Autobiography* (Oxford UP) as well as numerous articles on Native American literature, autobiography, and environmental non-fiction, editor of *Louise Erdrich’s Love Medicine: A Casebook* (Oxford UP) and co-editor of *Reckonings: Contemporary Short Fiction by Native American Women* (Oxford UP) and *Family of Earth and Sky: Indigenous Tales of Nature from around the World* (Beacon). Her most recent book

is *Picturing Identity: Contemporary American Autobiography in Image and Text* (U of North Carolina Press).

Her talk tonight will consider the centrality, endurance, creativity, and variety of Native Stories in North America as well as their ongoing role in resistance, resilience, and healing.

Registration: 8:00 – 10:00 am (Hotel Lobby)

Saturday, October 18, 2026

8:30-9:45 am

Session 6- A Modernist Worlds (Rivera A)

Chair: Fred Jordan, Nashville State Community College

1. Expatriates and Immigrants: Looking for Indigeneity and Longing for Home in “A Cat in the Rain” and “The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio,” Nicole J. Camastra, Independent Scholar
2. “A Soldier's Place: The Post-War World of Jay Gatsby and Davy Carr.” Leslie Frost, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
3. “Finding Faulkner’s Temple Drake,” Deborah Wilson, Arkansas Tech University

Session 6-B Forms of Science Fiction / Speculative Fiction (Rivera B)

Chair: Alfred Bendixen, Princeton University

1. “Hang Together or All Hang Separately:” Writing With and Against the Form of Culture in the Science Fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin, Leslie Marmon Silko and Octavia E. Butler,” Eric Aronoff, Michigan State University
2. “Ray Nayler and the Future of American SF,” Matt Morgenstern. University of Minnesota Crookston
3. “Sowing the Seeds of Survival: Travel as Palingenetic Resistance to Fascism in Octavia Butler’s Parable Novels,” Mary Rosenberry, Sierra College
4. “The Machine in the Garden’: Solar Punk Pastoralism in Becky Chambers’s *Psalm for the Wild-Built*,” Gretchen Murphy, University of Texas at Austin

10:00-11:15 am

Session 7-A Forms of Fiction: The Roman à Clef and the Use of Real People in American Literature (Rivera A)

Organized by Kirk Curnutt

Chair: Jacqueline Foertsch, University of North Texas

1. "Buried Alive: The True Story Behind Truman Capote's 'A Tree of Night,'" Denis Zakharov, Independent Scholar,
2. "Slippery Truths: David Foster Wallace's Roman à Clef of Power and Identity in 'Lyndon,'" Lawrence Kuhar, Wilkes University
3. "Perfect Sinners: The Blessed Afterlife of Cormac McCarthy's John Sheddan and J.P. Donleavy's *The Ginger Man*," Patrick Blair Bonds, Troy University
4. "*Rumours* and Romans à Clef: Historical Interest and Literary Invention in Taylor Jenkins Reid's *Daisy Jones and the Six* and David Adjmi's *Stereophonic*," Kirk Curnutt, Troy University

Session 7-B American Traditions (Rivera B)

Chair: Alfred Bendixen, Princeton University

1. "Genre and its Discontents: Faulkner's Exploration of Crime, Form, and the South," Deborah Clarke, Arizona State University
2. "Joe Trace and Morrison's Blues," Thadious M. Davis, University of Pennsylvania
3. "Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer* and the American Literary Tradition," John Carlos Rowe, University of Southern California

Session 7-C Mapping the Stories We Tell. (O'Keeffe)

Chair: Jared Gardner, Ohio State University

1. "Temporal Vagabondism in Hawthorne's Short Fiction," Maria Karafilis, California State University, Los Angeles
2. "Folktales, Mermen, and Storytelling in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Pearl of Orr's Island*," Maire Elizabeth Mullins, Pepperdine University
3. "'Up and Down the Whole Creation': The Immigrant's Map from Stephen Foster to Laila Lalami," Jennie Lightweis-Goff, Louisiana State University

11:30 am-12:50 pm

Session 8-A American Gothic (Rivera A)

Organized by the Society for the Study of the American Gothic

Chair: Cindy Murillo, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

1. "Gothic Family Values in Stephen Graham Jones' Slasher Fiction," Maria O'Connell, Wayland Baptist University (Texas)
2. "Deconstructing Racial Essentialism: The Feminine Double in Contemporary Gothic Fiction by Women," Alison Graham-Bertolini, North Dakota State University
3. "Southern Gothic Girls Doing Deathwork: *House of Cotton* by Monica Brashears and *Ellen Foster* by Kaye Gibbons," Rachel Bryan, University of Tennessee
4. "The Evolving Father and the Gothic in McCarthy's Novels," Scott D. Yarbrough, Charleston Southern University

Session 8-B Forest Traditions (Rivera B)

Chair: Maria Karafilis, California State University, Los Angeles

1. "American Places: Forests, Identity, and Genre in Washington Irving's 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,'" Virginia Grant, University of New Mexico, Los Alamos
2. "The Revolution of 'People Out of Doors' in Antebellum Revolutionary Novels," Mei Xiaohan, Fudan University.
- 3: "Westward Toward the Neighboring Forest: Coming of Age in the North Woods in Two Novels of the Logging Epoch," Chris "CW" Johnson, University of Minnesota Duluth

Session 8-C Contemporary Traditions and Forms (O’Keeffe)

Chair: Kirk Curnutt, Troy University

1. “Reality and Illusion in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*," Michael Collins, Texas A&M University
2. “Artistic Selection and Natural Selection, or the Other Vladimir Nabokov”, Leland de la Durantaye, Claremont McKenna College
3. ”Jonathan Safran Foer's Multi-Voiced and Multi-Genre Narrative,” Lovorka Gruic Grmusa, University of Rijeka, Croatia.
4. “Some Transformations of James Frey’s *A Million Little Pieces*,” Jacqueline Foertsch, University of North Texas

12:50- 2:00 pm

Lunch Break and Special Pedagogy Session

You can spend Saturday lunch exploring the options in town or bring the boxed lunch we will provide to our special session on:

Pedagogy of Genre: Innovative Strategies for New Course Development (O’Keeffe)

Mona Choucair, Baylor University: “A Mashup of Genres: Teaching Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* alongside Vashti Harrison’s *Big*”

Tara Foley, Baylor University: “Teaching the American West through the Genre of the Dime Novel”

Tracy Hoffman, Baylor University,: “A Tour of Pedagogy and Genre with Washington Irving”

Maura Jortner, Baylor University: "Teaching and Writing American YA Dystopia”

2:15 – 3:30 pm

Session 9-A Secularism and Aesthetics in the American Novel (Rivera A)

Organized by the American Religion and Literature Society

Chair: Deborah Clarke, Arizona State University

1. “Take It Easy: Sacred Leisure and Aesthetic Labor in Melville’s *Pierre*,” Ashley Barnes, The University of Texas at Dallas
2. “Willa Cather and the Miracle of Attention,” Ray Horton, Murray State University
3. “Ralph Ellison, Secularization Theorist,” Ryan Siemers, Southern Utah University

Session 9-B Financial Fictions and American Literature, 1800-2025 (Rivera B)

Organizer and Chair: Amanda Louise Johnson, Pitzer College

1. “Dismal Science: Money and Labor in 19th-century U.S. Utopianism,” Elizabeth Hewitt, Ohio State University
2. “*Rappacini’s Daughter*, Cottonseed Markets, and Fictions of Purity,” David Anthony, Southern Illinois University
3. “Living Money and Dead Figures: The ‘Financial Biology’ of Cash from Etherium to Ethereum,” Joe Conway, University of Alabama-Huntington

Session 9-C African American Traditions and Revisions (O’Keefe)

Chair: Angela Mullis, Rutgers University

1. “American Fiction, African American Literature, and the Replication of the Past,” Martha J. Cutter, University of Connecticut
2. “Remapping Genre in Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy* and Octavia Butler’s ‘Speech Sounds,’” Jessica Maucione, Gonzaga University
3. “‘A Lost American Church Updated’: Interpreting Ishmael Reed’s *Mumbo Jumbo* as Literary Conjure,” Jennifer O’Reilly, Syracuse University

3:40- 5:00 pm

Session 10-A Contemporary Possibilities (Rivera A)

Chair: Juan Alonzo, Texas A&M University

1. "Joan Didion: Fiction that Maps the Collapse," Christy Call, Weber State University
2. "Prevenient Grace or Predestined Prodigal? Postsecular Possibilities in Marilynne Robinson's Fiction," Makayla C. Steiner, Brigham Young University
3. "The Montana Gang," Diane Smith, Independent Scholar

Session 10-B B Form and Flux: African American and Multiethnic Writers Reshaping American Literary Traditions (Rivera B)

Organized by Debbie Lelekis

Chair: Michael Collins, Texas A&M University

1. Conjuring Truths: Charles Chesnutt's Realism in *The Conjure Woman*, Debbie Lelekis, East Texas A&M University,
2. The New Weapons: Innovative Storytelling in the Comics of the Black Press, Rebecca Nicholson Weir, West Texas A&M University,
3. "From 'Rough Riders;' to Addicts, Thugs, and Terrorists: Boys Coming of Age in the Contemporary Multiethnic American Novel," Shari Evans, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Call for Papers
American Literature Association
37th Annual Conference
May 20-23, 2026

The Historic Palmer House
17 East Monroe Street
Chicago, IL 60603

Conference Director: Leslie Petty
Rhodes College

Conference Fee: \$175
\$125 for Graduate Students, Independent Scholars, and Retired
Faculty

Deadline for Proposals: January 30, 2026

The ALA Website contains details and proposals for submitting proposals as well as important instructions for representatives of participating author societies. Proposals from individuals and program information from author societies should be sent to:

Professor Leslie Petty via email
(ALA@rhodes.edu)

by January 30, 2026, following the instructions on the website:

www.americanliteratureassociation.org