*MISSED CONNECTIONS

GRADUATE HUMANITIES FORUM

10th Annual Conference
FEB 19, 2010

on the side e-mail me please.

YOU CORNERED ME, YOU LOOKED
LIKE A CUTER ABBIE HOFFMAN,
YOU LIKED MY OUTFIT.

d great. You --
ssy and sexy. I sa
ng at me while

Sad Boys
Boys who vanish
Saddest of all.

N YOU SAW
STANDING THERE WITH CRUTCHES,
YOU SAID, "HAVE A SIT HON, I'LL BE
WITH YOU IN A FEW MINUTES." I
THOUGHT YOU WERE REALLY

HEY REMEMBER ME, I'M THE GINGER
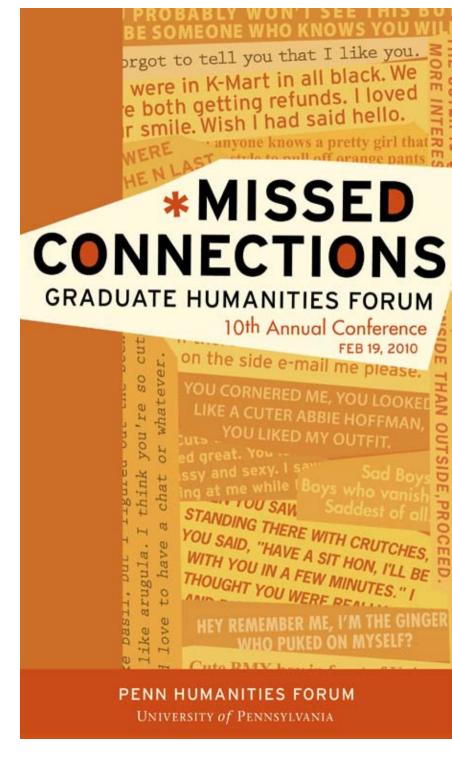WHO PUKED ON MYSELF?

PENN HUMANITIES FORUM
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

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PENN · HUMANITIES · FORUM

MISSED CONNECTIONS

10th Annual Graduate Humanities Forum Conference

Friday, February 19, 2010

University of Pennsylvania
Nevil Classroom • Penn Museum

GRADUATE HUMANITIES FORUM

A program of the Penn Humanities Forum, the Graduate Humanities Forum (GHF) was established in 2000 as an interdisciplinary research forum for Penn doctoral students in the humanities and social sciences. The GHF hosts faculty and students in a series of seminars, roundtables, special colloquia, and more informal gatherings.

PENN HUMANITIES FORUM

Established in 1999, the Penn Humanities Forum is charged with taking a fresh look at ideas that touch on the human experience. The Forum's goal is to introduce humanistic perspectives to the sciences, professions, and public, and to bring ideas, long confined to the ivory tower, into popular discourse. Addressing a different topic each year, the Forum offers an integrated program of research, teaching, and outreach, which invites students, scholars, the cultural community, and the general public to discover common ground. For 2009–10, the topic has been Connections—the webs, networks, and cross-fertilizations of the ancient past and the fast-approaching future.

For more information: www.phf.upenn.edu

WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the Graduate Humanities Forum, it is my pleasure to welcome you to our tenth annual conference, this year titled "Missed Connections."

The Graduate Humanities Forum is a meeting ground for students across the university and its goal is to foster interdisciplinary conversation and scholarship. In our biweekly meetings, our fellows have been presenting works in progress that in some way engage the theme of the Penn Humanities Forum for 2009–2010, "Connections." In planning this conference, we began talking about the ways in which the concept of "connections" invariably brings to mind gaps or fissures— missed connections. In what ways do attempt to connect fail? What is lost when we examine only what is connected, ignoring the isolated? Out of these discussions, we designed the conference around three panels: "'Can You Hear Me Now?,'" "Corporal Boundaries and Un-Bound Bodies," and "Coalitions and Their Failures" (see page 6 for full descriptions.)

This conference is the result of much thoughtful collaboration and hard work, and I would like to thank the many people responsible for bringing this conference to fruition: the Graduate Humanities Forum fellows, Heather Love, our Faculty Advisor and mentor, Sara Varney and Jennifer Conway of the Penn Humanities Forum, and Wendy Steiner, the founding director. I want to thank our respondents—Jeffrey Green, Sharrona Pearl, and Salamishah Tillet—for their generous participation. Thank you also to Laura Otis, our keynote.

One of the great benefits, and indeed pleasures, of interdisciplinarity is that it brings us all together into a different formation. Thank you for joining us!

Rachael L. Nichols
Graduate Research Assistant, Penn Humanities Forum

2009-2010 GRADUATE HUMANITIES FORUM RESEARCH FELLOWS

Raquel Albarrán, Romance Languages	Roger Matthew Grant, Music
Todd Carmody, English	Jeehyun Lim, English
Aymar Jean Christian, Communication	Deirdre Loughridge, Music
Sarah Dowling, English	Rachael Nichols, English
Matt Goldmark, Romance Languages	Mara Taylor, German
Che Gossett, History	

"CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?"

Though a modern-day cliché, "can you hear me now?" speaks to the perennial difficulty of connection and communication, the constant threat of bad connections and miscommunication. Taking the question in its broadest sense, this panel seeks to address the challenges of producing, conveying, receiving, and/or finding meaning in a world of geographical and cultural distances both small and large. What is at stake, besides the message itself, in our attempts to communicate? What and how does failure to communicate signify? Possible topics include static/noise, digital/material texts, legibility/illegibility, networks, strangers/intimates, publicity/anonymity, vernacular/standard forms, the phatic function, and translation.

CORPORAL BOUNDARIES AND UN-BOUND BODIES

This panel explores the making and unmaking of boundaries, and various kinds of crossings between them. We conceive of these boundaries broadly, as the borders of global politics, postcoloniality and travel; as the social categorizations and impermeable membranes shaping bodily materiality; and as affective connections and impasses. Does the spatial imagination generate possible connections that go unnoticed, or highlight problematic connections in zones of conflict?

COALITIONS AND THEIR FAILURES

This panel will seek to explore the concept of coalition alongside its productive failures. Under the rubric of coalition we might imagine assemblages, networks, various means of community and connectivity – not only in the political realm but also within academia, in information, and in technological, material and virtual fields. We aim to explore the connections between coalitions and narrative, historiography, anachronisms, and chrono-politics. At the juncture of perceived or real failures, revolutionary ideologies and counter-institutions can arise. What are the affective implications of coalition failures? Can there be a politics of disconnection? Of regret? Of singularity or isolation? How might we use such failures to imagine new alignments?

PROGRAM

9:00-9:30 | Coffee and Remarks

9:30-11:30 | Session I: "Can You Hear Me Now?"
Sharrona Pearl, Assistant Professor of Communication, Annenberg School, Penn

Megan Cook, English, University of Pennsylvania
> The Non-History of the Non-Reading of Thomas Usk's "Testament of Love"

Neil Crimes, Music, University of Pennsylvania
> The First Cut is the Deepest: On Lacan's Splitting and Music in the Margins

Emily Hyde, English, Princeton University
> "Heroic Cutting:" Auden in China

Tal Kastner, English, Princeton University
> Bartleby and Boilerplate: Paradigms of Failed Connection?

11:30-12:30 | Lunch

12:30-2:30 | Session II: Corporal Boundaries and Un-bound Bodies
Respondent: Salamishah Tillet, Assistant Professor of English, Penn

Denise Dahlhoff, Communication, University of Pennsylvania
> Converting Strangers to Intimates: Cultural and Societal Implications of Online Dating as Shortcut for Romantic Connections

Yumi Lee, English, University of Pennsylvania
> Identifying Across in Forough Farrokhzad's *The House Is Black*

Christine Marks, English and Linguistics, Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz
> Closed, Open, and Overmixed Bodies in Siri Hustvedt's Novel *What I Loved*

Lisa Mendelman, English, University of California, Los Angeles
> Reading into Silence: Desire and Intimacy in Suzan-Lori Parks' *Venus*

2:30-2:45 | Break

2:45-4:45 | Session III: Coalitions and Their Failures
Respondent: Jeffrey Green, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Penn; Mellon Faculty Research Fellow, PHF

Peter Clericuzio, History of Art, University of Pennsylvania
> Art Nouveau and French Connections with Alsace-Lorraine, ca. 1900-1914

Scott De Orio, German, University of Pennsylvania
> Is Pederasty Gay? Discourses about Male Intergenerational Intimacy during the Early German Homosexual Emancipation Movement

Elias Saba, Near Eastern Language and Civilizations, University of Pennsylvania
> Heroes, History, and Fiction: Rereading and Rewriting History in Ba'thist Iraq

Jason Saunders, English, University of Virginia
> "Imperial Boyhood": Masculine Rivalry, Interracial Desire, and the Limits of Empire in *Absalom, Absalom*

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

February 19, 2010 • 5:00–6:30pm
Rainey Auditorium, Penn Museum

LAURA OTIS
Professor of English, Emory University

RECONNECTING VERBAL AND VISUAL THINKING

In the humanities, many scholars associate ideas with words, but as we hear from our students in composition classes, thoughts suffer in the process of their "translation" into language. English Professor Laura Otis reviews some of the latest findings in cognitive science, philosophy, and literary studies to explain what thought is and whether we can make meaningful connections between its visual and verbal forms.

Laura Otis began her career as a scientist, earning her BS in Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry from Yale and MA in Neuroscience from the University of California at San Francisco. Before completing her PhD in Comparative Literature from Cornell University, she worked in labs for eight years.

Since 1986, Otis has been studying and teaching about the ways that scientific and literary thinking coincide and foster each other's growth. Otis works with English, Spanish, German, French, and North and South American literature, especially nineteenth-century novels. She is particularly interested in memory, identity formation, and communication technologies and has been a frequent guest scholar at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin.

She is author of *Müller's Lab* (Oxford, 2007), *Networking: Communicating with Bodies and Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Michigan, 2001), and translator of *Santiago Ramon y Cajal, Vacation Stories: Five Science Fiction Tales* (Illinois, 2001). In addition to her academic books, Otis has written four novels. In 2000, she was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship for creativity.

ABSTRACTS

Peter Clericuzio, History of Art, University of Pennsylvania
Art Nouveau and French Connections with Alsace-Lorraine, ca. 1900-1914

This paper argues that, in the fifteen years before World War I, a new artistic movement based in the city of Nancy, France—and aptly named Art Nouveau—was primarily responsible for reawakening the French desire to reconnect with and regain the "lost provinces" of Alsace-Lorraine. The humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by the German Empire in 1871 were traumatic events for the French nation. Suddenly, French citizens of Alsace-Lorraine were cut off from the country that they considered theirs and forced to choose whether to emigrate or live under German rule behind a tightly-controlled border. Meanwhile, French hope of regaining the provinces dwindled such that it was mostly forgotten by 1900, as French citizens erroneously assumed that they had permanently lost all political and cultural connections to Alsace-Lorraine. My paper, however, shows that in Nancy, just fifteen miles from the new German border, the residents refused to accept that the bonds between Alsace-Lorraine and France were broken. Nancy artists and architects began to emblazon their work with various patriotic motifs, including the Lorraine cross, the thistle (Nancy's civic emblem), and traditional Alsatian building designs. They exhibited their artwork and constructed Art Nouveau buildings both in Nancy and in the lost provinces, creating complete spatial environments that evoked these ties between France and Alsace-Lorraine in an effort to bridge the geographic boundary. The resulting attention garnered by their activities contributed heavily to the resurgence of French nationalism and anti-German sentiment just before the First World War.

Megan Cook, English, University of Pennsylvania
The Non-History of the Non-Reading of Thomas Usk's "Testament of Love"

Historical scholarship, as Stephen Greenblatt famously noted, often begins with the desire to speak with the dead. But what happens when one mis-dials the dead, and the past that responds is not that with which one desires to speak? This paper examines the confusions and complications that derive from the mismatch between the voices "speaking" in the surviving archive, and the voices for which readers and scholars listen. My topic is history (or lack thereof) of the "Testament of Love," a prose work by Thomas Usk describing the author's involvement in factional London politics and subsequent imprisonment during the 1380s. No manuscripts of the "Testament of Love" survive; the earliest witness to the text is a 1532 edition of the collected works of Chaucer. Indeed, Usk's text exists today only because it was ascribed to Chaucer, and could be mined for biographical details about the poet. For two centuries, the insistence on reading the "Testament" as Chaucerian autobiography (hence capable of providing the sort of transhistorical connection to which Greenblatt alludes) turned attention away both from historical evidence of Chaucer's actual activities, and from Usk's

own literary accomplishments. As its title and the encoded signature of the author within the work both suggest, the "Testament" is a work invested in the memorialization of its author: what do we make of its early readers' inability to recognize or acknowledge its attempts to communicate with posterity, and the seeming willfulness of this literary missed connection?

Neil Crimes, Music, University of Pennsylvania
The First Cut is the Deepest: On Lacan's Splitting and Music in the Margins

This paper asks: What is a "missed connection" in the realm of language? I argue that all signification (and therefore language) is an attempt to connect, either to the Other (as a part of discourse), or to the psyche as a part of understanding ourselves and the nature of our Being. Second, by challenging the notion of a "missed connection" in each case, I argue that a thorny paradox exists between the two. As Lacan argues, all linguistic acts are a result of our forced entry into the "symbolic" order. Furthermore, although we master language in order to make sense of this umbilical wound, it can never be bridged. Thus, all language is a missed connection, failing as it does to reconnect to our lost ("real") self. However, because the Other can never be removed from this process, there is no such thing as a "missed connection"—the Other is always present. Finally, I show how, on occasion, remnants of this lost past, and ubiquitous presence of the Other, appear on the surface of music with an Uncanny presence. In opera, this is seen in the attempt to transcend the constraints of the human voice (the excess of the signifying process) via the "pure cry," the utterance that Zizek argues brings us closest to the "real" order. Similarly, in cinematic theory, the absent Other is seen in the "acousmatic voice," that which attempts to communicate from beyond the body (eg. Norman Bates' mother in *Psycho*).

Denise Dahlhoff, Communication, University of Pennsylvania
Converting Strangers to Intimates: Cultural and Societal Implications of Online Dating as Shortcut for Romantic Connections

In recent years, more and more people across the demographic and socio-economic spectrum have used online dating to make romantic connections—for marriage, instant sexual encounters, and everything in between. Dalton Conley, the chair of New York University's social sciences department, likens the significance of online dating to the introduction of the Pill in the 1960s. Considering the importance of online dating in contemporary life as a means of connecting romantically, what has its impact been for individuals and society? Situating four unique features of online dating in the context of larger cultural, societal, and romantic trends, this paper discusses online dating's implications for romantic relationships and individuals' behavior. The four features discussed are the customized search for partner characteristics and type of relationship; low required investment to attain dates for romantic and sexual connections; seemingly endless pool of potential mates; and lack of overlap of daters' social networks. Eight hypotheses are derived from these features, using literature on online dating, new media, consumer

behavior, decision making, and recent family and relationship trends. Specifically, the hypotheses refer to the shopping and consumption approach of online dating; relation between the large choice of candidates and daters' satisfaction; commitment to long-term relationships and facilitation of less committed romantic relationships, including one-night stands; change of social norms regarding romantic non-exclusivity and lower commitment; and impact on face-to-face interpersonal skills to meet romantic partners.

Scott De Orio, Germanic Languages and Literatures, University of Pennsylvania
Is Pederasty Gay? Discourses about Male Intergenerational Intimacy during the Early German Homosexual Emancipation Movement

The first modern gay rights movement took place in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century. Two main organizations formed to promote the interests of sex deviates. The first was the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee), a group of doctors, writers, and politicians that sought to overturn Paragraph 175, a national law that made gay sex illegal. The second was the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* (Community of the Special), which produced the world's first homophile periodical *Der Eigene* (The Self-Owner). Significant ideological differences separated these two groups. On the one hand, members of the Community argued for the legitimacy of erotic relationships between adult men and adolescent males. On the other hand, the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee petitioned in 1907 for the repeal of Paragraph 175 with the proviso that already punitive age of consent laws be made harsher. In my paper, I argue that the coalition of a mainstream gay rights movement in Germany was conditioned upon the exclusion of other, even more stigmatized sex deviates. To this end, I examine several spheres of discourse about perversion, including the psychiatric texts of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Magnus Hirschfeld, the novels of boy lover John Henry Mackay, and the polemics of *Der Eigene* editor Adolf Brand.

Emily Hyde, English, Princeton University
"Heroic Cutting:" Auden in China

In 1938 W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood set out to confront the coming war in Europe. They went to China, and the running joke in the travel book they produced is that they never did find the front of the Sino-Japanese War. They tramped around in the mud and rode on crowded trains, they kept diaries, took snapshots, and wrote verse, but the resulting book, *Journey to a War* (1939), was considered a failure. It is neither sufficiently documentary—they never saw the front—nor properly aesthetic—Auden's amateur snapshots jar against his highly wrought verse. This paper aims to reconsider Auden's two 1930s travel books in light of their intentional failure to make lasting, legible connection between the documentary and the aesthetic mode. It will examine the politics of form Auden indicates with the tenuous, enigmatic, or impossible links he draws between narrative, verse, photography, and captions. Invoking his background in the nascent documentary film movement, Auden remarks that only "heroic

cutting" can save these books. This politics of form depends not upon linkage or montage but upon what gets left on the cutting room floor, and that, in large part, becomes difference: formal difference, but more crucially, the difference between the Englishman abroad and the nations and cultures he encounters. In war-torn and semi-colonial China, Auden's politics of form must also be read through a postcolonial lens.

Tal Kastner, English, Princeton University
Bartleby and Boilerplate: Paradigms of Failed Connection?

This paper considers the unexplored phenomenon of boilerplate, or form language, in Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener." Boilerplate today is understood as the standardized terms that comprise much of contractual documents and thereby reflect the failure of connection or limits of agreement that often legitimates contract. As language disengaged from an author, boilerplate is paradoxical in its function as the substance of agreement, and its resulting potential for both transparency and opacity, as well as standardization and customization. I argue that "Bartleby" is prescient in its identification of the implications of boilerplate for the limits of contract. In addition, the struggle of the reader and narrator to interpret Bartleby, a boilerplate copyist lacking his own origin story, may be understood through the paradoxes of boilerplate as a vehicle of connection. The paper parses ways in which Bartleby's refrain of "I would prefer not to," itself a type of form language, serves as his medium of communication as well as isolation. Read in light of the notion of boilerplate, Melville's tale reveals the inherent instability of the fiction of contract, or a "meeting of the minds," even as it is developing into a defining American social metaphor. Perhaps more fundamentally, the tale also points to the broader fiction of the distinction between the expressive possibility of idiosyncratic and standardized language. Ultimately, I question the uniqueness of the eponymous scrivener, arguing instead that the tale exposes the limits of human knowability and thereby reframes the possibilities of expression.

Yumi Lee, English, University of Pennsylvania
Identifying Across in Forough Farrokhzad's *The House Is Black*

Elin Diamond, critiquing the "coherence of a spectatorial we," has suggested that "the borders of identity … [are] transgressed by every act of identification." Similarly, Kaja Silverman has argued that the spectator enters "a politically productive relation to bodily otherness when he or she is encouraged to identify according to an exteriorizing, rather than an interiorizing, logic." For Silverman, such "excorporative" or "heteropathic" identification is uniquely possible in the medium of film, which can visually "project the male subject into the bodily parameters of femininity, the white subject into those of blackness," and so on. Thus theorizing an ecstatic assimilation to the bodily coordinates of the other, or an eroticized "identity-at-a-distance," Silverman envisions the liberatory dimensions of a project of heteropathic identification. Formally engaging the

politics of specularity, identification, and representation, Forough Farrokhzad's experimental documentary *The House is Black* (1962), shot in a leper colony in Iran, stages the ethical challenge of the filmic encounter. In a reading of the film, this paper explores the implications of identifying with a culturally denigrated object/other – in this case, through images that depict poverty, ugliness, sickness, disability, and social isolation. Complicating Silverman's notion of heteropathic identification, I ask: how does power precondition identificatory gestures? What is the political efficacy of excorporative identification for already deidealized subjects? And how does this film invite and foreclose certain identifications? Ultimately, I argue that Farrokhzad's film forces us to reconsider the possibility of connection across corporeal, geographic, and temporal borders.

Christine Marks, English & Linguistics, Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz
Closed, Open, and Overmixed Bodies in Siri Hustvedt's Novel *What I Loved*

In her writings, the American author Siri Hustvedt advances the idea of an embodied self that is inseparable from the world it dwells in. Boundaries between inside and outside are transgressed in the physical exchanges between self and world, and relations between self and other are determined by instances of "mixing," of an overlap between identities that at times erases the boundaries of the self. The precarious balance between "mixing" and "overmixing," central to Hustvedt's linking of identity and the body, resonates with phenomenological conceptions of the body. The characters find themselves torn between the need of what Edmund Husserl defined as the "sphere of one's own" and the realization that there is no such thing as a monadic self. This movement between isolation and coalescence, closed and open bodies, autonomy and heteronomy is a central motif in Hustvedt's works. This paper will investigate the relation of physical boundaries to the construction of intersubjective identity in Hustvedt's novel *What I Loved*. Specifically, the phenomena of anorexia nervosa, which Hustvedt interprets as a counter-reaction against being overmixed with the environment, will serve to illustrate the significance of boundaries and their transgression. Anorexia, according to Hustvedt, is an attempt to shut down the borders of the self, a resistance against being connected to the world. In its renunciation of intersubjective exchange, anorexic identity poses a counter-example to Hustvedt's ideal of a reciprocal exchange between self and other. Hustvedt's rendering of anorexic identity is an innovative illustration of a failed connection between self and other, linking medical and philosophical discourses.

Lisa Mendelman, English, University of California, Los Angeles
Reading into Silence: Desire and Intimacy in Suzan-Lori Parks' *Venus*

As a writer, my job is to write good plays; it's also to defend dramatic literature against becoming 'Theatre of Schmaltz.' For while there are several playwrights whose work I love love love, it also seems that in no other form of writing these days is the writing so awful…. –Suzan-Lori Parks
Distinguishing high-quality drama from cloying, reductive sentimentality, Pulitzer

prize-winning playwright Suzan-Lori Parks suggests that her theatrical agenda does not preclude provoking intense affect. After all, she includes her own intense affective relation to the work of several of her contemporaries. Instead, Parks emphasizes the manner in which her personal romance with certain works (those that inspire "love love love") paradoxically stresses mere love as highly ambivalent, an individual assessment of the inner worth of a text or loved object as "good" or "awful." Not surprisingly, then, Parks' play *Venus* (1990) presents versions of love that problematize its frequent construct as a process of discovering a subject's interior (as, for example, in the anatomical dissection of Saartjie Baartmann, also known as The Venus Hottentot and Parks' protagonist). Drawing upon a range of theories to define romantic love as an engagement of physical desire and emotional intimacy, my paper reads Parks' staged silences, called "Spells," to explore the affective valence of these non-verbal exchanges between distinct bodies. Parks' definition of "Spells" as a "place of great (unspoken) emotion… a place for an emotional transition" highlights a series of bodies–the architecture of the text, the characters in the play, their historical analogs, the audience, the directors, the actors, the reader–all of whom participate, to varying degrees, in the affective experience evoked by unregulated public space (*The America Play*, 16-17). The Spells thus allow an interaction that highlights the complex dynamics of love–the ambiguities of indirect transmission, the freedom of individual interpretation, and the unsettling possibility of misunderstanding/misalliance or mistaken intimacy.

Elias Saba, Near Eastern Language and Civilizations, University of Pennsylvania
Heroes, History, and Fiction: Rereading and Rewriting History in Ba'thist Iraq

This paper examines historical memory and nationalism in Ba'thist Iraq. Eric Davis (2005) has argued that throughout the 20th century, Iraqi regimes promoted particular interpretations of history so as to legitimize their rule. By manipulating history, regimes have been able to highlight the shared history between various groups in Iraq. I analyze Ba'th party ideas about the writing of history, particularly Saddam Hussein's pamphlet, *On the Writing of History*, in order to establish a framework with which to consider one specific appropriation. I argue that the aesthetic of Hussein's Iraq, particularly its military aesthetic, was an attempt by which to manipulate shared memories with the West, and particularly with America. Rather than relying on a shared history, however, Saddam Hussein relied on a shared (science) fiction. I draw Michael Rakowitz's recent art exhibitions to show the similarities between the imagery of posters for *Star Wars Episode V* and the Victory Arch in Baghdad and between the uniforms of Darth Vader's stormtroopers and Iraq's elite paramilatary unit, *fidayyin Saddam*. The monument and uniforms should be understood as attempting to establish a cultural connection with America, and on a different level they also play to an Iraqi crowd by showing Iraqi dominance over Iran in the Iran-Iraq war. I show how this appropriation fits into the greater *Project for the Rewriting of History* undertaken during Hussein's reign, and how it was in part this missed connection that ultimately doomed his broader efforts.

Jason Saunders, English, University of Virginia
"Imperial Boyhood": Masculine Rivalry, Interracial Desire, and the Limits of Empire in *Absalom, Absalom*

In William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*, the emergence of Haiti within the narrative's progression seems to secure a patriarchially-codified white manhood. Reminiscent of the United States' nineteen-year occupation of the island between 1915 and 1934, the island's appearance recalls a contemporaneous popular discourse which located American Imperialism as a site of white male identification where, to borrow from cultural historian Mary Renda, "men… found opportunities to reimagine their own nation… and lives as they appeared to be refracted through Haitian history and culture."

In this paper, however, I argue that we might better think about Haiti's significance in the novel not as a triumphant tale of an exceptional American Empire but as a sexually-charged instance of sublimation and denial or what Lisa Lowe has observed in the "Intimacies of Four Continents" as an "economy of affirmation and forgetting." In making this point, I historicize "Imperial Boyhood" as a conceptual category which suggests the tensions between an abstract white manhood and the risk of interracial same-sex desire. In making this point, I bring together three historical tropes which, though regularly recognized, are hardly ever read in concert: social theories of degeneracy, miscegenation case law, and circum-Atlantic cultural movements.