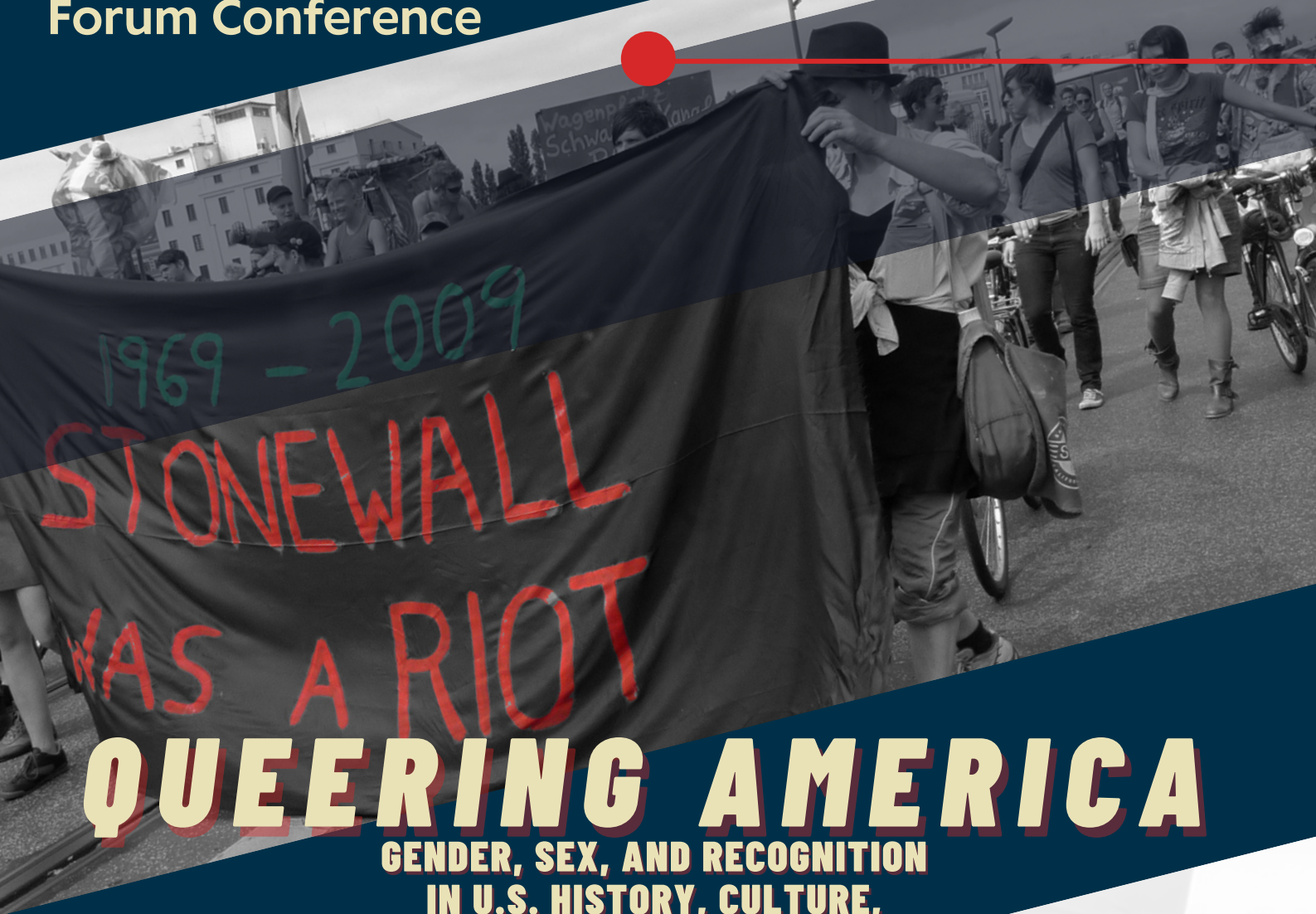


3rd AISNA Graduate Forum Conference



QUEERING AMERICA

GENDER, SEX, AND RECOGNITION
IN U.S. HISTORY, CULTURE,
AND LITERATURE

Keynote Speaker:
Dr. Francisco Costa
University of East Anglia

September 30, 2022
Centro Studi Americani
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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- 9:30-10:00** Registration of participants
- 10:00-10:15** Opening and welcome
- 10:15-11:30** Keynote Speech, Dr. Francisco Costa
- 11:30-12:00** Coffee break
- 12:00-13:30** Session A
- 13:30-14:15** Lunch break
- 14:15-15:45** Session B
- 15:45-16:15** Concluding Remarks, Prof. Anthony Castet
- 16:15-16:30** Closing remarks



PARALLEL SESSIONS

MORNING
12-13.30

- **Panel 1. Inclusion and Exclusion in U.S. Present and Past: Community, Family, Belonging**

1. **Toni R. Juncosa**, "Queering Home, Queering the Nation: Danez Smith's Poetic Challenge to Dominant Family Models Through Domestic Space"

2. **Sara Riccetti**, "Decolonizing Indigenous Queer Identities: Daniel Health Justice's The Way of Thorn and Thunder"

3. **Tamiris Bura Froes**, "'People Need Other People to Live'. The Queer Longing to Belong in N. K. Jemisin's The Broken Earth Trilogy"

4. **Yana Shtilman**, "The Ecstasy and the Agony: Deconstruction of Catholic Imagery in Queer Art of Robert Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano, and David Wojnarowicz During the 1980s-1990s Culture Wars"

- **Panel 2. Intersectional Identities: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Queer America**

1. **Chiara Starace**, "Nella Larsen and the Queer Revolution of *Passing*"

2. **Maria Łusakowska**, "Being Biracial, Being Bisexual. Passing as a Heteronormative White Girl in *Caucasia* by Danzy Senna"

3. **Francesca Scaccia**, "The Trope of Africanism to Address Homosexuality in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*"

4. **Giuseppe Polise**, "The Kinetics of Black Queer Desire: Looking into the Materiality of Erotic Movement in *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*"

PARALLEL SESSIONS

AFTERNOON
14.15-15.45

- **Panel 3. Queer Representation and Recognition in U.S History, Culture, Contemporary Politics**

1. **Emanuele Monaco**, "Queering American History. Why, How and Where?"
2. **G. Ziggy Ghirelli**, "Queering the Archive: Authority, Politics, Power and Representation in American LGBTQIA+ Archives"
3. **Daniele Atza**, "Let Me Get This Queer: Recognition and Representation in 21st Century America"
4. **Becca Miller**, "The Villain of the Age: Readership and Same-Sex Desire in *A Marriage Below Zero*"

- **Panel 4. Literary Imaginaries of Queerness**

1. **Katharina Röder**, "Contemporary Queer Dystopias in the US"
2. **Steph Berens**, "Narrating the Past and the Passed in Casey Plett's *Little Fish*"
3. **Charis Antonios Mavroulias**, "Drawing (on) Somatic Communism: A Reconstellation of Countersexual Identities in *Gender Queer: A Memoir*"
4. **Claudia Franzoni**, "*Middlesex's* New Type of Human Being"

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Francisco Costa

University of East Anglia



“Out of the Closets, into the Streets: Staging Queer Resistance Before and After Stonewall”

Examining the discourse of queer visibility and resistance as it unfolded before and after Stonewall, in this keynote I will offer a historiographic snapshot of the before and after of this key moment in America’s queer history and in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights. Framed by a queer-postmodernist approach, my examination of queer resistance during this time will be framed by a specific analytic focus on “gay theatre”, focusing on Mart Crowley’s play *The Boys in the Band* (1968) and Terrence McNally’s play *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (1994). I will consider the plays, the responses to them, the circumstances of publication, performance, and reception to fully place these dramatic texts within the wider context of pre- and post-Stonewall America. Through this analysis of *The Boys in the Band* and *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, I will consider the influence that particular American historical, cultural and social moments, such as the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s, the Stonewall Riots of 1969, the beginning and development of the gay and lesbian liberation movements of the 1970s, and the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s, had in the production of gay male identities, and the representation of those identities on stage.

This comparative examination of changes in representation of dissident male sexualities in these two texts will demonstrate the progression from early attempts to depict the homosexual as a distinct identity in the pre-Stonewall years to depictions of sexual dissidence after Stonewall which threatened normative boundaries, but which at the time never truly envisaged the radical potency and the queer promises of the Stonewall Riots.

Francisco Costa is an Associate Professor in Humanities at the Interdisciplinary Institute for the Humanities at the University of East Anglia, where he is also Head of School and Associate Dean for Learning, Teaching and Quality for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. His areas of specialism lie primarily in the study of the construction and representation of queer identities, particularly non-normative masculinities, and his work weaves through literature, queer theory, cultural studies and theatre and performance studies. He has presented his research at national and international conferences and published in these areas.

**Morning
Session**

10:15-11:30

Toni R. Juncosa
University of Barcelona

"Queering Home, Queering the Nation: Danez Smith's Poetic Challenge to Dominant Family Models through Domestic Space"

Throughout Danez Smith's poetry, sexual intercourse frequently triggers a spatialization of the body. As a site of encounter between two different realities, the speaker's body is metaphorically expressed as a house or as a temple in both *[insert] boy* (2014) and *Don't Call Us Dead* (2017). Once HIV enters the equation of sex, however, spatialization imagery is altered radically, and the body is presented as a prison or as a fortification, indicating a need for protection and imposed isolation resulting from the threat the virus poses on the speaker's body. However, in "it began right here," a post-diagnosis poem about the experience of HIV contagion, the speaker self-describes as "a house swollen with the dead, but still a home" (51). While the presence of "the dead" appears to denote the image of the house negatively, its affirmation as "still a home" creates an apparent contradiction. How can a home be "filled with the dead"? What does this tell us about the experience of HIV in the 21st century? In which way is the notion of home stretched poetically here? And, maybe most importantly, how does this affect the Nation as Family metaphor described by Lakoff (1996)? In the presentation, I will read Smith's "it began right here" in light of Blunt & Dowling's (2006) and Rosemary Marangoly George's (1998) reflections about the notion of home in contemporary culture, as well as on Castiglia & Reed's (2012) criticism of "degenerational unremembering" and Love's (2007) defense of "feeling backward."

Toni R. Juncosa is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Barcelona whose research approaches modern and contemporary US literature under the lens of Queer Theory and Critical Thought, with a special focus on American culture and identity. He obtained an MA in Modern and Contemporary Literature, Culture and Thought from the University of Sussex, and an MA in Creation and Representation of Cultural Identities from the University of Barcelona, where he is writing his thesis about 21st-century experiences of HIV in poetry. Juncosa is a "la Caixa" fellow and a member of the research project "(Un)Housing: Dwellings, Materiality, and the Self in American Literature." He has been the recipient of a Black Studies Collaboratory grant from the University of California, Berkeley. His latest publication is "My Proof of Life: HIV as Reification of Black Metaphysics in Danez Smith's *Homie*" in *452°F Journal*.

**Morning
Session**

**PANEL 1. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION
IN U.S. PRESENT AND PAST:
COMMUNITY, FAMILY, BELONGING**

12-13:30

Sara Riccetti
Sapienza University
Rome and University of
Silesia

"Decolonizing Indigenous Queer Identities: Daniel Heath Justice's *The Way of Thorn and Thunder*"

Departing from the traditional representations of colonial past, Indigenous fantasy fiction emerges as a new important trend in the North American Indigenous literary landscape, allowing Native writers to critique colonial conditions and imagine alternative kinds of social and political power. This article focuses on the representation of alternative worlds in three Indigenous fantasy novels: Daniel Heath Justice's *Kynship* (2005), *Wrywood* (2006), and *Dreyd* (2007), in the context of their decolonial potential. The analysis of Justice's trilogy, first published as a one-volume novel with the title *The Way of Thorn and Thunder* in 2011, pays special attention to the representation of queer identities and their significance to the Indigenous decolonial project, as well as to the re-narrativization of space in the face of colonialism, the destruction of the natural environment and imperial invasion. The aim of the article is to show how Justice complicates colonial conceptions of gender and Indigeneity, writing characters that inhabit multiple belongings simultaneously in a way that challenges in-between spaces as exceptional. This article uses two Indigenous concepts "kinship" and "interrelatedness" to read Justice's novels not only as a response to colonialism but as an integral part of constructing Indigenous cultural and political sovereignty. In order to facilitate the discussion of the Indigenous fantasy and speculative fiction novels, this article refers to recent theories in Native American studies, including Indigenous Queer studies, Indigenous futurism, and Native dystopia.

Sara Riccetti is a Ph.D. student in Studies in English Literatures, Language and Translation. She holds a B.A. in Foreign Languages and Cultures (2007) and an M.A. in Languages for International Relations and Cooperation (2010) from LUMSA University (Rome, Italy). She graduated with an M.A. in English and Anglo-American Studies (2020) from Sapienza University (Rome, Italy.) Her Ph.d. project focuses on Indigenous drama by contemporary women playwrights from the U.S. and Canada. Her research interests include Indigenous theatre and performance in North America, Indigenous Feminist Theory and Decolonial studies.

**Morning
Session**

**PANEL 1. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION
IN U.S. PRESENT AND PAST:
COMMUNITY, FAMILY, BELONGING**

12-13:30

Tamiris Bura Froes University of Évora

“People Need Other People to Live”. **The Queer Longing to Belong in N. K. Jemisin’s *The Broken Earth Trilogy***

“Friends, family, which am I to you? Both and more. We are beyond such things”. Speculative fiction authors often interest themselves in the interrogation of human relations under disastrous situations. Those who want to survive need to become, stronger, smarter, even selfish. However, the real asset in a speculative fiction story, and especially in those of women writers, is the ability to build alliances based on the acceptance of difference in all its facets. African American writer and Hugo Awards winner N. K. Jemisin writes about the struggle to survive when your mere existence is a threat to the status quo in her trilogy *‘The Broken Earth’*. The author presents a narrative that focus on the ‘longing to belong’ which defines the main character’s motives and intertwines their fates in a web of alliances and affinities, regardless of barriers of gender identities and sexual orientations. Although the world is –literally– trying to kill them, the characters in Jemisin’s novels find strength, support and love in each other because of their differences. The best example is the ‘comu’ of Castrima, founded based on acceptance. The purpose of this essay is to present a reading proposal of Jemisin’s trilogy under the scope of Elizabeth Freeman’s theory of ‘queer belonging’, viewed as the ‘longing to be’ as well as ‘to endure beyond procreation’ and thus free of the constraints of the hierarchical structure of the heterosexual traditional family. By analyzing the ways in which the author depicts the creation of ‘chosen families’ and queer communities of caring in a post-apocalyptic world, it is my goal to shed some light into the role of queer communities and ‘chosen families’ which are, in their essence, supportive of difference, within the speculative fiction canon.

Tamiris Bura Froes is a doctoral student from the University of Évora. She has been doing research in the speculative fiction genre since her Master’s in Foreign Languages at the University of Perugia from which she graduated in 2020 with a dissertation called *“The Strategies of Science Fiction in the Works of Octavia E. Butler”*, receiving full marks with honour. A member of the Center for the Studies in Letters (CEL) of the University of Trás dos Montes (Portugal), she is currently working on her doctoral thesis on the cyborg goddess in the works of Octavia E. Butler and N. K. Jemisin.

Morning
Session

PANEL 1. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION
IN U.S. PRESENT AND PAST:
COMMUNITY, FAMILY, BELONGING

12-13:30

Yana Shtilman

Université Paris Cité

"The Ecstasy and the Agony: Deconstruction of Catholic Imagery in Queer Art of Robert Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano, and David Wojnarowicz During the 1980s-1990s Culture Wars"

This paper is devoted to the articulation of queer identity through the subversion of traditional Catholic visual patterns in the selected works of three artists: Robert Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano, and David Wojnarowicz. It bases its analysis on Judith Butler's and bell hooks's gender theories and elaborates on the artists' ways of affirming queer identity in the conservative American society during the culture wars and AIDS epidemic in the 1980s.

The above-mentioned photographers saw religion and censorship, which had been actively promoted from 1985 onward by Reagan's policy, as a threat to their art and identity. However, restrictions from the government and cultural institutions only encouraged artists to create a response, which such senators as Jesse Helms and Alfonse D'Amato would consider "obscene art." Therefore, this paper relates historical context and subversive methods of the selected artists and focuses on their attempts to create queer representations, destabilize heteronormative society's values and change the traditional perception of the gender binary and identity concepts.

The corpus of this paper consists of several selected art pieces involved in the 1980s-1990s culture wars. These are Serrano's *Early Works* (1984-1987) and his *Piss Christ* (1987) photograph and the images from Mapplethorpe's retrospective exhibition *The Perfect Moment* (1990). The Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center was accused of displaying these "obscene photographs" and had to defend in the court — this paper studies this case titled "Mapplethorpe obscenity trial." The last part of the corpus is Wojnarowicz's video *A Fire in My Belly* (1986-1987), which was expelled from The Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery's 2010 exhibition due to the accusations of the similar nature that occurred during the culture wars.

Yana Shtilman is a Ph.D. student at Université Paris Cité in Paris, France. Currently, she is working on her thesis, which focuses on the creation of the image of the new black womanhood during the Harlem Renaissance (1925-1940). She occupies a temporary teaching position at the Department of English and American Studies at Université Paris Cité. In 2022, she received the Terra Foundation for American Art Travel Grant for her Ph.D. project. Her academic interests include American art, Harlem Renaissance, gender, queer and colonial studies, photography, and corporeality.

Morning
Session

PANEL 1. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION
IN U.S. PRESENT AND PAST:
COMMUNITY, FAMILY, BELONGING

12-13:30

Chiara Starace
University of Naples
Federico II

"Nella Larsen and the Queer Revolution of *Passing*"

Nella Larsen has been a writer active during the Harlem Renaissance. She has been the first African American to win a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1930, but her literary career came to an abrupt end few years later for unclear reasons. The author has been rediscovered by critics in the 70s.

At the time she was writing, in the United States a dehumanizing white fiction of the black person had been strengthened and non-heteronormative sexualities began to be subjected to a new attitude of medicalization, often linked with forms of scientific racism. Moreover, an emerging African-American middle-class was also beginning to adopt a heteronormative and patriarchal code of respectability to face racist stereotypes. In this context it was also difficult for an African American to see her/his works published without the aid of a white patron. Therefore, the writer had to deal with both the stereotyped expectations of the patrons and white readers and the censorship of the African American middle class.

In her two novels, *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929), through an essential and beautiful language, Larsen challenges the reader by questioning the dominant racial stereotypes, the narrowness of sexual roles and even established values in the African-American culture. The protagonists of the two novels, Clare and Helga, queer rewritings of classic female figures of the US fiction, operate a continuous transition between the racial, class, sexual orientation and gender categories. This attitude in *Passing* is accompanied by a sexually or emotionally charged lexicon and by an enhanced look in Clare's interactions, operating in depth and without the need of focusing on the appearances.

The aim of the intervention is to analyse, referring to passages from the two classics, how the Larsen's descriptions of fluid identities has constituted a precious antecedent in the representation of queer identities in the US Literature.

My name is Chiara Starace. I am attending the Master's Degree course in Modern Philology at the University of Naples Federico II. I wrote a B.A thesis in Contemporary History about the Cold War impact on the US families. I am currently working on an M.A. thesis on the Harlem Renaissance. My work revolves around the figures of Nella Larsen, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison. The focus of my analysis is the relationship between the African-American authors and the white readership at the height of the 20s and at the sunset of the Renaissance.

**Morning
Session**

**PANEL 2. INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES:
RACE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN
QUEER AMERICA**

12-13:30

Maria Łusakowska
University of Warsaw

**"Being Biracial, Being Bisexual.
Passing as a Heteronormative White Girl
in *Caucasia* by Danzy Senna"**

This presentation's aim is to deconstruct the essentialist notions of whiteness and heterosexuality in Danzy Senna's novel *Caucasia*. Previous research on Senna's novel has been done in the context of racial passing – a phenomenon specific to the United States where the "One-Drop Rule" still bears significance. Yet, the act of passing can occur in the sphere of gender, sexuality, or class as well. In my presentation, I will analyze the notion of passing in the context of race and sexuality through the story of *Caucasia*'s protagonist and narrator, Birdie, a biracial bisexual girl who grows up in the ambiance of the American 1970s identity politics. Due to complicated family circumstances, the rigidity of racial and sexual categories forces her to pass for a white heterosexual subject. In the novel whiteness and heterosexuality are inherently interconnected, and, throughout the story, they reinforce each other. Whereas Birdie tries to apprehend and discover her identity, which seems to be fluid and unfixed, neither black nor white, neither heterosexual nor homosexual. Through the lens of Judith Butler's concept of performativity and Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity, I will explore this story of coming of age in a society with very constrained understandings of identity where there is no space for mixed, indefinite individuals like her. I will discuss the "monolithic" and "universal" qualities of whiteness and heterosexuality and the (im)possibility of finding a space "in-between" within them. My analysis will focus on Birdie's "white," "female" body, as the primary vehicle of her assumed identities. Using Anzaldúa's notion of "Borderlands," as a space where Birdie tries to find her identity and subjectivity, I will demonstrate that contemporary African American literature seeks a "third space" above racial and sexual binaries in order to create inclusive spaces for fluid identities.

Maria Łusakowska is a postgraduate student of American Studies at the University of Warsaw, interested in race theory, feminism and intersectionality. Her main focus is on American literature which crosses the American borders. She is interested in pursuing an academic career after her MA and wishes to spend her whole life reading novels. She will probably also write her own novel someday. Her non-academic interests include learning languages and writing songs.

**Morning
Session**

**PANEL 2. INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES:
RACE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN
QUEER AMERICA**

12-13:30

Francesca Scaccia

University of Rome
Tor Vergata

"The Trope of Africanism to Address Homosexuality in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*"

In the preamble to the Declaration of Independence "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" are described as being unalienable rights of people and moreover, they constitute the core of the American national ethos, "the American Dream". Nevertheless, after over two centuries from the issuance of this phrase in 1776, it seems to have only endorsed exclusivity and discrimination, when actually should have supported inclusivity in order to guarantee equal opportunities to every American citizen. Especially the notion of "liberty" has historically been influenced by many socially constructed categories in the US, notably race, religious belief, gender, and sexual orientation. Therefore, the connected concepts of "life" and "the pursuit of happiness" couldn't help but be reshaped by those categorizations. This despicable state of things had such a profound impact on the life and works of many authors –especially on those who closely faced an unjust set of domination and discrimination–, that they publicly condemned how suffocating and hypocritical American society still was in the nineteenth century, and somehow has always been. Among them stands the influential African-American writer James Baldwin, a figure in which one can really feel the struggle of being labeled as both Afro-American and homosexual by the hypochondriac white society of the US. In his second novel entitled *Giovanni's Room* (1956), Baldwin deeply explored the theme of the quest for self-identity in connection with the theme of sexual orientation. Thus, the aim of this paper is to investigate how–and why–Baldwin makes use of Africanist, or Africanlike, characters to explore topics that otherwise would have been taboo, which means homosexuality and bisexuality. In particular, the analysis will rely on the seminal work of literary criticism *Playing in the Dark* (1992), by Toni Morrison, who greatly pointed out for the first time the peculiar use of black characters in American literature.

Francesca Scaccia is currently a first-year Ph.D. student in Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Rome Tor Vergata. Her doctoral work explores the literary influence of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* on Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, with a particular focus on the characters and the language used. Her main research interests are race, African-American literature, and late 19th-and 20th-century American literature. She holds an M.A. in European and American Languages and Literatures (with honors) and a B.A. in Modern Languages and Literatures.

Morning
Session

PANEL 2. INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES:
RACE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN
QUEER AMERICA

12-13:30

Giuseppe Polise
University of L'Aquila

"The Kinetics of Black Queer Desire: Looking into the Materiality of Erotic Movement in *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*"

In 1982, Audre Lorde publishes *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. As the subheading "abiomythography" suggests, this non-fictional work journals the author's story from childhood to young adulthood in the pre-civil-rights NYC with a narrative style that blends the plain language of everyday life with an aura of sacrality that accompanies continuous references to black ancestral folklore and myth. In a lyrical prosody that gives the tempo of a journey of self-discovery and actualization, Lorde accesses memories of her family history in Carriacou in order to reminisce the very women who, per the author's words, "adorn and define the border of [her] journey" (3). Simultaneously, the constitution of self is not limited to her kin, but it encompasses the many women with whom she meets and who teach her other—most crucial—ways of loving. At a time where blackness and female homosexuality swung between invisibility and monstrosity, Lorde makes the female black body into existence as one that daringly plunges into the depths of queer desire. Such journey to and through queer blackness is marked in the narrative by the number of erotic moments that Lorde shares with other women, and it culminates with that feeling of coming home to the self that she experiences upon meeting with Afrekete. In this sense, movement appears as a theoretical principle that, while informing the entire arc of such spiritual journey for reconstitution, simultaneously defines Lorde's erotic encounters at an episodic level through the very materiality of its manifestation. From the correlation between young Lorde's circular pounding of spices and her sexual awakening, to the stillness on the dancefloor with Muriel as opposed to the dancing euphoria that takes over the author in the presence of Afrekete, this paper looks into how these moments of kinetic revelation instantiate a black queer aliveness in the biomythography that works against the positionality of the black female subject as always socially dead. Ultimately, I will look at these moments as the undeniable evidence of how black queer resistance takes place in the quotidian space of one's becoming.

Giuseppe Polise is a post-doctoral researcher currently working at the University of L'Aquila. In 2021, he defended his Ph.D. dissertation, titled *Ecstatic Kinaesthetics: African American Women Redefining Pleasure Through Diasporic Spirituality*. He authored the articles "Beyond The Archives of Pain: Diasporic Memories of Ecstasy and the Black Feminine Divine in Beyoncé's 6 Inch" (de genere 7, 2022), "Never Knew Love Like this Before: Signifyin(g) the Invisibility of Black Death in the 1980s Ballroom Culture" (de genere 6, 2020) and "Black Women Matter: the #BlackLivesMatter Movement, Black Female Singers, and Intersectional Feminism" (Iperstoria 9, Spring 2017). He was the recipient of the 2019 Fulbright Scholarship and spent one semester at the College of Charleston (SC) as a Visiting Student Researcher.

**Morning
Session**

**PANEL 2. INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES:
RACE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN
QUEER AMERICA**

12-13:30

Emanuele Monaco

University of Bologna

"Queering American History. Why, How and Where?"

"In several respects, queer studies and critical history are products of the same post-enlightenment critique; both, for instance are skeptical of universalist metanarratives, transcendent categories, sequential linearity, narratives of progression and empty sameness".

But what does it mean to queer American history? How might queering it move us to ask new and different questions about it, regardless of whether we write about intimacy, eros, sexuality or love? If early scholarship chronicled the exploits of queer-identified people over time for an audience already open to the history of sexuality, the contemporary methodological struggle is aiming to suggest ways in which queering history might aid us in thinking more critically about how conventions, ideals, norms and, above all, practices gain traction and resonance in our history writing.

To queer history instead of just writing histories of queerly situated or queer-identified people is to draw on a wide array of conceptual tools—often from other disciplines—to lay bare common assumptions about the world in which our subjects lived. It means stepping away from the family album approach and adding new layers of complexity to a shared historical past.

The paper, in the spirit of decades' worth of scholarship that sees queer as much as a methodological intervention as an epithet, sketches out:

- the way queer American history has been defined by academia and the issues and limits that emerged from research and scholarship.
- what it means to queer our common understanding of American history untangling it from the excessive focus on the XX century.
- where queer history gets its fuel, the archive, what it means to reconstruct and preserve the memory of discriminated and written off communities and individuals.

I obtained my PhD in Modern History from the University of Bologna in 2020, with a thesis on Jean Monnet's transatlantic network and its effect on European and U.S. foreign policy. I spent time as a Visiting Scholar at New York University and the London School of Economics. I authored articles in journals and for the general public on transatlantic relations, American history and American LGBTQ+ history and politics.

I am currently publishing my first book. I am also a recurring contributor to "Jefferson-Lettere sull'America", where I edit an oral history column called "Status Queer" about the American LGBTQ+community.

Afternoon
Session

PANEL 3. QUEER REPRESENTATION AND
RECOGNITION IN U.S HISTORY,
CULTURE, CONTEMPORARY POLITICS

14:15-15:45

G. Ziggy Ghirelli
University of Turin

"Queering the Archive: Authority, Politics, Power and Representation in American LGBTQIA+ Archives"

The proposal consists of an individual contribution regarding the topic of LGBTQIA+ and Queer history Archives in the USA, presented in their history, composition, accessibility and online presence. Recognizing the concept of the archive in its broader sense and viewing it from a Queer perspective, there will be presented an array of attempts at collecting, preserving and sharing historical sources produced and regarding American LGBTQIA+ experiences. Main trajectories of the analysis presented will be: the relationship and the tension between academia and grassroots activism in the historical and archival practices; public involvement with and access to LGBTQIA+ historical materials; digitalization attempts and online presence and accessibility; the intersectional potentials of Queer archival practices; the political aspect of Queer archival practices and their relationship with normative power dynamics.

The presentation will be based on an expanded and updated version of a chapter of the proponent's M.A. graduation dissertation, focused on an analysis of American Queer archival experiences through the lenses of Public History. Using the theoretical framing of Queer archival practices proposed by authors like Ann Cvetkovitch, the cases presented will include established independent archival institutions like the Lesbian Herstory Archives as well as newer, less traditional and more diverse experiences like the Digital Transgender Archive. The presentation will revolve around the case studies as well as the theoretical framework of the question of queering archival practices.

Born in 1997, G. Ziggy Ghirelli (they/them/their) is a recent graduate with honors from the University of Turin with an M.A. in Historical Sciences. Their main line of research is relative to Queer archival practices and public representation of Queer historical narratives, with a particular focus on the accessibility and portrayal of Trans* historical experiences. Alongside research they are also active in the LGBTQIA+ Italian movement, being an active member and coordinator of various groups for Trans* right advocacy in the Emilia-Romagna region.

**Afternoon
Session**

**PANEL 3. QUEER REPRESENTATION AND
RECOGNITION IN U.S HISTORY,
CULTURE, CONTEMPORARY POLITICS**

14:15-15:45

Daniele Atza
University of Turin

"Let Me Get This Queer: Recognition and Representation in 21st Century America"

The Declaration of Independence (1776) reassures individuals of their rights to *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*; still, these unalienable rights are not available for everyone yet. The fourteenth amendment, the American ideals of equality, freedom, and inclusiveness will be significant and promising results only when they are extended to everyone. These challenging conditions set up the metaphorical battlefield in which activists, lawyers, and artists have been fighting to defend minority's rights.

This paper deals with recognition and the need for representation according to the psychological concept of personality development. Growing up, individuals usually shape their identities by imitating others they appreciate and respect. It is safe to assume that this "mirroring" manifests itself mostly in children, who eventually grow up to shape their own identities. This emulation is important because children look for role models to imitate, but they also want to feel represented by them. For instance, one can analyze *Encanto* (2021), the first Disney-Pixar film with a female protagonist wearing glasses: this small detail conveys a powerful message of inclusiveness. Nevertheless, if one's queerness pertains the LGBTQ+ community, the prospects of being represented on a popular medium like television, in a non-stereotypical setting, are fewer. This paper explores the role of queer representation in American media and it illustrates why it is important, for queer individuals growing up, to identify with someone. This analysis stretches from the patriarchal construct of the "Americancitizen" as a male, strong, and masculine entity, depicted in John Fante's novel *Wait Until Spring, Bandini* (1938), to the anonymous *Queer Nation Manifesto* (1990). Furthermore, contemporary episodes of queer representation will be investigated, such as the event of Mattel's new transgender Barbie doll, created to resemble American LGBTQ+ activist and actress Laverne Cox, and the fictional same-sex couple from the ABC sitcom *Modern Family* (2009-2020).

Daniele Atza is currently a first-year postgraduate student of English and American Studies at the University of Turin, in Italy. He has a bachelor's degree in Linguistic Mediation Science and speaks fluently English and Spanish. His bachelor's dissertation on English Literature, *The Antihero and the Reader: A Clockwork Orange*, explores why readers empathize with immoral and problematic protagonists, using as an example Alex DeLarge, main character of *Clockwork Orange* (1962) by Anthony Burgess. His primary academic interests are American literature and culture dealing with racism and inequality, in particular towards Hispano-American immigrants.

**Afternoon
Session**

**PANEL 3. QUEER REPRESENTATION AND
RECOGNITION IN U.S HISTORY,
CULTURE, CONTEMPORARY POLITICS**

14:15-15:45

Becca Miller
Drew University

"The Villain of the Age: Readership and Same-Sex Desire in *A Marriage Below Zero*"

In this paper, I will consider the reception history of Alan Dale's 1889 novel, *A Marriage Below Zero*, hailed as the first English language explicitly queer novel. Using 19th-century American book reviews, I will trace this work's historical and literary significance as a portrayal of same-sex desire. This novel sparked widespread public condemnation, while also serving as a space for exploring homoerotic desire, female sexuality, and social anxieties about threats to heterosexual marriage.

As contemporary book reviews make clear, the novel did not merely depict implied homosexuality. Dale's work leaves little room for interpretation, earning it the label of "leprousliterature," a "scantly veiled obscenity" that reeks of "Sodom and Gomorrah." The narrator, Elsie Bouverie, recounts the unraveling of her unconsummated marriage to Arthur Ravener, due to his ongoing affair with his lover, Captain Dillington. Through the story of a marriage in crisis, this narrative frames homosexuality, not as a victimless "inversion" but instead as a threat to the fabric of society. The text also serves as a critique of a society which leaves women in such a state of ignorance about sexuality, but this aspect of the text was often overlooked by those contemporary reviewers fixated on the "vices" of the text, the same-sex romance.

Drawing upon the methodology of book history, I will consider how this novel has contributed both to the representation and vilification of same-sex desire among American readers. I will also trace the rediscovery of this text in the *Mattachine Review* in the 1950s as an example of claiming space for queer identity in historical literature. Finally, I will examine how this model of an innocent heterosexual woman being imposed upon has continued to shape representation of same-sex love in the 19th century, notably in Julian Fellowes' series *The Gilded Age*.

Becca Miller is a Ph.D. Candidate in the History & Culture program at Drew University. Her concentration is in 19th-century British and Transatlantic History, specializing in intersections between queer theory and imperialism. Her current work considers literary representations of the subaltern and how the civilizing mission of the empire has been used to enforce heteronormativity.

**Afternoon
Session**

**PANEL 3. QUEER REPRESENTATION AND
RECOGNITION IN U.S HISTORY,
CULTURE, CONTEMPORARY POLITICS**

14:15-15:45

Katharina Röder
University of Regensburg

"Contemporary Queer Dystopias in the US"

In the first half of the 20th century, dystopian novels like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or George Orwell's *1984* have established a narrative around future societies in which people are controlled by a totalitarian government that uses technology to regulate the people living within the respective societies. More recently, contemporary texts like Janelle Monáe's "emotion picture" *Dirty Computer* or Tina Horn's comic series *SFSX* see queer artists using similar motifs to explore dystopian futures that specifically impact and regulate the lives of queer people, focusing on their sexuality, identity and the ideas on family connected with a queer identity. Especially in a time, where the supreme court might overturn *Roe v. Wade* and states are passing laws directly influencing and limiting the rights of women and queer people, these fictional explorations appear more timely and more significant than ever. In my thesis I want to argue that – in contrast to former dystopias – contemporary dystopian texts set within a queer context offer a hopeful outlook, based in the power that can be found within community and the concept of chosen family. To do so, I am going to consider José Esteban Muñoz' theory of understanding "queer" as a utopia, while also taking into account approaches from Afrofuturism and other related fields. In doing so, I want to provide an intersectional analysis of the texts based in a close reading that examines how these contemporary dystopias function and how they can be differentiated from the more canonical texts mentioned above.

Katharina Röder (she/her) is currently working as a research assistant at the University of Regensburg. She graduated with a Master's degree in Applied Literary and Cultural Studies from TU Dortmund in 2022 after exploring depictions of queerness in contemporary music videos by LGBTQ artists in her master's thesis. Her research is focused on gender and queer studies, with a focus on contemporary texts and popular culture.

Afternoon
Session

PANEL 4. LITERARY IMAGINARIES OF
QUEERNESS

14:15-15:45

Steph Berens
University of Munich

"Narrating the Past and the Passed in Casey Plett's *Little Fish*"

In Casey Plett's novel *Little Fish*, the protagonist Wendy faces multiple lifechanging events at the same time: After her grandmother passes away, she finds out that her Mennonite grandfather might have been a trans woman and grapples with the way her family has narrativized him, how she can remember him going forward, and how she narrates her own past of (non-)belonging within a Mennonite community. In the midst of this journey, her new friend Sophie dies by suicide and Wendy is left to piece together Sophie's past, navigate a present of mourning, and imagine a future without her. This paper explores the narration of past and passed in *Little Fish* and interrogates how cisnormative narrations of transness and transitioning hold trans subjectivities in a constant temporal bind.

This bind within cisnormative and heteronormative temporalities is rooted in medicalizing and pathologizing narrations of trans identity. In his essay "Mutilating Gender," Dean Spade argues that medical gatekeeping practices demand adherence to cisnormative constructions of sex, gender, and embodiment in order to grant legibility as well as access to gender-affirming health care, all in the name of producing "norm-abiding gendered subjects" (316). In favor of creating cis-passing subjects in the future, cisnormative medical narratives seek to overwrite trans pasts and histories. Transness is thus configured as a present phase on a linear transitioning path from a traumatic childhood in the past to the "curing" of a "wrong body" in the future. This imagination clearly separates pasts, presents, and futures, and coopts transitioning as the key to passing from a volatile and "sick" present into a stable, cispassing, "healthy" future. How, then, does one unearth and reconstruct trans pasts and trans histories? What if a loved one suddenly crosses the boundaries backwards between present and pas(sed)t? And which implications does this have for the narration of trans futures?

Steph Berens (they/them) studied North American literature and culture at the University of Munich, Germany, Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, Canada, and Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. They are currently teaching courses on queer and trans literature at the University of Munich and working on their dissertation, which examines the reworking of cultural tropes in contemporary North American trans fiction.

**Afternoon
Session**

Charis Antonios Mavroulias

University of Athens

"Drawing (on) somatic Communism: A Reconstellation of Countersexual Identities in *Gender Queer: A Memoir*"

Published the same year that the World Health Organization (WHO) crossed transgender identities out of the list of "mental disorders," *Gender Queer: A Memoir* (2019) challenges a heteronormative American society that is appalled by the idea of masturbation, menstruation, and homoerotic images, explicitly drawn, and written on the page. By writing eir autobiography in form of a comic book- a medium until recently marginal per se- Maia Kobabe materialized and gave voice to a very marginal and unrepresentable experience (even within the LGBTQI+ community): that of being gender non-binary in a world full of gender, sexual and linguistic binaries, and asexual within a sexualized society, obsessed with (romantic and/or erotic) relationships and procreation. Kobabe, thus, through eir comic-memoir delineates, literally, the internal conflict, the gender dysphoria, that Maia (the main character) is confronted by since eir childhood, towards early adulthood when e is introduced to the world of comics, and surprisingly, to new gender, (a)sexual, and linguistic possibilities. In this essay, I will thus argue that *Gender Queer: A Memoir* constitutes a prolific -and even radical addition to the queer literary archive, by introducing the "countersexual postbody" which through prosthesis, technological (binding, packing and the strap-on) and linguistic (The Spivak pronouns "e, em, eir") exemplifies Paul B. Preciado's "somatic communism," a rebellion of naturally artificial marginal bodies. As a *Countersexual Manifesto*, it refuses to (re)annunciate a radical separatist feminist utopia. At the same time, the comic book problematizes gender (men-women) and sexual (sexuality-asexuality, gay-straight) binaries, while deconstructing the divide between male and female, ability and disability, and nature and culture. Whether it offers a solid resolution to the wider essentialism- constructivism debate, it is up to the potential "countersexualist," the reader, to decide.

Charis Anthony Mavroulias graduated from the department of English Language and Literature of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. He is currently attending the MA Programme "English Studies: Literature and Culture", which is specializing in Representations of Marginality and Exclusion. Through the past years, he developed a strong interest in theatre and poetry. He also worked voluntarily as an activist for LGBTQI+ rights and participated in sessions and seminars related to the assertion of equality and visibility for marginalized communities. His academic activity focuses mostly on post-structuralist feminism and queer studies. He, along with his fellow panelists, is the recipient of the British Association of American Studies Targeted Panel grant for 2022-2023.

Afternoon
Session

PANEL 4. LITERARY IMAGINARIES OF
QUEERNESS

14:15-15:45

Claudia Franzoni

Università Cattolica del
Sacro Cuore, Milan

"*Middlesex's* New Type of Human Being"

Jeffrey Eugenides is one of the most successful exponents of the generation of authors that began publishing their works in the Nineties, during the declining phase of Postmodernism. His second novel, *Middlesex* (2002), seems to celebrate sexual ambiguity right from its title; however, in the final chapters of the book, the intersex protagonist (Cal Stephanides) rejects his queerness and takes on a well-defined, male and heterosexual identity: that's why the author has been accused by some critics, like Debra Shostak and Sarah Graham, of being unable to transcend the old, binary, heteronormative logic. While admitting the validity of some of those claims, I believe there are two main reasons that still allow us to consider *Middlesex* as a turning point in the handling of "queerness": to start with, though joining a long list of literary ancestors marked by an ambivalent sexuality, *Middlesex's* protagonist is, for the first time, not a fanciful or mythical creature, but a realistic one, whose condition can be described from a scientific and medical point of view. Secondly, Cal is an intersex who leads a normal, satisfactory, middle-class life, punctuated not by tragedies or suicide attempts, but by ordinary and fairly relatable events. By contrasting and comparing Cal not only with his/her literary forefathers (from Hermaphroditus to Tiresias, from Woolf's Orlando to Foucault's Herculine Barbin), but also with other significant characters of the book who, across generations and continents, continuously reinvent their identity, hide their true colors, or pretend to be something they are not, I will argue that what Eugenides wants to tell us is that being intersex is not that different from being immigrant, or mixed-race. Doubleness and metamorphosis are inherent traits of American society, which is full of "new types of human being" endowed with the talent to come to life twice, to transform and to rise from their ashes.

Claudia Franzoni is a second year Ph.D. student in Languages at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, where she graduated in 2019 with a thesis on Joe Lansdale. She also holds another degree in Humanities. She is currently doing research on the works of Jeffrey Eugenides. One of her main fields of interest is the portrayal of family dynamics in contemporary American literature. She is interested in translation and she has volunteered as a subtitler for years. She works as an English teacher.

Afternoon
Session

PANEL 4. LITERARY IMAGINARIES OF
QUEERNESS

14:15-15:45

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Prof. Anthony Castet

Tours University



“The Double Binds of LGBTQ+ Equal Dignity and Religious Liberty: A Piece of Cake?”

Justice Anthony Kennedy has ascertained a strand of jurisprudence articulated around the concept of “equal dignity”, enshrined in the equal protection clause and the promise of “liberty” guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. However, in their dissents, originalist justices have framed marriage equality as a way to shift the burden of discrimination onto religious conservatives who claim their right not to recognize LGBTQ+ citizens by invoking religious freedom and direct democracy.

Although it is early to determine whether the court will be poised to overturn key precedents, I would like to argue that within the framework of “America’s greatness”, the recent flux of religious domination has enabled Donald Trump to restore the moral uplift of the federal judiciary, which could potentially undermine Kennedy’s legacy. Over the course of his presidency, Donald Trump has equipped himself with all the tools to hold the leverage he needs to launch a moral crusade against women’s reproductive rights or transgender Americans by denying them equal protection against “sex” discrimination under the 1964 Civil Rights Act (*Altitude Express Inc. v. Zarda, Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia, R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes Inc. v. EEOC, et al., 2020*) and gender-affirming care.

By referring to landmark LGBTQ+ cases, I aim to explore ways in which some conservative justices have assailed the fundamental principles of the 14th Amendment by eviscerating its legitimacy, licensing invisibilization, marginalization and unequal treatment of LGBTQ+ Americans. In *Masterpiece Cakeshop* (2018), Kennedy drew a fine line between sexual orientation discrimination and religious freedom on narrow grounds. Nevertheless, countless issues remain unanswered: the GOP has always refused to allow a vote on The Equality Act and the Full Faith and Credit Clause (Section IV) remains unenforceable, maintaining a patchwork of unequal laws across the country for LGBTQ+ Americans.

Anthony Castet is an Associate Professor of North American studies at Tours University where he specializes in LGBTQ+ issues in the fields of history, politics and civil rights. His research focuses on contemporary culture wars and their impact on American democracy, the legal treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, same-sex parenting, the intersections between politics, religion and civil rights, especially with respect to LGBTQ+ Americans. His research lies primarily in the areas of discrimination based on sex and sexual orientation, marriage/family law and religious liberty. He serves as copresident of the EAAS LGBTQ+ Studies Network.

He is the author of *The Fabric of LGBTQ+ Equality in the United States: Dissent, Resolution and Reparation*, François Rabelais University Press, forthcoming.

**Afternoon
Session**

15:45-16:15



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