



# **Collaborative Public Workshop**

**May 8 - 9, 2020**

**Cogut Institute  
for the Humanities**

The Collaborative Public Workshop concludes the capstone seminar of the Doctoral Certificate in Collaborative Humanities. The Project Development Workshop (HMAN 2500) was taught this Spring 2020 by Timothy Bewes, Interim Director of the Cogut Institute and Professor of English, and Brian Meeks, Professor and Chair of Africana Studies.

Participants have developed and workshopped a paper over the course of the semester while studying a number of collateral academic roles: they have nominated and introduced a text to the seminar that was formative for their scholarly development; they have served as first questioners for papers workshopped by others; and they have interviewed one of their peers and prepared an introduction to his or her work. By providing training and preparation for roles that are crucial to the practice and fabric of academic life, yet are seldom the object of formal study and reflection, the course reimagines the conditions and extends the limits of an interdisciplinary and collaborative research space.

The **Doctoral Certificate in Collaborative Humanities** promotes cross-disciplinary work oriented toward the most challenging questions facing humanities research today. Collaboration is built through research practices dedicated to thinking together across disciplines and geographical locations. Participants pursue these forms of inquiry through teaching models and student practices that experiment with group presentations, collaborative online discussions, co-authored seminar papers and other forms of intellectual partnership.

More information at [brown.edu/academics/humanities/curriculum](https://brown.edu/academics/humanities/curriculum)

# Collaborative Public Workshop

**Friday, May 8**

Workshop Moderators: **Timothy Bewes** and **Brian Meeks**

12:00 – 1:15 pm            Panel 1

**Jeffrey Feldman**, *The Politics of (Non-)Violence between the General Strike and the Law*

Commentators: **Stephen Best** and **Jeremy Gilbert**

**Miriam Rainer**, *Desertion*

Commentators: **Andre Willis** and **Jeremy Gilbert**

Discussion

1:35 – 2:50 pm            Panel 2

**Michael Paninski**, *Naming the Without (a Name) – Notes on Translating Barbara Köhler's Poem Cycle: No One's Wife. Cantos.*

Commentators: **Patricia Ybarra** and **Andre Willis**

**Amber Vistein**, *The Discrete Charm of 60 BPM*

Commentators: **Patricia Ybarra** and **Jeremy Gilbert**

Discussion

3:10 – 4:25 pm            Panel 3

**Mirjam Paninski**, *Insistences – Voices in Partum, Bodies in Labor*

Commentators: **Patricia Ybarra** and **Stephen Best**

**Jacquelynn Jones**, *Blurred and Faded: Mapping the Color-line through Photography*

Commentators: **Stephen Best** and **Andre Willis**

Discussion

## Saturday, May 9

10:00 – 11:15 am      Panel 1

**Kevin Ennis**, *Into the Amazon*

Commentators: **Patricia Ybarra** and **Andre Willis**

**Ahona Palchoudhuri**, *Towards an Anthropology of Aesthetics*

Commentators: **Patricia Ybarra** and **Jeremy Gilbert**

Discussion

11:35 am – 12:50 pm      Panel 2

**Michael Putnam**, *Birdland: Avian Iconography and the Ethics of Devotion*

Commentators: **Andre Willis** and **Jeremy Gilbert**

**Nicholas Andersen**, *Awakening: David Walker, Maria Stewart, and the Knowledge of Freedom*

Commentators: **Stephen Best** and **Jeremy Gilbert**

Discussion

2:00 – 3:15 pm      Panel 3

**Melaine Ferdinand-King**, *Black Nationalism & Maroonage*

Commentators: **Andre Willis** and **Stephen Best**

**Nicole Sintetos**, *Settler Shadows and the Carceral State: Postwar Homesteading at Tule Lake Segregation Center*

Commentators: **Patricia Ybarra** and **Stephen Best**

Discussion

## Workshop Participants



**Nicholas Andersen** is a fourth-year doctoral candidate in the Department of Religious Studies at Brown University. He is a 2019-2020 Mellon Graduate Fellow in Collaborative Humanities and held a Graduate Fellowship at the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women in the 2017-2018 academic year. His research and teaching interests include religious ethics, black religious thought, theories of empire and colonialism, and religion in the 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Americas. In particular, his scholarship inquires into the ways that the moral resources of religious traditions have been and may be used to establish norms and collectivities opposed to slavery, racialized domination, and settler colonialism. His dissertation, “Ethiopia Shall Soon Stretch Forth Her Hands to God,” explores these questions through a reconstruction of the Ethiopianist tradition.

**Project:** *Ethiopia Awakening: David Walker, Maria Stewart, and the Knowledge of Freedom*  
My dissertation, “Ethiopia Shall Soon Stretch Forth Her Hands to God,” reconstructs the animating questions, disagreements, and networks of influence that helped constitute the ethical discourse of the Ethiopianist tradition, as well as the ways that 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Black intellectuals drew upon this discourse to develop moral imperatives and collectivities opposed to slavery, racialized domination, and settler colonialism. In this chapter, I analyze the ethos of awakening promoted by David Walker and Maria Stewart in their 1830 *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* and 1835 *Productions*, respectively. Attending to Walker and Stewart’s use of sacred and secular sources, I argue that their attempts to awaken their audience evidence a distinctively historicist sensibility, in which a distinguished Black past and a biblical promise for a free Black future are deployed to arouse a sense of solidarity and political possibility. I demonstrate that to be awake, for Walker and Stewart, means not only sharing this historicist sensibility but also actively reimagining the meaning of political action as conjurational, that is, as efficacious for invoking supernatural aid, and, consequently, living one’s life as though it were not wholly determined by one’s present conditions. Along the way, I show how Stewart’s observations about the conditions of Black women’s lives and labor significantly challenge Walker’s masculinist articulations of solidarity and political action even as she self-consciously takes up his mantle. I contend that these two articulations of awakening highlight how early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ethiopianism functioned as a rich and open-ended moral vocabulary useful for social criticism and identity formation.



**Kevin W. Ennis** is a second-year doctoral student in the Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies at Brown University and a 2019-2020 Mellon Graduate Fellow in Collaborative Humanities. He hails from nearby Cranston, RI, but also lived in Manaus, Brazil, in 2016 and in Bragança, Portugal, as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in 2017-2018. His research and teaching interests lie in Amazonian literature, representations of indigenous peoples in Brazilian literature, and contemporary Portuguese and Lusophone African narratives of return, displacement, and migration. His scholarship examines the relationships between literature and ethnography, as well as between the writer and the ethnographer, with respect to the power dynamics associated with extractivism and Othering in Amazonia. His work also broadly considers the roles of place and geography alongside epistemology in the cultivation of selfhood.

**Project:** *Into the Amazon*

Variations of “the Amazon is burning” were the headlines plastered across print and social media in 2019, yet burning and deforestation have been occurring for centuries as part of larger extractive projects of control over the rainforest, its resources, and the people who inhabit it. Exploration, extractivism, and the Othering of exploited landscapes and peoples serve as the bases for an expanded understanding of Amazonian literature by writers from the Amazon and by writers writing about the Amazon in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Linking fiction to histories and anthropologies of Amazonia, I take my cues from three literary scholars—Lúcia Sá, Candace Slater, and Charlotte Rogers—and their work highlighting the relationships between the diverse environmental and cultural landscapes of the Amazon, extractive practices, and indigenous and non-indigenous writings from and about the region. Texts from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century serve as added context for understanding commentaries on exploration, extraction, and Othering perpetrated by regional, national, and international forces in Amazonia. In engaging with these texts and scholarship, I examine further commentaries on the unequal power dynamics associated with control of the Amazon in Amazonian literature published since 1976, a flashpoint year of writings with Márcio Souza’s *Galvez*, *Imperador do Acre* and Darcy Ribeiro’s *Maíra*. Milton Hatoum’s four Amazonian novels tie thematic questions of migration and personal and collective displacement to histories of extraction and Othering in the Amazon from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century into the 20<sup>th</sup>. Finally, written indigenous cosmovisions affirm indigenous systems of knowledge and rights to their lands and survival amidst the continued destruction of the rainforest.





**Jeff Feldman** is a fourth-year PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science at Brown University. He holds a BA in Economics from Amherst College. His dissertation considers the relationship between the categories of the “social,” the “ethical,” and the “political” in a plurality of attachments to individuals or collectivities along the fault lines of 20<sup>th</sup>-century discussions of the revolutionary general strike in critical theory and in the

Black radical tradition. Next year he will be the Dissertation Fellow at Brown’s Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, where he will be researching W.E.B. Du Bois’s conceptualization of the general strike in *Black Reconstruction*, focusing on the conflicts between strikers and the state as well as on the practices of resistance that fell outside of Du Bois’s frame.

**Project:** *The Politics of (Non-)Violence between the General Strike and the Law*

Recent work in Black political thought has argued that mutual aid, communal celebration, and “wayward” practices of the self not only fortify Black life under conditions of oppression but also constitute political acts in themselves. W.E.B. Du Bois writes, in *Black Reconstruction*, describing the general strike among enslaved people that led to formal emancipation: the “truth was not simply that Negroes ought to be free; it was that thousands of them were already free” (82). The general strike names a hope for politics: that political subjects can use the resources available to them without turning to alien forms of violent power that betray their cause—in short, that they are already free. For Walter Benjamin and contemporary scholars of sociality—for whom mutual aid, communal celebration, and “wayward” practices of the self not only fortify Black life under conditions of oppression but also constitute political acts in themselves—this freedom is the freedom to create new relationships that simultaneously destroy an oppressive world and create a new one. My dissertation considers the tensions, aporias, and underexplored possibilities at the heart of this radical political vision.



**Melaine Ferdinand-King** is a second-year PhD student in Africana Studies. Informed by her ethnographic training and anchored by a political commitment to transnational solidarities among Black women, Melaine's work examines and explores aesthetic practices of being and becoming free in Black US and Latin American communities. Melaine is particularly interested in the unfinished, and at times paradoxical, work of pursuing

Black liberation: she lingers on concepts, objects, and terms that are permeated by the ambivalences associated with making a way out of no way. Alongside her graduate curriculum, she has helped to convene Brown's Black Historical Aesthetics Reading Group and works as a Graduate Fellow for the 2021 *Imagined New* art and historiography workshop hosted by the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice.

**Project:** *Black Nationalism & Maroonage*

This paper examines the Black nationalist elements of maroonage to highlight a less researched political imaginary and to further understand the complexities of the struggle for liberation on an international scale. Focusing on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century maroons of the Americas, I argue that not only did maroons demonstrate elements of early Black nationalism, but that the nationalist efforts of maroons were coupled with slave culture. Placing them at the start of Black nationalist chronology, I assert that maroons exemplified revolutionary nationalist thought through the practices of flight and nation-building outside the limits of white control and surveillance, offering a critique and destabilization of the State in pursuit of freedom and sovereignty.





**Jacquelynn Jones** is a third-year PhD candidate in the Department of American Studies. Her academic work broadly explores the intersection of Black feminist theory, the history of photography, and racial formation theory. Her research on racial-mixture interrogates practices of looking and seeing—underscoring the politics of display and circulation of visual representations of Black women in the afterlives of chattel slavery. She is interested in the intimate relationships between people, objects, and culture to further understand the complexities of identity formation. On campus, Jacquelynn is the graduate mentor for the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship and serves as the coordinator of Brown’s Photographic Archives Research Group and Lecture Series.

**Project:** *Blurred and Faded: Mapping the Color-line through Photography*

My dissertation is interested in African Americans’ shifting relationships to scientific methods and photographic practices which have traditionally worked to materialize Blackness; assigning visual markers to an abstract, heterogeneous, and elusive racial category. Grappling with the enduring legacy of chattel slavery, my work theorizes the Black female body and the ways it has been rendered accessible, readable, and knowable. In order to illuminate and challenge longstanding investments in legibility and singularity, my work turns to 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century visual representations of racial-mixture.



**Ahona Palchoudhuri** is a third-year doctoral student in the department of Anthropology. Her interests lie at the intersection of aesthetics, ethics, and the environmental humanities. Her current project, tentatively titled “The Making and Receiving of Rain: Labor and Tempo in the Ordinary Life of Climate-Change,” looks at seasonality, ritual, and forms of musical performance in rural West Bengal. Before coming to Brown, Ahona studied English Literature at Delhi University and Social Anthropology at the London School of Economics. She has also taught critical writing at Ashoka University in Sonipat, India.

**Project:** *Towards an Anthropology of Aesthetics*

This paper makes a case for a revisiting of the question of aesthetics in anthropology. It argues that while aesthetics has long been a key aspect of the anthropological endeavor, its bracketing off into sub-disciplinary concerns with media, art, and performance has led to a glossing over of the crucial ways in which it shapes animating questions in the discipline. Against the backdrop of its theoretical treatment within the philosophical canon, this paper explores the limits, preoccupations, and tendencies of aesthetics as an anthropological concept. It examines aesthetics alongside neighboring concepts of ontology, affect, and ethics in order to excavate the distinct potential that it holds for the study of everyday life, and to explore the ways in which it might come to newly invigorate the anthropological relation between the social and the natural.



**Michael Paninski** is a fourth-year PhD candidate in the Department of German Studies. Ranging across both literary and visual arts, Michael's research considers the limits and possibilities of language that emerge at the intersection of thought and practice. By placing contemporary narratives of human rights, justice, and violence in conversation with post-structuralist and post-modern theories of occupation and possession, Michael works towards developing a critical methodology that seeks to attend to what is incalculable in language, and a political vocabulary that might strive to receive the interventions of the Other.

**Project:** *Naming the Without (a Name) – Notes on Translating Barbara Köhler's Poem Cycle: No One's Wife. Cantos.*

According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's reflections on the politics of translation, language, in general "allows us to make sense of things, of ourselves." The problem of translation, however, challenges and contests the very idea of identity, thought of as a relation that each thing only bears to itself. Translation confronts us with the fact that every identifying demarcation of the one from the other has to engage with the challenge that this otherness is a part of, or at work within, the construction of a self already.

In her poem cycle *No One's Wife. Cantos*, Barbara Köhler investigates and explores the preconceptions that underlie this notion of establishing subjectivity—or, more precisely, the becoming of an 'I'—in and through language. Köhler's pretext is one of the oldest and most famous texts of western culture and civilization: the major ancient Greek epic poem attributed to Homer, *The Odyssey*.

The question, who has the capability and linguistic power to say "I" and how this potential is implemented and negotiated in a text like *The Odyssey*, is essential for Köhler's own specific interest in the interrogation of grammatical structures that constitute the "linguistic arena in which relations between 'subjects' (and their objects) take place." (Paul, 2013) Following this thread of an inquiry, my paper tries to listen to the others, that spoke—the female voices that are countless because "No-One" counted them in.



**Mirjam Paninski** is a fourth-year doctoral candidate in the German Studies Department at Brown University. She previously studied Comparative Literature, German Studies, Aesthetics, and the Philosophy of Culture at the University of Vienna. Her PhD project revolves around rhetoric and the interferences of violence, as well as the staging, pathologizing and conceptualizing of the body during pregnancy and childbirth. Her multi-

faceted dissertation also includes a podcast series and sound art installation, which debuted this spring, titled “Insistence.” More broadly, her teaching and research interests include translation and translatability of and within 20<sup>th</sup>-century poetry, the gaps of language, the manifestation of trauma, and the loss of speech within literature and multilingual literature.

Prior to her time at Brown, Mirjam was a founding member of the poetry translation collective Versatorium, Vienna. She has significant professional experience curating and co-curating interdisciplinary and transnational art shows, conferences, and workshops throughout Vienna, Beirut, Istanbul, Tbilisi and Zagreb.

**Project:** *Insistences – Voices in Partum, Bodies in Labor*

The multimedia dissertation project “Insistences – Voices in Partum, Bodies in Labor,” consisting of a written dissertation, a series of art installations, and a podcast, seeks to counter imaginary concepts and stagings of the body during pregnancy and birth as well as the dehumanization of both the pregnant individual and medical staff. The project follows the argument that the body during pregnancy and childbirth is itself always a site, which subverts the naturalization of a normative system. It examines how culturally-determined grammars of control have pathologized pregnancy and birth, and have thus transformed birth into a moment of crisis, absorbed by the medical protocol. While the availability of choice is simulated, the developments incline towards a controlled institutionalization of birth rather than facilitating an intimate, autonomous experience with the assistance of medicine, if needed or desired.

To radically reframe, rethink, and unlearn the determined concept of birth as crisis, for me involves re-encountering the individual body with its elements of breath, voice, and rhythm. Rather than posing a universal counter-theory to the prevailing approaches of western medicine, I am hoping to initiate a momentary affective shift through an individual expression of intimacy, vulnerability, voice, meditation, and also trigger questions of what it could mean to own one’s birth and deliberately establish a relationship to the body during pregnancy and labor as well as to the unborn child. With this talk, I thus attempt to display a part of my art installation, the lecture performance, as a mode of presentation.



**Michael Putnam** is a third-year PhD candidate in the Department of Religious Studies. Michael brings a background in philosophy as well as theology and his present research explores the entanglements of environmental ethics and aesthetics with discourses about religion and theology and how they may inform one another. His dissertation project adduces the prevalence of religious themes in contemporary environmental literature and art, arguing for a renewed appreciation of the role of religion in shaping forms of attention and perception to the non-human world and invoking what he has been calling a *prayerful attention*. In addition to this work, he is broadly interested in the role of religion in American romantic philosophy and literature from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Before coming to Brown, Michael studied at Whitman College (BA) and Harvard Divinity School (MTS).

**Project:** *Birdland: Avian Iconography and the Ethics of Devotion*

In this paper, I situate the work of the contemporary photographer Stephen Gill at the nexus of religious environmental ethics, critical animal studies, and visual studies. Gill, a British photographer known for his photographs of urban London, has recently turned to photographing birds. Taking up his 2019 project *The Pillar*, I argue that Gill employs a variety of aesthetic strategies to rethink the transcendence which is often attributed to avian life—citing, among other items, the longstanding tradition in Western iconography of representing the Holy Spirit as a bird. My contention is that by framing birds as objects of devotion—arguably as “secular icons”—Gill renders them objects of ethical and political concern, especially at a time when bird populations throughout the world are catastrophically plummeting. In so doing, he demonstrates what Susan Best has called a “reparative aesthetics,” especially insofar as he refuses to represent birds either as the bearers of programmed mythologies or as objects of pity. I thus argue that his work helps to articulate the possibility of a devotional aesthetics in the Anthropocene.



**Miriam Rainer** is a fifth-year PhD candidate in the Department of German Studies at Brown University, where she is also pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Collaborative Humanities. Prior to attending Brown, Miriam earned degrees in American Studies, German, and Comparative Literature at the Universities of Hamburg and Vienna. Her master's thesis, "Zögern / Hesitate. Zum Übersetzungsdenken Walter Benjamins," was published in

2015. Miriam's scholarship is situated at the broad intersection of philology and political theory, pluri-lingualism, and ethics, and focuses upon epistemically violent manifestations of issues around housing, desertion, naming, and migration as they are oriented by the problem of hospitality. In her readings of the transnational literatures of the long 20<sup>th</sup> century, Miriam deploys a novel method she calls "filoulogie," which combines careful attention to narrative with etymological, spatial, and phonetic analysis. In addition to her scholarly work, Miriam co-founded the literary translation collective Versatorium in 2012, and she has been a member of the Berlin-based Wiese, an Arabic-German writing group embedded in an experimental educational platform, since 2018.

### **Project:** *Desertion*

On the eve of the First World War, from an unlikely place, from within a German word, its bellicose virulence nowadays domesticated, no, unfettered, Rosa Luxemburg draws out an ambiguity lodged into the word *hausen* that allows for it to include as a variant: desertion, *wüsten*. Tracking the semantic chasm parceling this particular etymology, my project proposes different *scenes of desertion*, interwoven, to discuss consequences and reemerging elements of linguistically situated violence embedded in German colonialism and fascism, to address the possibility of eliminating their intrinsic disposition to war and militarism. Scene 1: the prototype of settler violence in the African colonies, the genocide against the Herero that occurred in present-day Namibia between 1904 and 1908 which included a left-to-die desertion on part of the colonizers transforming the Omaheke desert into a deadly environment. Scene 2: the *unheimliche* self-desertedness and solitary sociality that Hannah Arendt drafts in *Ideology and Terror* by attending to individual life under totalitarianism, allowing for disposing oneself toward oneself as deserting one's own dominion. Scene 3: the more recent theoretical attention to refugees as deserters housed in newly established "anchor centers" across southern Germany today, these centers' dilation of the (Mediterranean) sea stigmatizing abolitionist desertion as illegitimate form of escape. Yet, as they harbor within themselves things and people these environments are designed to safely isolate, silence, and dispose of, anchor centers involuntarily become a repository of utopia—of the subjugated bodies and knowledges of deserters.



**Nicole Sintetos** is a fourth-year PhD candidate in American Studies at Brown University and holds a MA in Public Humanities. She is currently working on an environmental history of Tule Lake Segregation Center and more broadly is interested in how the Bureau of Land Reclamation shifted conceptions of racialized labor, agro-technology, and homesteading in the postwar West. A prior high school teacher, Nicole is invested in bridging the divide between high school curriculum development and university research. She recently collaborated with the Choices Program to coauthor a free four-day curriculum on Japanese American incarceration. Beyond the university, she is invested in cultivating more opportunities for collaboration between artists and academics who address histories of racialized violence. As such, she is working to launch the second iteration of JA Incarceration Mobile Workshop, scheduled for summer of 2021.

**Project:** *Settler Shadows and the Carceral State: Postwar Homesteading at Tule Lake Segregation Center*

“Settler Shadows and the Carceral State: Postwar Homesteading at Tule Lake Segregation Center” extends the temporal scope of Japanese internment’s archive through a close reading of the land itself beneath Tule Lake Segregation Center (Newell, CA), which once detained over 19,000 incarcerated. By weaving together War Relocation Authority material with the National Archives’ Bureau of Land Reclamation files, I aim to situate this site of Japanese American Incarceration within an extended narrative of the settler colonial project: first, by charting the seizure of Klamath land in Northern California for “development” following the Modoc War, to the site’s transformation into a Civilian Conservation Corp. Camp in the Great Depression, to a Japanese and Japanese American Concentration Camp in World War II, and—ultimately—into a major homesteading project in the postwar period limited to white veterans. This paper will focus in particular on Bureau of Land Reclamation promotional material for the Tule Lake homestead to consider how the rhetoric of manifest destiny extended well into the 1950s. As the postwar pull of the suburbs competed with the agrarian vision of Bureau of Land Reclamation homesteading, project sites such as Tule Lake overtly “packaged” and “romanticized” the sites with narratives of white reclamation of Native land. Hence, by centering the land as witness, a new form of historical testimony is thereby produced within the archive—one that links these histories of racialized violence and labor as layered, traceable, and intrinsically related to the identity of the site. I demonstrate that as the temporal optics of JA Incarceration expands or contracts, the archive also responds, and allows for often obscured, racialized histories to focus in its wake.





**Amber Vistein** is a composer and sound artist who delves deeply into the poetics of timbre, texture, and gesture. Most recently, she has composed for Chartreuse (2019), Ensemble Dal Niente (2018), the International Contemporary Ensemble (2017), Russell Greenberg of Yarn/Wire (2016), and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (2016). In addition to her compositions, Amber has also created site-specific sound installations for

the deCordova Museum in Lincoln, MA (2016) and collaborated with video artist Amanda Justice to present the multi-media work Landscapes at the Peabody Essex Museum (2017). She also served as an artist-in-residence with ArtsIceland in Ísafjörður, Iceland (2016). As a fifth-year doctoral student in the Department of Music and Multimedia composition at Brown University, Amber's scholarly research focuses on sonic materiality, embodiment, temporality, vocality, and autonomic poetics. Amber holds a BA in Music & Philosophy from New College of Florida and an MFA in Sonic Arts from Massachusetts College of Art

**Project:** *The Discrete Charm of 60 BPM*

At 60 bpm it is possible to represent the duration of an event, its unfolding in time, in a way that maps directly onto both absolute time (clock) and tempo-relative (musical) time: i.e., an event lasting one second also lasts one beat. If we now consider that 60 bpm also closely corresponds with an average resting heart rate, it becomes possible to simultaneously think the duration of an event in terms of absolute (clock), tempo-relative (musical), and autonomic (heart rate) measurements that correspond and map (fairly directly) onto one another. At 60 bpm the external, aesthetic, and autonomic organization of time meet. What opportunities might this triplicate overlay or intersection of temporality afford us?

Taking into account recent scientific research demonstrating that “the structure of a piece of music has a constant dynamic influence on cardiovascular and respiratory responses, which correlate with music profiles... even in the absence of accompanying emotion” or aesthetic enjoyment, in this essay I contemplate the possibilities of an autonomic poetics. Then, reflecting on my own experiences of listening under duress (with my heart racing), I explore the potential for a musical-autonomic reframing of traumatic experience. And postulate that this kind of intervention represents a form of sonic agency.

## Commentators and Moderators



**Stephen Best** is Professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley. His scholarship encompasses a variety of fields and materials: American and African-American literature and culture, cinema and technology, rhetoric and the law, and critical theory. His research pursuits in the fields of American and African-American criticism have been rather closely aligned with a broader interrogation of recent literary critical

practice. He has edited a number of special issues of the journal *Representations* (on whose board he sits): “Redress” (with Saidiya Hartman), on theoretical and political projects to undo the slave past; “The Way We Read Now” (with Sharon Marcus), on the limits of symptomatic reading; and “Description Across Disciplines” (with Sharon Marcus and Heather Love), on disciplinary valuations of description as critical practice. His books include *The Fugitive's Properties: Law and the Poetics of Possession* (University of Chicago, 2004), a study of property, poetics, and legal hermeneutics in 19<sup>th</sup>-century American literary and legal culture, and *None Like Us: Blackness, Belonging, Aesthetic Life* (Duke University Press, 2018).



**Timothy Bewes** is Interim Director of the Cogut Institute for the Humanities in 2019-2020 and Professor of English at Brown University. His research focuses on 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century literature and culture, especially relations between aesthetics and politics. His books include *Cynicism and Postmodernity* (Verso, 1997), *Reification, or The Anxiety of Late Capitalism* (Verso, 2002), and *The Event of Postcolonial Shame* (Princeton University

Press, 2011). He has also edited collections of essays on Jacques Rancière, Georg Lukács, and cultural capitalism, among other topics, and is an Associate Editor of the journal *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*. His latest book *Free Indirect: The Idea of Twenty-First Century Fiction* is forthcoming from Columbia University Press.



**Jeremy Gilbert** joined the Cogut Institute as Visiting Professor of Humanities for the Spring of 2020. He is Professor of Cultural and Political Theory at the University of East London, and his most recent publications include the translation of Maurizio Lazzarato's *Experimental Politics* and the book *Common Ground: Democracy and Collectivity in an Age of Individualism*. His books *Twenty-First Century Socialism* (Polity) and *Hegemony Now: Power in the Twenty-First Century* (Verso, co-authored with Alex Williams) will both appear in 2020. He is editor of the journal *New Formations* and has written and spoken widely on politics, music and cultural theory, having given keynotes at numerous international conferences on these topics and on the politics and practice of cultural studies. He writes regularly for the British press (including the *Guardian*, the *New Statesman*, *openDemocracy* and *Red Pepper*) and for think tanks such as Institute for Public Policy Research and Compass, is routinely engaged in debates and discussion on Labour Party policy and strategy, has appeared on the BBC as a Labour Party spokesperson, and hosts the popular #ACFM podcast on Novara Media.



**Brian Meeks** is Professor and Chair of Africana Studies at Brown University. He previously served as Professor of Social and Political Change and Director of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. He has also taught at Michigan State University, Florida International University, and Anton de Kom University of Suriname, and served as Visiting Scholar at Cambridge University, Stanford University, and Brown University. He has published twelve books and edited collections, including *Critical Interventions in Caribbean Politics and Theory* (University Press of Mississippi, 2014); *Caribbean Revolutions and Revolutionary Theory: An Assessment of Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada* (Macmillan Caribbean, 1993); *Narratives of Resistance: Jamaica, Trinidad, the Caribbean*; and *Envisioning Caribbean Futures: Jamaican Perspectives* (University of the West Indies Press, 2000).



**Andre C. Willis** is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies. He is a philosopher of religion whose work focuses on Enlightenment reflections on religion, African American religious thought, critical theory, and democratic citizenship as it relates to “religious” notions of hope, recognition, and belonging. Willis earned a BA at Yale and his MA and PhD at Harvard. He is the author of *Towards a Humean True Religion* (Penn State University Press, 2015) and is currently working on a manuscript about African

American religion and politics. He has published articles in international journals such as *Hume Studies*, *The Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, *Political Theology*, *Critical Philosophy of Race*, and *Radical America*.



**Patricia Ybarra** is Professor and Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies at Brown University. She is the author of *Performing Conquest: Five Centuries of Theatre, History and Identity in Tlaxcala, Mexico* (University of Michigan Press, 2009) and *Latinx Theatre in Times of Neoliberalism* (Northwestern University Press, 2018) as well as of articles in *Aztlán*, *The Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, *Theatre Journal*, and *Theatre Topics*. She is also the co-editor with Lara

Nielsen of *Neoliberalism and Global Theatres: Performance Permutations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; paperback, 2015). Ybarra is a former President of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education.

The **Cogut Institute for the Humanities** at Brown University advances collaborative research and curricular innovation in the humanities and across the university. Our annual fellowship program brings together faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate and undergraduate fellows to explore work-in-progress in a dynamic workshop setting. In addition to offering the Doctoral Certificate in Collaborative Humanities, we provide cutting-edge research seminars for undergraduate students. A rich array of programming—conferences, lecture series, and colloquia—enhances the Institute’s core research and curricular mission, creating a lively space of inquiry and dialogue that draws in faculty, students, and members of the larger Providence community.

