

**Twelfth Biennial Conference of the
Swedish Association for American Studies (SAAS)
Södertörn University – Stockholm,**

October 3-4, 2024

PROGRAM

Thursday, October 3

8:30-9:00

Registration and coffee in the foyer outside MB505

9:00

Welcome! Opening of the conference, MB505

9:10-10:45

Teaching American Studies, MB505

Jenny Bonnevier and Adam Hjorthén invite to a conversation apropos of the contents of an upcoming theme issue of *American Studies in Scandinavia*.

10:00-11:30

Parallel sessions, 1

Session 1A, MB505

Culture, nature, space

Anna Bark Persson: *The Red Planet Beyond the Frontier: Feminist and Queer Mars Fiction*

Elena de Wachter: *Landscapes of the Mind: Elizabeth Bishop's Poetic Strategies*

Hanna Liebiebieva: *Racial Discourse Presuppositions in Thoreau's Philosophical Understanding of Nature*

Tanja Cvetkovic: *Reading the landscape: The contemplations on Thoreau's Cape Cod*

Session 1B, F819

Identities and power 1

Kim Khavar Fahlstedt: *The Patria Affair: Warner Oland, W.R. Hearst and the 1917 American-Japanese Diplomatic Crisis*

Chloé Avril: *"Burned into my memory": Developing historical consciousness through the graphic memoir*

Jonas Lindkvist: *Parody, Satire, and the Rejection of Nation in South Park*

12:00-13:00

Lunch

13:00-14:30

Parallel sessions, 2

Session 2A, MB505

Politics and responsibility

Adam Hjorthén: *'A More Perfect Union'? Public Scholarship and the United States Constitution in a Polarized Society*

Moa Spegel: *"Liberalism of fear" as perspectivization*

Leyla Belle Drake: *The origins of the Pentagon Papers: A speculative proposal*

Session 2B, F819

Books in action

Bo Ekelund: *Staying the Distance: Patterns of Literary Survival in Three Cohorts of US Authors*

Karin Molander Danielsson: *Trans-species empathy and affect in The Octopus*

Maria Holmgren Troy: *Adapting Octavia E. Butler's Kindred in the Twenty-First Century*

14:30

Coffee in the foyer outside MB505

15:00

Keynote lecture

James T. Kloppenberg, Harvard University:

Solidarity Embattled: American Progressives since 1900 in Atlantic Perspective

(further information below)

16:30

Refreshments in the foyer outside MB505

17:00

Panel discussion:

Sound and Fury: The U.S. Election and Media Images in Long-term View

Participants: James T. Kloppenberg, Cecilia Khavar, Göran Rosenberg, Dag Blanck.

Moderator: Christin Mays

(further information below)

19:00

Conference dinner at Flemingsberg Campus

Friday, October 4

8:30-9:00

Coffee in the foyer outside MB505

9:00-10:00

The SAAS General Meeting, MB505

(will also be possible to attend digitally, via Zoom)

10:00-11:30

Parallel sessions, 3

Session 3A, MB505

Swedish-American borderlands

Lucia Hodgson: *Swedish-Texan Plantation Literature: The Letters of S. M. Swenson*

Joel Johansson: *Emotional Belongings in Swedish-American Chicago 1919–1939*

Hélène Ohlsson: *Gilded Tones of an Aging Body: Divas, Ageism, and the Inauguration of the Metropolitan Opera House 1883*

Christin Mays: *Vital Swedish-American connections: The case of Ruth Randall & J. Sigfrid Edström*

Session 3B, F819

Identities and power 2

Fredrik Svensson: *Affirmative Sabotage in Harriet Jacobs' Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Zdravka Katinic: *HypheNation – the 1990s “new” American*

Jenny Bonnevier: *Studying “American Literature” in a Glocal Context*

11:45-12:30

Summing up and closing the conference. MB505

12:30

Lunch in the foyer outside MB505

(possible to bring along for those in a rush)

*

Södertörn University/Campus Flemingsberg, about 20 minutes from central Stockholm by commuter train, station *Flemingsberg*.



The entrance to **MB 505** is found “behind the rock” at the main campus square, in Moas bäge (across Biblioteket).

F819 is located at the 8th floor, F-huset (you will be guided there)

“Democracy begins in bloodshed [...]. To survive, however, let alone thrive, it requires a culture of mutual respect. Popular government often emerges as a result of conflicts that turn violent, but it cannot be established or sustained unless people are willing to let their worst enemies exercise power if they win an election. That willingness requires the predisposition that I have characterized as the ethic of reciprocity. In its absence, democracy is impossible; even in its presence, democracy is fragile. Although issues in politics often seem too important to submit to vote or a jury of randomly selected citizens, sustaining democracy depends on individuals’ willingness to do just that. Either rejecting the outcome of established procedures such as elections or trials or responding to defeat with violence is fatal to democracy. Conceding legitimacy to opponents requires [...] forbearance and humility, because it signals the realization that one might be wrong and one’s foes might be right. That willingness is uncommon in human history, which explains why democracies have been rare and why they have rarely lasted long.

James T. Kloppenberg, *Toward Democracy*, 2016.



**October 3, 15:00,
Södertörn University, MB 505**

Public keynote lecture:

James T. Kloppenberg

Solidarity Embattled: American Progressives since 1900 in Atlantic Perspective

James T. Kloppenberg is the Charles Warren Professor of American History at Harvard University – a world-renowned intellectual historian and scholar of democratic thought. Among his books may be mentioned *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (1986), *The Virtues of Liberalism* (1998), *Reading Obama: Dreams, Hope, and the American Political Tradition* (2010), and the *magnum opus*, *Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought* (2016).

**October 3, 17:00,
Södertörn University, MB 505**

Public panel discussion:

***Sound and Fury:
The U.S. Election and Media Images in Long-term View***

Participants:

James T. Kloppenberg

Cecilia Khavar, radio reporter, cofounder of “USA-podden”, author of *Stormningen: våldet, lögnerna och åren som förändrade USA* (2024,
<https://www.norstedts.se/bok/9789113125435/stormningen>)

Göran Rosenberg, journalist and author, TV-correspondent during the Reagan-Bush eras, whose book *Friare kan ingen vara: Den amerikanska idén från revolution till Reagan*, from 1991, will soon be published in yet another expanded version
(<https://www.rosenberg.se/friare>)

Dag Blanck, historian and director, the Swedish Institute for North America Studies, (SINAS), Uppsala University, and a frequent commentator in Swedish media coverage of the U.S.

Moderator: **Christin Mays**, historian and sociologist of education, SINAS.



Presentation abstracts

Session 1A

Anna Bark Persson, Umeå University
anna.bark@umu.se

The Red Planet Beyond the Frontier: Feminist and Queer Mars Fiction

Space and space exploration are having a renaissance, heralded by new governmental and commercial space ventures as well as a general surge in space interest – particularly in regard to an eventual colonization of the planet Mars. Rather than the bilateral US–Soviet space race of the Cold War, this second space age is driven by (trans)national actors from around the globe. Even so, the grand narrative of space exploration – articulated in terms of colonization, manifest destiny, and frontier ideology – extends from US history and presupposes the US as a stand-in for all humanity. Furthermore, it is a highly masculine narrative, of rugged explorers, manly astronauts, and bold science pushing mankind into a supposedly brighter and better tomorrow. In my postdoc project, I examine counters and alternatives to this overarching story of space exploration by turning to American feminist and queer speculative fiction. More specifically, I look at feminist and queer literary representations of Mars and how they can offer understandings of Mars and space exploration beyond hegemonic narratives of settler colonialism and historical-evolutionary destiny. The project is at its midway point, and the purpose of this presentation is to offer some initial findings as well as some tentative next steps.

Elena De Wachter, Lund University
elena.de_wachter@englund.lu.se

Landscapes of the Mind: Elizabeth Bishop's Poetic Strategies

The understanding of landscape as an extension, reflection, or representation of human thought is one of the most pervasive and poetically fecund tropes in Anglophone literature. In other words, THE HUMAN MIND IS A LANDSCAPE is a highly conventional conceptual metaphor, to the extent that the very term used in cognitive linguistics to describe the understanding of one

domain of experience through the structure of another – the foundation of cognitive theories of metaphor – is ‘mapping’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). However, literary studies lacks a nuanced understanding of the ways in which poetry expresses these conceptual metaphors, thereby also overlooking the need for a critical examination of how poetry conceptualises the natural world.

As part of a larger PhD project that examines the poetic strategies for expressing conceptual metaphors, this presentation proposes to read Elizabeth Bishop's memorial poem for Robert Lowell, “North Haven” (1978), as a negotiation of the metaphor THE HUMAN MIND IS A LANDSCAPE. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to existing scholarship on Bishop's geographical poetics, as well as suggesting “North Haven” as site of productive entanglement between American landscapes and American writers.

Hanna Liebieidieva, Södertörn University/Taras Shevchenko National University, Kyiv
hanna.liebieidieva@sh.se

Racial Discourse Presuppositions in Thoreau's Philosophical Understanding of Nature

The presentation will review the relationship between 19th century racial science and the philosophical level of Thoreau's concept of nature. The question is what were the basic assumptions that guided Thoreau's views on nature? On one hand, he is known as a convinced abolitionist, while on the other he has subconsciously absorbed the mentality of rather privileged segment of the slave-holding society to which he belonged. It is important to note that Thoreau defined the concept of nature not through the opposition of nature and man (since nature for him constituted the human essence), but through the opposition of nature and society (where he viewed the society as the oppressor of nature). Given this, the question arises: did he classify the enslaved population as part of society or part of nature? To consider the victims of slavery as part of nature would mean to operate within the ideology of a slave society, while considering them as part of society in terms of Thoreau would be to view them as oppressors of nature. In order

to resolve this contradiction, the question of how Thoreau's concept of nature interacts on an epistemological, anthropological, and cultural level with the racial discourse of his time will be examined.

Tanja Cvetković, University of Niš (Serbia)
tcvet99@yahoo.com

Reading the landscape: The contemplations on Thoreau's *Cape Cod*

The paper explores the relationship between man and Nature in Thoreau's posthumously published work, travelogue, *Cape Cod* (1865). In this work Thoreau further theorizes his philosophy of Nature and his wakefulness doctrine. By contemplating on the death in the ocean and the shipwrecked St. John, Thoreau comprehends the Nature's power and indifference as well as the inevitability of overcoming obstacles that might stand in the way of man's meaningful relationship with it. Towards the end of the book Thoreau draws a conclusion that Nature consists of man's own perceptions, and the author of the paper further dwells on the issues of how man sees Nature, what antidote to the state of *disjunction* is proposed in the book, how Thoreau's awakening is raised in the book, how man's actions of destroying and creating are perceived in Nature and where they lead to. Is there a step forward? Is there a future in the light of these dark comprehensions? And how can this piece of writing be put in the context of contemporary challenges man faces. These are some of the questions that the author of the paper poses for reflection and tries to answer. The views presented in the paper are supported by Scott Slovic's ideas of man's relationship with Nature expressed in terms of *conjunction* and *disjunction*.

Session 1B

Kim Khavar Fahlstedt, Örebro University
kim.khavar-fahlstedt@oru.se

The Patria Affair: Warner Oland, W.R. Hearst and the 1917 American-Japanese Diplomatic Crisis

This paper investigates the 1917 "Patria" film controversy, where Swedish actor Warner Oland's portrayal of an oriental figure sparked a political crisis. Through primary sources, it examines how Oland's casting intersected with American propaganda, William Randolph Hearst's anti-Wilson agenda, and perceptions of ethnicity. Oland's trajectory from Broadway failure to

Hollywood star, alongside his yellowface role, sheds light on racial stereotyping in early cinema. In this paper, I argue that the controversy functioned as Oland's original yellowface sin, shaping his career and public perception, positioning him as a "transcultural contact zone" between Sweden, the US, and the Far East. Oland's portrayal not only influenced American cultural imaginaries but also contributed to discussions on ethnic identity. By exploring Oland's cultural footprint, this research illuminates broader shifts in transnational cultural exchange during the early 20th century.

Chloé Avril, Gothenburg University
chloe.avril@sprak.gu.se

"Burned into my memory": Developing historical consciousness through the graphic memoir

My paper focuses on the increasingly popular genre in young adult fiction today, namely the graphic memoir. Looking at George Takei's *They Called Us Enemy* (2019) as an example of this genre, I will argue that graphic narratives can play a significant role in contributing to students' engagement with controversial topics in American history. One of the central issues I will focus on in my discussion is how Takei (with co-writers Justine Eisinger and Steven Scott as well as illustrator Harmony Becker) portrays his family's experience of the concentration camps for Japanese Americans during WWII not as a discontinuity or anomaly in American history but as part of "an endless cycle of injustice" which the country has "inflicted on minorities" (Takei cited in Scardilli, 2019). As part of this "unending cycle," new groups are forever identified as "unassimilable" in an effort to define what America is and what it wants to be. Parallel to this, Takei's memoir also focuses on another more positive cycle in American history, that of activist struggle for justice and equal rights. Particular attention will be paid to how the visual dimension of the graphic novel can successfully draw in and interpellate readers as active agents with the power to shape tomorrow's history.

Jonas Lindkvist, Lund University
jonas.lindkvist@litt.lu.se

Parody, Satire, and the Rejection of Nation in *South Park*

In *Going Native*, episode 11 of season 16 of *South Park* (Parker/Stone 1997-), young Butters is told that he was born in another homeland and travels with his friend Kenny to participate in a

traditional coming of age ceremony. The homeland in question turns out to be Hawaii and Butters' ancestors turns out to be white time-share owners who quibble about who arrived at the new land first, with actual Hawaiian natives watching in disbelief from the exoticized background. The first known use of parody is from Aristotle's *Poetics* and since then it has been used for both transgressive and normative purposes. Parody deals with the concept of borders, in ridicule, in truth telling, and in what is transported and reiterated from its original source to create new art, new worlds, new possibilities. By using and expanding on theories on parody and satire from among others Linda Hutcheon, Richard Dyer and Dan Harries, it is my ambition to show how modern animated tv shows use parody or satire not only for humor and derision, but for political and aesthetic purposes and that animated tv parody today is at the forefront of not only parody and intertextuality, but of dramatic, comedic, political and personal storytelling.

South Park in general and *Going Native* specifically use parody and scathing satire to expose the hypocrisy of colonialist thought in certain stories of American migration, and to ridicule the fierce competitiveness in discussions of who arrived in America first and therefore who has the most right to its land, status and resources. In doing so I would argue that it also questions the very use of nation as a building block of society. It is my intention to examine deeper *South Park's* use of parody and satire on questions of migration and nationalism with the episode *Going Native* as main focus.

Session 2A

Adam Hjorthén, Uppsala University (SINAS)
adam.hjorthen@engelska.uu.se

'A More Perfect Union'? Public Scholarship and the United States Constitution in a Polarized Society

The U.S. Constitution of 1787 created the American political system and remains "the supreme law of the land." In recent years, it has been at the center of political debates related to its role as a tangible vessel for the promises of democracy, justice, and freedom. The Constitution may be non-partisan, yet it is today interpreted within a polarized political landscape, where some observers fear the collapse of the democratic system.

This paper will present the outlines of and tentative results from an ongoing research project, which is funded by the Democracy and Higher

Education research program at Uppsala University. The purpose of the project is to investigate the role of academic scholars in the public negotiation of the U.S. Constitution. This is achieved through a study of the public scholarship of the National Constitution Center (NCC). Created as an explicitly "non-partisan" institution by the U.S. Congress and opened in Philadelphia in 2003, the NCC is today a central point of contact between scholars and the American public on all issues broadly related to the Constitution—including voting rights, racial justice, climate change, and abortion. Beyond the research questions and method of the project, take-aways from interviews conducted in Philadelphia in September 2024 will be presented as foundation for further discussion.

Moa Spegel, Södertörn University
moa.spegel@sh.se

"Liberalism of fear" as perspectivization

The American political theorist Judith Shklar (1928-1992) is mainly known as a proponent for a so-called "liberalism of fear". In 1989 she wrote the article "The Liberalism of Fear", which has come to be perceived as an embodiment of her thinking in general. This has resulted in the characterization of Shklar as an inherently pessimistic thinker focused on damage control and safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. Even though this understanding of her has been nuanced over the last fifteen years, the idea of a liberalism of fear as Shklar's (systematic) political theory still tends to be placed at the analytical center. I will present the outlines of my PhD project in which I approach the political thought of Shklar from the perspective of her thinking practice. My analytical focus leaves the notion of a coherent political theory behind, and brings attention to a political theorist who engaged with different political issues moving between different positions and perspectives. By discussing "The Liberalism of Fear" I intend to show something of what my overall approach will do, and what kind of understanding of Shklar's political thought it enables.

Leyla Belle Drake, Uppsala University
leyla.belle.drake@idehist.uu.se

The origins of the Pentagon Papers: A speculative proposal

In 1967, defense secretary Robert McNamara commissioned a secret study of America's involvement in Indochina since 1945. Leaked to the press in 1971, the Pentagon Papers exposed

the consistent lying of four consecutive administrations and confirmed the peace movement's critique of the Vietnam war. Much ink has been spilled examining Daniel Ellsberg's 1971 leak; the ensuing legal battle between the Department of Justice and the press, culminating in a landmark Supreme Court decision; the impact of the Pentagon Papers on public opinion and the conduct of the final years of the war; and the chain of events set in motion by the leak that led to Nixon's resignation. Far less has been said about the *origin* of the Pentagon Papers, which remains obscure to this day. This paper presents a new origin story, connecting McNamara's fateful decision to commission a secret study to an elaborate antiwar protest in Stockholm: the 1967 Russell Tribunal, presided over by Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre. In proposing a causal link from the Russell Tribunal to the Pentagon Papers, this paper challenges prevailing notions of the peace movement's influence on US government decision making and the outcome of the Vietnam war.

Session 2B

Bo G Ekelund, Stockholm University
bo.ekelund@english.su.se

Staying the Distance: Patterns of Literary Survival in Three Cohorts of US Authors

The presentation I propose for the SAAS conference involves a return to and reactivation of a research project that has lain dormant since 2006. In that project, I (and two colleagues) studied three cohorts of US first novelists (and authors of first short story collections)—1940, 1955, and 1970—in order to find out what were the social conditions of possibility for becoming a published author of fiction in the US in that period, and also what was required for sustaining a literary career over time. Some results were published in the early 2000's, but the data on the 1970 cohort were never completed.

Over the years, the empirical work of filling in information regarding the 397 authors of the 1970 cohort has been carried out piecemeal, and it will now be possible to start comparing the data for the three cohorts.

What I aim to present at the conference are results regarding the longer-term survival of the 956 cohort authors, seen in terms of their presence in academic scholarship on the one hand, and on the book market on the other. The former involves the production of scholarly articles and books while the latter is measured by the authors' own books staying in print over time. The delay in

concluding this research project has the added benefit that even the 1970 cohort is now a full fifty years in the past, which means that the traces left by these authors after a half-century can be compared.

Karin Molander Danielsson, Mälardalen University
karin.molander.danielsson@mdu.se

Trans-species empathy and affect in *The Octopus*

In recent decades our knowledge of nonhuman animal emotions has expanded greatly thanks to the works of scholars like evolutionary biologist Marc Becoff (2008), affective neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp (1998), and others, work that furthermore points to significant similarities between human and nonhuman emotional lives. Scholars in the intersection of the cognitive sciences and narrative studies (David Herman 2011, Suzanne Keen 2010, Alexa Weik van Mossner 2017) argue that this similarity or continuity between human and nonhuman minds is a reason why representations of nonhuman emotional states in texts and films have the ability to greatly affect the reader or watcher. This transfer of affect might however rely in large part on the text's anthropomorphization of the animal, which might mean that "narrative empathy for nonhuman characters always runs the risk of false empathy" or so it is claimed by for example Erin James (2019).

Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901) is a large scale novel of Californian farmers and railroaders, usually considered one of the more important works in American literary naturalism. It tells the story of how modernity drives a wedge into an agrarian—and manily unmotorized—landscape, changing the lives of humans and nonhumans for ever. It is not a novel primarily about animals, but animals are often present, and typically in scenes that are heavily charged with emotion. In this project I will investigate the novel's nonhuman characters, ranging from herds of sheep and flocks of jackrabbits, to individual dogs and horses. I will analyze what affects or emotions these animals display and how they are revealed to the reader: for instance whether through anthropomorphization or experienced through a focalizing character, i.e. human "bridge character" (Keen, 2007 and James, 2019) or some other narrative device, and their ultimate narrative effects.

Maria Holmgren Troy, Karlstad University
maria.holmgren.troy@kau.se

Adapting Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* in the Twenty-First Century

Academic work on Octavia E. Butler's speculative fiction has increased exponentially since the 1990s, and Butler is a towering presence in the multidisciplinary field termed Afrofuturism. A fairly new development regarding Butler's oeuvre – her first novel *Patternmaster* was published in 1976, her last, *Fledgling*, in 2005 – is the interest in adapting her novels to different media. There have been two graphic novel adaptations: *Kindred* (2017) and *Parable of the Sower* (2021), a TV series based on Butler's neoslave narrative *Kindred* (1979) premiered on Hulu in December 2022, and some of her other novels are considered for film and television adaptations. These adaptations were, however, preceded by The Seeing Ear Theater's audio theater adaptation of *Kindred*, which aired in February 2001.

My research project is primarily focused on adaptations of *Kindred* in different media, and it will probably turn into a book project. Here I would like to discuss the 2001 audio adaptation, about which I plan to write an article.

Session 3A

Lucia Hodgson, Linnaeus University/the Swedish Emigrant Institute, Växjö
Lucia.hodgson@lnu.se

Swedish-Texan Plantation Literature: The Letters of S. M. Swenson

This paper draws on a project funded by the Swedish Research Council titled "New Sweden Texas: Swedish Settlers and Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Texas." It seeks to tell a cultural history of nineteenth-century Swedish-Texans that understands their inhabitation of Texas land as a form of settler colonialism intimately intertwined with the enslavement of African-descended peoples. This paper will argue that S. M. Swenson's letters to his lawyer housed in the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin are written in the generic tradition of what Jennifer Greeson terms "plantation literature" which originated in the late sixteenth-century to attract potential investors and settlers to English colonial projects in North America. These letters and travel narratives explained and justified plantation projects characterized by dispossession of Indigenous land and enslavement of African people. These

projects preceded, necessitated, and instigated an Enlightenment discourse of individual property rights and racial difference. In my paper, Swenson's transformation from the son of Swedish farmers to the owner of Texas plantations worked by enslaved Africans on land expropriated from Indigenous peoples serves as a case study for understanding how dispossession and enslavement come together in the plantation and through it fashion Swedish-Texan white male identity.

Hélène Ohlsson, Karlstad University
helene.ohlsson@kau.se

Gilded Tones of an Aging Body: Divas, Ageism, and the Inauguration of the Metropolitan Opera House 1883

In the second season of HBO's drama series *The Gilded Age*, the plot revolves around the opening of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in 1883. Every now and then, the greatest opera star of all is mentioned—Swedish diva Christina Nilsson. In the highlight of the opening episode, we see her singing the jewel aria at the home of one of the main characters. Her presence in the series makes it clear that, over the years, Nilsson, through popularity and skill, had sung her way into American cultural history.

During the height of her career, she represented herself as an ideal of cosmopolitan Swedish femininity and was generally recognized as such in the Swedish press. But now, at the end of her career, the discourses surrounding her had changed. From the theoretical perspective of feminist historiography and diva studies, and with the empirical example of the ageism directed towards Nilsson in the Swedish press, this paper discusses the merciless discrimination and prejudice directed towards women's aging bodies on stage

Joel Johansson, independent scholar (PhD from Oslo University)
johansson.joel@gmail.com

Emotional Belongings in Swedish-American Chicago 1919–1939

How were notions of belonging to spaces and identities conveyed emotionally in the experiences of Swedish-Americans in Chicago? Can mobility and migration prompt alternative ideas of emotional belongings that are expressed in encounters with new surroundings and ethnic groups? If so, do these belongings differ from earlier constructions of identities that migrants expressed

in their original homelands? Are these spaces and memories seen as images of the past left behind, or do they continue to shape migrants in their newly formed identities and ideological strives in the new country?

The potentials and challenges of studying emotional attachments to Sweden and America through the provincial societies of Chicago will be focused on in my presentation, where my planned project *Emotional Belongings in Swedish-American Chicago 1919–1939* will be outlined. The project seeks to analyze national and regional identity formations by studying two different Swedish-American provincial societies ("hembygdsföreningar") in Chicago from 1919 to 1939. The organizations aimed at preserving the Swedish language and regional identities in the U.S. while offering social activities to its members.

Christin Mays, Uppsala University (SINAS)
christin.mays@engelska.uu.se

Vital Swedish-American connections: The case of Ruth Randall & J. Sigfrid Edström

In 1896, Ruth Randall, a schoolteacher from Illinois, boarded an ocean liner headed to Europe on school trip with a group of her fellow teachers. On her return trip, Randall met J. Sigfrid Edström, a Swedish engineer headed to the United States to start a job at an electrical company in Cleveland, Ohio. After 3 years of courtship, the pair were married in Chicago, settling several years later in Sweden. By 1903, Edström had accepted a position as General director of the Swedish General Electrical Company (*Allmänna Svenska Elektriska Aktiebolaget*), and the pair settled in Västerås. In the pursuing years, Ruth Randall Edström juggled many roles as a mother of 4, director's wife, and peace and women's rights activist. Both Edström and Randall were active in multiple voluntary organizations, and in particular Swedish-American organizational life. This presentation explores the significance of personal and organizational connections between Sweden and United States during the first half of the 20th century through the case of two important figures, Ruth Randall Edström and her husband J. Sigfrid Edström.

Session 3B

Fredrik Svensson, Gävle University
fredrik.svensson@hig.se

Affirmative Sabotage in Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

This presentation reads Harriet Jacobs' 1861 *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* through the postcolonial theory of Gaytri Spivak, and it argues that by positioning herself as a knowledgeable reader of 19th century American and British culture, religious and otherwise, Jacobs manages to affirmatively sabotage this culture from the inside. More specifically, thanks to her erudition and its rhetorical packaging, Jacobs demonstrates that slavery lacks epistemological support both in the majority religion of the US *and* in some of the country's most celebrated and influential literature. The presentation elaborates on this finding by referencing Spivak's discussion on how an aesthetic education in the 21st century has to at once espouse and challenge Enlightenment ideas. Because even as Enlightenment discourse has been used to oppress the subaltern, a subject existing outside of mainstream power structures, it might still be possible for liberative projects to make demands within the same discourse. If meaning is always predicated on use, to speak with Ludwig Wittgenstein, an alternate use of epistemological tools already in place—as practiced by Jacobs—might affect our understanding of the ethical and political affordances of the Enlightenment. One of many caveats, however, is that, to Spivak, affirmative sabotage may only be accomplished from a position of strength. This leads to the question as to who might acquire such a position. To echo Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: who decolonizes, and how?

Zdravka Katinić, Karlstad University
zdravka.katinic@kau.se

HypheNation – the 1990s “new” American

The 1993 November 18th issue of Time Magazine claims that there is a "new face of America" - a national perspective promoted by politics and media. The editors of the magazine further state that "the face of America has been dramatically altered in the final years of the 20th century. America's face is not just about physiognomy, or even color ... It is about the very complexion of the country, the endless and fascinating profusion of people, cultures, languages and attitudes that make up the great pool." My doctoral project takes into perspective this promotion of the "American" and explores six American minority novels published in the "post-era" of the 1990s USA: Danzy Senna's *Caucasia* (1998), Gish Jen's *Mona in the Promised Land* (1996), Sapphire's *Push* (1996), Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat* (1995), Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* (1994), and

Julia Alvarez's *How The Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991). While my dissertation mainly centers on how the novels play with the Bildungsroman genre, the presentation for this conference will focus specifically on the version of "American" the protagonists in the novels are being taught and how they interact with it.

Jenny Bonnevier, Örebro University
jenny.bonnevier@oru.se

Studying “American Literature” in a Glocal Context

This presentation is related to my project “Hominid Ecologies and Transspecies Kinship: Imagining Livable worlds in a (Post)Apocalyptic Present.” The project aims to conceptualize and articulate alternative understandings of what it means to be human that could support livable worlds. To do so, it studies contemporary speculative fiction by feminist, indigenous, and black diaspora writers that imagine worlds where humans are inescapably entangled with the more-than-human. Much of the fiction included in the project could be labeled “American” and much of both the global and the local contexts of these texts is the result of processes wholly or partially centered in the US, such as US settler colonialism and the slave trade.

In this presentation, I raise some questions about what it means for a text to be part of the category “American Literature.” I bring up some of the challenges I am attempting to think through when it comes to the role that “American” can or should play in a project that aims to explore alternatives to the murderous logic driving the Plantationocene.