

Literature and Creative Writing Panel – Goldberry Long, Respondent – May 1, 2020

"Daughters of Mother Earth Against Father Authority of Power, Capital, and Nature"

Sumeyra Buran (English)

We live in the Anthropocene epoch since we, as humans, change the essential nature of the planet by our activities on the Earth. We are in a time of environmental destruction, ecological collapse, and capitalized world-ecology. I call Sarah Hall's *Daughters of the North* (2007) "a green dystopia," which is a response to climate change, set in a world of socio-economic and political collapse that has resulted in an irreversible transformed Britain. Much of the country is drowned by the deadly floods, and those who remain are captured as a dependent colony of America by a harsh regime called the "Authority." Donna Haraway names this epoch the Chthulucene "a kind of time place for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on damaged earth," and this novel suggests such a setting need not be one of disaster (2). Instead, the female refugees from environmental disasters come together in the Carhullan Army to live in balance and harmony with what is left from non-human nature, forming a resistance against the oppressive environmental policies of the Authority. These include control of women's bodies by requiring that every woman of childbearing age is fitted with a contraceptive device, with only some enabled to reproduce via lottery. Innovative technologies offer new lifeways with new patterns for human habitation and reproduction. However, the unnamed narrator, Sister, the rebel fighter who is called an Unofficial terrorist by the Authority, escapes the reproduction lottery and travels to an isolated northern urban farm where a group of women lives. Both women's bodies and the natural body of Earth are controlled by the Authority; just as women's fertility is restricted, nature is turned into "petrochemical" and "black turned" land. Both the Earth and women are made infertile because nature cannot give birth any longer in this toxic Capitalocene world. This paper will explore whether it is possible to achieve gender equality and balance between humans and nature through the militarization of the daughters of Mother Earth, who resist the dictatorial regime of the Father Authority that controls the power, capital, nature, and gender inequitably.

"The Troubles I've Seen": Phantasmagoria and Black Survival in the Wake of Bayou and House of Whispers"

Cathy Thomas (UC President's Postdoctoral Fellow, Creative Writing)

When twelve-year-old Lee Wagstaff finds the mutilated, lynched, and drowned body of young Billy Glass she proclaims, "The bayou is a bad place. Ain't nothing good ever happened around there" (Love 4). Later, she adventures from her fictional Jim Crow south of Charon, Mississippi to a Dixie Neverland where her precocity mixes with gods, monsters, folk figures of slavery, Civil War, and Reconstruction in Jeremy Love's graphic novel *Bayou*. A similar Afrodiasporic mapping of spiritual experience, consciousness, and care is presented in Nalo Hopkinson's *House of Whispers* where Erzulie, a Haitian African loa, is disconnected from her worshippers "in the waking world" when the infectious Waking Sickness, which separates human body from soul, spreads throughout and beyond New Orleans. The fantasy element signaled in these narratives elaborates on Black survival in places of political and spiritual desiccation and is indexed by a mode of Black salvage borne of magic that resists the naturalizing of Black suffering. I connect metaphoric and methodological discussions of genocide, slavery, and cataclysm in Tiffany

King Lethabo's *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* and Alexis Pauline Gumbs's *M Archive: After the End of the World* to ask: do Black female experiences in comic books serve as proxy for discourses of contemporary politics via mythologizing trauma? And, as innovative Black studies contributions make a (re) turn to the speculative writing to create new epistemologies, what else might be intellectually salvaged for the academy from the potential within non-traditional literary forms such as comics?