



# ABSTRACTS AND NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

## **ANTONIO BARRENECHEA**

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### **Dracula as Inter-American Film Icon Universal Pictures and Cinematográfica ABSA**

My essay explores the vampire cinema of Hollywood and Mexico. In particular, I trace the relationship between Universal Pictures as the progenitor of horror during the Great Depression and Cinematográfica ABSA's "mexploitation" practices. The latter resulted in the first vampire film in Latin America—*El vampiro* (1957). Rather than strengthening separatist national cinemas, the unintended consequences of genre film production make this a case of inter-American scope.

**Keywords:** Dracula, hemispheric, inter-American, cinema, mexploitation

Antonio Barrenechea is a professor of literature of the Americas and cinema. He is the author of *America Unbound: Encyclopedic Literature and Hemispheric Studies* (University of New Mexico Press, 2016), which brings together comparative literature and hemispheric studies by tracing New World historical imaginaries in prodigious novels from the United States, Latin America, and Francophone Canada. He is also co-editor of *Hemispheric Indigenous Studies*, a special issue of *Comparative American Studies* (2013) that calls for a trans-American frame for indigenous history and culture. Over the past fifteen years, Dr. Barrenechea has contributed articles and reviews to *Comparative Literature*, *Revista Iberoamericana*, *American Literature*, and other venues, including the American Comparative Literature Association's "state-of-the-discipline" report. The forthcoming "Hemispheric Studies Beyond Suspicion" was awarded the 2014–2016 prize for the best

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essay by the International Association of Inter-American Studies. Following upon a 2016–2017 fellowship at the Institut Américain Universitaire in France, Dr. Barrenechea's recent work is on the relation between trash culture and analog cinema as produced in the fringes of North and South American film capitals. He also conducts ongoing research on the intellectual history of the literature of the Americas, particularly its international pioneering waves, and its contemporary manifestations in U.S. academia. Dr. Barrenechea presently serves on the boards of the International American Studies Association, the International Association of Inter-American Studies, and Comparative American Studies..

**MANUEL BRONCANO RODRÍGUEZ**

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**A Literary History of Mental Captivity in the United States  
*Blood Meridian, Wise Blood, and Contemporary Political Discourse***

On July 15, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump and Russia's President Vladimir Putin held a summit in Helsinki that immediately set off a chain reaction throughout the world. By now, barely two months later, that summit is all but forgotten for the most part, superseded by the frantic train of events and the subsequent bombardment from the media that have become the "new normal." While the iron secrecy surrounding the conversation between the two dignitaries allowed for all kinds of speculation, the image of President Trump bowing to his Russian counterpart (indeed a treasure trove for semioticians) became for many observers in the U.S. and across the world the living proof of Mr. Trump's subservient allegiance to Mr. Putin and his obscure designs. Even some of the most recalcitrant GOPs vented quite publicly their disgust at the sight of a president paying evident homage to the archenemy of the United States, as Vercingetorix kneeled down before Julius Cesar in recognition of the Gaul's surrender to the might of the Roman Empire. For some arcane reason, the whole episode of the Helsinki summit brought to my mind, as in a vivid *déjà vu*, Cormac McCarthy's novel *Blood Meridian* and more specifically, the characters of Judge Holden and the idiotic freak who becomes Holden's ludicrous disciple in the wastelands of Arizona. In my essay, I provide some possible explanations as to why I came to blend these two unrelated episodes into a single continuum. In the process, I briefly revisit some key texts in the American canon that fully belong in the history of "mental captivity" in the United States, yet to be written. Obviously, I am not in hopes of deciphering the ultimate reasons for current U.S. foreign policy, and the more modest aim of my article is to offer some insights into the general theme of mental captivity through a novel and a textual tradition overpopulated with "captive minds."

**Keywords:** Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*, U.S. foreign policy, President Trump, President Putin

Manuel Broncano (PhD Salamanca 1990) is a Regents Professor of English at Texas A&M International University. From 2015 to 2019

he served as the president of the International American Studies Association (IASA). Before moving to Texas, he taught for two decades at the University of Leon (Spain). Broncano has published a number of scholarly works on various American authors such as Flannery O'Connor, Willa Cather, Faulkner, Melville, Poe, etc. His latest book was released in 2014, *Religion in Cormac McCarthy's Fiction: Apocryphal Borderlands* (Routledge). Broncano has also kept an active agenda as a translator. His latest translation is Giannina Braschi's *United States of Banana* (*Estados Unidos de Banana*, Amazon Crossing 2014).

#### **SONIA CAPUTA**

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#### **Resistance and Protest in Percival Everett's *Erasure***

As argued by the literary critic Margaret Russett, Percival Everett "unhinges 'black' subject matter from a lingering stereotype of 'black' style [and] challenges the assumption that a single or consensual African-American experience exists to be represented." The author presents such a radical individualism in his most admired literary work published in 2001. In *Erasure*, Thelonious 'Monk' Ellison, the main character and narrator of the book, pens a stereotypically oriented African American novel that becomes an expression of "him being sick of it"; "an awful little book, demeaning and soul-destroying drivel" that caters for the tastes and expectations of the American readership but, at the same time, oscillates around pre-conceived beliefs, prejudices, and racial clichés supposedly emphasizing the 'authentic' black experience in the United States. Not only is *Erasure* about race, misconceptions of blackness and racial identification but also about academia, external constraints, and one's fight against them. The present article, therefore, endeavors to analyze different forms of resistance and protest in Percival Everett's well-acclaimed novel, demonstrating the intricate connections between the publishing industry, the impact of media, the literary canon formation and the treatment of black culture.

**Keywords:** protest, resistance, Percival Everett, literary canon

Sonia Caputa, PhD, works as Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Silesia. She was a participant of the Summer Fulbright Scholarship Programme "The United States Department of State 2015 Institute on Contemporary U.S. Literature" (University of Louisville, Kentucky). She is an active member of the Polish Association for American Studies. Caputa was guest co-editor one of the issues of *RIAS* and a co-editor of the series "Grand Themes of American Literature." She teaches contemporary ethnic American literature and offers survey courses of the history of American literature. Her interests include, but are not limited to: ethnicity, assimilation, as well as stereotypes in literature and films.

**MURAT GÖÇ-BILGIN**

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### **Posthumanity and Prison-House of Gender in Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs***

This article aims to analyze Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs* with a deliberate emphasis on posthuman theory, body politics, and gender to construe the transformation of the human body, human-machine nexus, and captivity in inhumanity with a struggle to (re)humanize minds and their bodies. One of the arguments of the paper will be that posthumanism offers a new outlet for breaking the chains of captivity, that is, escaping into non-human to redefine humanity and to emancipate the human mind and human body to notch up a more liberated and more equitable definition of humanity. As gender and sex are further marked by the mechanical and mass-mediated reproduction of human experiences, history, and memory, space and time, postmodern gender theories present a perpetual in-betweenness, transgression and fluidity and the dissolution of grand narratives also resulted in a dissolution of the heteronormative and essentialist uniformity and solidity of the human body. Gender in a posthuman context is characterized by a parallel tendency for reclaiming the possession of the body and sexual identity with a desire to transform the body as a physical entity through plastic surgery, genetic cloning, in vitro fertilization, and computerization of human mind and memory. Therefore, the human body has lost its quality as gendered and sexed and has been imprisoned in an embodiment of infantile innocence and manipulability, a "ghost in the machine," or a cyborg, a hybrid of machine and organism (Haraway). The human-machine symbiosis, then, is exteriorized and extended into a network of objects switching "natural human body" to an immaterialized, dehumanized, and prosthetic "data made flesh." In this regard, Coupland's *Microserfs* boldly explores the potential of posthuman culture to provide a deconstruction of human subjectivity through an analysis of human and machine interaction and to demonstrate how human beings transgress the captivity of humanity by technologizing their bodies and minds in an attempt to become more human than human.

**Keywords:** Douglas Coupland, *Microserfs*, posthuman, cyborg theory, gender

Murat Göç is an assistant professor of English Language and Literature at Celal Bayar University Turkey. He received his PhD degree from Ege University American Culture and Literature Department. His main fields of interest are: contemporary American literature, literary theory, gender studies, and, in particular, masculinity studies. He is the founding editor of the *Masculinities* Journal and a member of the Initiative for Critical Studies of Masculinities, an academic network of scholars based in Turkey, working on establishing and ensuring gender equality, supporting LGBTI rights, and inspiring a critical transformation of masculinities.

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**MICHAŁ KISIEL***Er(r)go. Theory–Literature–Culture*  
University of Silesia in Katowice  
Poland**Violence Hates Games?  
Revolting (Against) Violence in Michael Haneke's *Funny Games U.S.***

This article aims at exploring Haneke's *Funny Games U.S.* as a protest against violence employed in the mainstream cinema. Satisfying compensatory needs of the spectators, constructing their identities, and even contributing to the biopolitics of neoliberalism, proliferating bloodthirsty fantasies put scholars in a suspicious position of treating them as either purely aesthetical phenomena or exclusively ethical ones. Haneke's film seems to resist such a clear-cut binary; what is more, it contributes immensely to the criticism of mainstream cinematic violence. Misleading with its initial setting of a conventional thriller, Haneke employs absurd brutality in order to overload violence itself. The scenes of ruthless tortures are entangled in the ongoing masquerade, during which swapping roles, theatrical gestures, and temporary identities destabilize seemingly fixed positions of perpetrators and their victims, and tamper with the motives behind the carnage. As I argue, by confronting its spectators with unbearable cruelty devoid of closing catharsis, *Funny Games* deconstructs their bloodthirsty desire of retaliation and unmask them as the very reason for the violence on screen. Following, among others, Jean-Luc Nancy and Henry A. Giroux, I wish to demonstrate how Haneke exhausts the norm of acceptable violence to reinstate such a limit anew.

**Keywords:** Haneke, violence, affect, brutality, *Funny Games U.S.*, cinema

Michał Kisiel holds a PhD in Humanities and an MA in English from the University of Silesia in Katowice. His doctoral dissertation focused on the unfolding of Samuel Beckett and Tadeusz Kantor by means of new materialist methods. His interests include the correspondence between literature and philosophy, and the ontological turn in humanities. In 2015, he participated in The Northwestern University Paris Program in Critical Theory.

**MONIKA KOCOT***Department of British Literature and Culture*  
University of Łódź  
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and the Ethics of Civil Disobedience in Gary Snyder's Writing**

The article attempts to shed light upon the evolution of Gary Snyder's "mountains-and-rivers" philosophy of living/writing (from the Buddhist anarchism of the 1960s to his peace-promoting practice of the Wild), and focuses on the link between the ethics of civil disobedience, deep ecology, and deep "mind-ecology." Jason M. Wirth's seminal study titled

*Mountains, Rivers, and the Great Earth: Reading Gary Snyder and Dōgen in an Age of Ecological Crisis* provides an interesting point of reference. The author places emphasis on Snyder's philosophical fascination with Taoism as well as Ch'an and Zen Buddhism, and tries to show how these philosophical traditions inform his theory and practice of the Wild.

**Keywords:** Gary Snyder, the Wild, interconnectedness, interbeing, rivers, mountains, Zen, Ch'an, Tao

Monika Kocot, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of British Literature and Culture at the University of Łódź, Poland. Her main academic interests include contemporary British poetry, Native American prose and poetry, literary theory, and literary translation. She is the author of *Playing Games of Sense in Edwin Morgan's Writing* (Peter Lang, 2016) and co-editor of *Języki (pop)kultury w literaturze, mediach i filmie* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2015), *Nie tylko Ishiguro. Szkice o literaturze anglojęzycznej w Polsce* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2019), and *Moving between Modes. Papers in Intersemiotic Translation. In Memoriam Professor Alina Kwiatkowska* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego 2020). She is a member of the Association for Cultural Studies, The Association for Scottish Literary Studies, and the French Society of Scottish Studies (SFEE). She is the President of The K.K. Baczynski Literary Society.

**MONIKA KOŁTUN**

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**The Tragedy of a Whistleblower  
Adamczewski's *Tragic Protest* and the Case of Chelsea Manning**

Bringing most carefully guarded secrets into light, political whistleblowers deconstruct the essential oppositions upon which superpower ideologies are founded: they draw popular attention to what has been relegated to the margins of the dominant discourses. Torpedoing the reputations of the most powerful organizations in the world, and well aware of the inevitability of retaliation, they put themselves in a most precarious position. Fighting against impossible odds in the name of the greater good, facing the gravity of the consequences, they become heroes in the *classical* sense of the word: arguably, their dilemmas are not unlike those faced by Antigone, Hamlet and other iconic figures in history, literature and mythology. Such is the central premise of this article. The methodological frame for the analysis of the material in this study has been adopted from Zygmunt Adamczewski's *The Tragic Protest*, whose theory, bringing together classical and modern approaches to tragedy, allows for the extrapolation of the principles underlying the protest of such iconic figures as Prometheus, Orestes, Faust, Hamlet, Thomas Stockman or Willy Loman to discourses outside the grand narratives of culture. His theory of the tragic protest serves as a tool facilitating the identification of the features of a quintessential tragic

protester, which Adamczewski attains by means of the study of the defining traits of mythological and literary tragic heroes. It is against such a backdrop that I adapt and apply Adamczewski's model to the study of materials related to Chelsea Manning in search of parallels that locate her own form of protest in the universal space of tragedy.

**Keywords:** whistleblower, tragic protest, archetype, Chelsea Manning

Monika Kołtun, a PhD Candidate at the University of Silesia in Katowice, holds an MA degree in American and Canadian Studies for Intercultural Relations and Diplomacy. As a graduate, she spent a year studying at the University of the Fraser Valley in Canada. Monika Kołtun authored an article titled "Signed: Gombrowicz. 'Pupa,' the Western Canon, and the English Translation of *Ferdydurke*" in a high-ranking journal of translation studies *Między Oryginałem a Przekładem*. Her research interests embrace a variety of problems within the areas of cultural and literary studies, anthropology, politics, and ethics.

**GIORGIO MARIANI**

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**Emerson's Superhero**

After offering some preliminary remarks on the notion of what makes a "captive mind," the article shifts its attention to one of the most significant and yet relatively neglected early essays by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the essay "War." This text, I argue, deserves not only to be considered the (largely forgotten) founding document of the American anti-war movement, but it remains important even today, as it sheds light on the inevitable contradictions and double-binds any serious movement against war and for social justice must face. It is a text, in other words, which helps us highlight some of the problems we run into—both conceptually and practically—when we try to free our minds from a given mindset, but we must still rely on a world that is pretty much the outcome of the ideologies, customs, and traditions we wish to transcend. To imagine a world free of violence and war is the age-old problem of how to change the world and make it "new" when the practical and intellectual instruments we have are all steeped in the old world we want to abolish. Emerson's thinking provides a basis to unpack the aporias of what, historically speaking, the antiwar movement has been, both inside and outside the U.S. The article concludes by examining some recent collections of U.S. pacifist and anti-war writings, as providing useful examples of the challenges antiwar, and more generally protest movements, must face.

**Keywords:** Ralph Waldo Emerson, anti-war movement, protest movements

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as President of the International American Studies Association (IASA), from 2011 to 2015. His work has concentrated on nineteenth-century American writers (Emerson, Melville, Stephen Crane, and others); on contemporary American Indian literature; on literary theory; on the literary and cinematic representation of war. He has published, edited, and co-edited several volumes, listed below. His essays and reviews have appeared in many journals, including *American Literary History*, *Studies in American Fiction*, *Fictions*, *RIAS*, *RSA Journal*, *Stephen Crane Studies*, *Nuovo Corrente*, *Zapruder*, *Leviathan*, *Letterature d'America*, *AION*, *Acoma*, *Studi Americani*. With Donatella Izzo he edits the American Studies series of the Sapienza UP, and with Donatella Izzo and Mauro Pala he edits the series "Le Balene" published by La Scuola di Pitagora. He is co-editor-in-chief (with Donatella Izzo and Stefano Rosso) of *Acoma. Rivista internazionale di studi nord-americani*. His books published in English include: *Waging War on War. Peacefighting in American Literature* (2015), *Post-tribal Epics: The Native American Novel between Tradition and Modernity* (1996), *Spectacular Narratives: Representations of Class and War in Stephen Crane and the American 1890s* (1992).

**JOHN MATTESON**

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**Mailer, Doctorow, Roth**  
**A Cross-Generational Reading of the American Berserk**

Of all American paradoxes, none is greater than this: that the typical American cherishes free speech but is almost mortally offended by public protest, which he regards as at best lacking in taste and at worst an outright crime. A nation founded on dissent, America is exquisitely uncomfortable with ill-mannered disagreement. More than freedom itself, an American is likely to value moral insularity and absolutism: he wants to live his life free from ethical challenge. He seeks suburban anesthesia, a life of commercial abundance untroubled by the pain inflicted elsewhere to maintain it, whether through military aggression or the global exploitation of labor. The American hopes to be reminded that he is good and blameless—and quickly condemns his critics as envious or mad or driven by dark agendas. As by an unwritten law, he denounces protest as an offense against his *amour propre*. This condemnation, *ipso facto*, makes a figurative criminal of the protester, who, when her efforts are scorned, finds herself not trying to persuade, but acting in a spirit of resentment and self-vindication. She sees any act by her countryman that does not challenge the social system as intolerable evidence of complicity and collaboration. The spirit of compromise vanishes, and the protester risks falling into the attitude described by Philip Roth as "the American berserk." My article examines this process of polarization through three indispensable American

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novels of protest: Norman Mailer's *Armies of the Night*; E.L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel*; and Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*.

**Keywords:** protest, radicalism, liberalism, conscience, literature, Norman Mailer, E. L. Doctorow, Philip Roth

John T. Matteson is a recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Biography. He has an AB in history from Princeton University and a PhD in English from Columbia University. He also holds a JD from Harvard and has practiced as a litigation attorney in California and North Carolina. His work has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*; *The New York Times*; *The Harvard Theological Review*; *New England Quarterly*; *Nineteenth-Century Prose*; *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies*; and other publications. His first book, *Eden's Outcasts: The Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Father*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2008. His more recent book *The Lives of Margaret Fuller* has been awarded the Ann M. Sperber Prize for Best Biography of a Journalist. Professor Matteson's annotated edition of Alcott's *Little Women*, published by W. W. Norton in 2015, reached #1 on Amazon's list of best-selling works of children's literary criticism. Professor Matteson is a Fellow of the Massachusetts Historical Society and a former Fellow of the Leon Levy Center for Biography, where he formerly served as deputy director. He has received the Distinguished Faculty Award of the John Jay College Alumni Association and the Dean's Award for Distinguished Achievement by a PhD Alumnus of the Columbia University School of Arts and Sciences. His new book, *A Worse Place Than Hell: How the Civil War Battle of Fredericksburg Changed a Nation*, is currently in print.

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#### **FEDERICA PERAZZINI**

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#### **Paradigms of Otherness The American Savage in British Eighteenth-Century Popular and Scholarly Literature**

In this article, I trace the changes in the literary and material representations of the indigenous peoples of North America within the British sphere of cultural production. As a first example, I give an account of the episode of the "Four Iroquois Kings" envoy at Queen Ann's court in 1710, focusing on the resonance of such a historical encounter in popular texts and iconographic material. As a second example, I analyze the popular story of Inkle and Yarico included in Richard Steele's *The Spectator* in 1711, showing its impact on the early Enlightenment reflections on colonial trade. In my conclusion, I examine the role of American natives in the scholarly works of the Scottish Enlightenment, in order to show how they were used as comparable types for the observation of the roots of European civilizations thus justifying the construction

of the British imperial hegemony both geopolitical terms and discursive practice.

**Keywords:** American savages, public sphere, popular literature, Scottish Enlightenment, British Empire

Federica Perazzini is Researcher in English Literature at the “Sapienza” University of Rome where she currently teaches English Literature and Culture. Awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in 2011, she was visiting researcher at Stanford University where she joined Franco Moretti’s research group at the Literary Lab. Her main research interests involve the application of computational tools to the study of literary genres and cultural discourse analysis. Her pioneering dissertation, published in two volumes in 2013, is an example of computational criticism applied to the case study of the English gothic novel. Her latest research projects include the computational analysis of the emergence of modern subjectivity in the Long 18th Century (*La Cifra del Moderno*, 2019) and the publication of a study on the intersections between fashion and English literature titled *Fashion Keywords* (2017).

**MAŁGORZATA POKS**

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**“Where Butchers Sing Like Angels”  
Of Captive Bodies and Colonized Minds  
(With a Little Help from Louise Erdrich)**

*The Master Butchers Signing Club*—Louise Erdrich’s “countehistory” (Natalie Eppelsheimer) of the declared and undeclared wars of Western patriarchy—depicts a world where butchering, when done with precision and expertise, approximates art. Fidelis Waldvogel, whose name means literally Faithful Forestbird, is a sensitive German boy turned the first-rate sniper in the First World War and master butcher in his adult life in America. When Fidelis revisits his homeland after the slaughter of World War II, Delphine, his second wife, has a vision of smoke and ashes bursting out of the mouths of the master butchers singing onstage in a masterful harmony of voices. Why it is only Delphine, an outsider in the Western world, that can see the crematorium-like reality overimposed on the bucolic scenery of a small German town? Drawing on decolonial and Critical Animal Studies, this article tries to demystify some of the norms and normativities we live by.

**Keywords:** Louise Erdrich, decoloniality, species war, normative humanity

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border writing, Critical Animal Studies, Christian anarchism, Thomas Merton's late poetry. She has published widely in Poland and abroad. Her monograph *Thomas Merton and Latin America: a Consonance of Voices* (2006) received the International Thomas Merton Award and in her article "Home on the Border: in Ana Castillo's *The Guardians: The Colonial Matrix of Power, Epistemic Disobedience, and Decolonial Love*" was awarded the 2019 Javier Coy Biennial Research Award. Poks is also a recipient of several international research fellowships.

**JOHN ERIC STARNES**

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**Black Flag under a Grey Sky  
Forms of Protest in Current Neo-Confederate Prose and Song**

While 'tragic' protest and protest songs are normally conceived of as originating on the political left of American culture, in recent years protest from the political right, specifically the racist right has flown under the cultural radar of most researchers of American studies. This article strives to explore the ways in which the neo-Confederate movement is currently protesting the state of cultural, political, and social affairs in the contemporary American South. The neo-Confederate movement is one of the oldest forms of 'conservative' protest present in the United States, originating out of the defeat of the Confederacy and the civic religion of the 'Lost Cause' of the last decades of the 1800s into the first three decades of the 1900s. Since the neo-Confederate movement is both revolutionary and conservative, it is possible to derive some valuable insights into the contemporary reactionary politics of the right by examining a brief sampling of the protest songs, novels, and essays of this particular subculture.

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**Keywords:** neo-Confederate, radical fiction, racist revolutionary subculture, U.S. cultural history

J. Eric Starnes is a native of North Carolina with a BS and an MA in history, as well as a PhD in American Literature. His main fields of research revolve around the study of nationalism, revolutionary fiction (fiction that advocates revolution), revolutionary subcultures, psychology—particularly the study of historical trauma, Jungian social psychology, and the Men's Rights Movement. Starnes is the author (among others) of: "The Riddle of Thule: In Search of the Crypto-History of a Racially Pure White Utopia" (2015) and "The Ties of Revolution, The Knots of Race: An Examination of Two 'Revolutionary' American Pacific Northwest Novels" (2018).

