

“Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.”

**Walt Whitman**  
from *Song of Myself*

## “STARTING FROM PAUMANOK”: WHITMAN, LONG ISLAND, THE WORLD

**FRIDAY  
MAY 3 2019**

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SYMPOSIUM AT  
THE POETRY CENTER  
HUMANITIES BLDG  
RM 2001

**2:00 PM TO 4:45 PM**

LECTURE AND  
PERFORMANCE  
RECITAL HALL I  
STALLER CENTER  
FOR THE ARTS

**5:00 TO 6:30 PM**

WITH COMPOSER  
MATT AUCOIN &  
BARITONE ROD GILFRY

RECEPTION TO FOLLOW

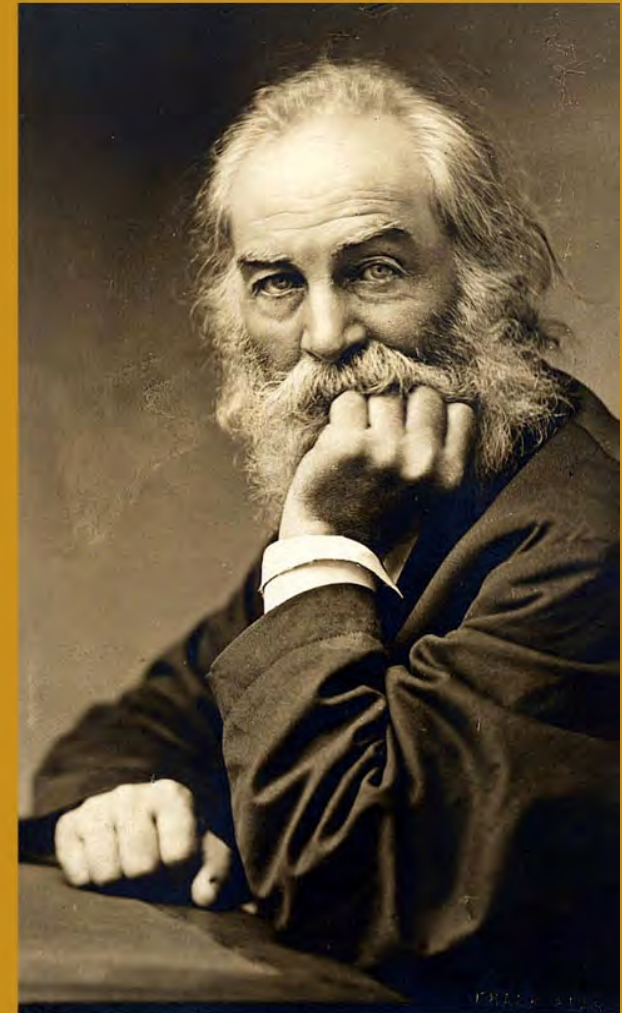




Image: 1873 map of Long Island. NY Beers, Comstock & Cline.

**“Starting from Paumanok”: Whitman, Long Island, The World**, is a half-day symposium that explores Walt Whitman’s impact on literature, music, and the visual arts. On this 200th anniversary of the birth of Walt Whitman on Long Island, we seek to focus on Whitman not only because of his broad impact in the United States and beyond, but also because he is a native of Long Island - the place where the landscapes and people shaped his life and early voice.

This event is sponsored and supported by a FAHSS grant award, the Run Run Shaw Fund, the Graduate Student Organization, the University Libraries, Humanities Institute, the Department of English, the Department of Music, and the Office of the Provost. Free and open to the public.

### EVENT SCHEDULE

#### Session I 2:00 to 3:30pm **Whitman’s New York**

**2:00pm-2:30pm:** View rare books from Special Collections, SBU Libraries  
**Welcome** by **Celia Marshik**, Chair of English, Stony Brook University  
**Introduction** by **Susan Scheckel**, SBU English Department, **Kristen J. Nyitray**, SBU Libraries & **Andrew Rimby**, SBU English Department

#### **2:30pm to 3:00pm: “Whitman’s Arcadia: Long Island through the Eyes of a Poet and Painters”**

**Joshua Ruff**, Long Island Museum

In this talk, Ruff will discuss how Walt Whitman was profoundly engaged with and influenced by nineteenth-century American visual culture. He will also examine how his writings were concerned with some of the same subjects—nature’s power and the lives of working people—that characterized the subject matter of prominent artists working on Long Island during his lifetime.

#### **3:00pm to 3:30pm: “A Sense of Place: Evoking Whitman’s Long Island”** **Andrew Rimby & Meghan Buckley**, Stony Brook University

Scholars present their research for the current Long Island Museum exhibition on Whitman and the accompanying walking tour.

#### **3:30pm to 3:45pm Break**


**A Sense of Place: Evoking  
Whitman’s Long Island**

**A Walking Tour**

*May 26, 2019, 11-3*  
*July 11, 2019, 6-8*

*Tour begins at Long Island  
Museum Art Gallery*

To RSVP  
or arrange another date,  
contact [andrew.rimby@stonybrook.edu](mailto:andrew.rimby@stonybrook.edu)



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## "Starting from Paumanok" Organizing Committee

Kristen J. Nyitray, Associate Librarian; Director, Special Collections & University Archives; University Archivist

Andrew Rimby, PhD Candidate in English, Stony Brook University

Susan Scheckel, Associate Professor of English, Stony Brook University

We wish to thank the following people for their support and assistance in making this event a reality: Brenda Harris, Adrienne Unger, Michael Hershkowitz, Matthew Barnson, Celia Marshik and the Poetry Center at Stony Brook, Lynn Toscano, Chris Sauerwald, Dillon Meacham, Christopher Couluris, Perry Goldstein, Daniel Weymouth, Valentina Pogudina, and Jennifer Shemet.



Photo: A street in Huntington, NY in the 1800s. George Bradford Brainerd, Brooklyn Museum

## Session II

**3:45pm to 4:15pm: "Walt Whitman, Rural New Yorker"**

Karen Karbiener, New York University

A boy from rural Long Island moves to Brooklyn and, without money or mentorship, conceives, writes, and self-publishes America's declaration of cultural independence. How did Walter Whitman - grammar school dropout and second son of a farmer-turned-carpenter - become Walt Whitman? This lecture will focus on the most obscure yet most seminal period of Whitman's life: his childhood and youth on his beloved "Paumanok," where he claims to have been born as a poet.

## Session III Whitman and the Civil War

**4:15pm to 4:45pm: "Whitman the Wound Dresser"**

Susan Scheckel, Stony Brook University

Whitman often referred to the years he spent nursing wounded soldiers during and after the Civil War as a transformative period that changed forever his poetry, his sense of himself as a poet, and his understanding of American character. This talk explores what drew Whitman to the hospitals, what compelled him to stay, and why this experience had such a profound impact upon him.

## "Civil War and Whitman's Homoeroticism"

Andrew Rimby, Stony Brook University

In the poem "In Paths Untrodden," Whitman explores the speaker's need to disclose a secret - the need for manly love - which has been eating at the speaker's soul. This talk will center on how Whitman's expression of homoerotic longing in his writing (both romantic and physical) goes through different stages based on his male relationships.

**4:45pm to 5:00pm Break - Travel to Staller Center for the Arts**

**Session IV: 5:00pm to 6:30pm**

**Recital Hall I, Staller Center for the Arts**

**Welcome by Nicole Sampson**, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

**Introduction by Andrew Rimby**, Stony Brook University.

## "Walt Whitman and the Ethics of Optimism"

Matt Aucoin, composer

**Performance** of selections from *Crossing*

**Rod Gilfry**, baritone

## PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES



**Meghan Buckley** is a PhD candidate in English and American literature at Stony Brook University. Her research interests include 20th and 21st century American and Anglophone literature with a focus on postcolonial studies, critical race theory, trauma theory and war literature. She is currently at work on her dissertation, which examines the function of landscape in contemporary literature of the Iraq War.



**Karen Karbiener** is a Whitman scholar and teaches at New York University. Winner of the Kluge Fellowship at the Library of Congress and a Fulbright recipient, she has published widely on Whitman, including an edition of *Leaves of Grass*, two audiobooks on Whitman's life and influence, a children's book, and she has collaborated with illustrator Brian Selznick on *Live Oak, with Moss*, a new edition of Whitman's secret same-sex love poems. She is the co-curator with collector Susan Tane of "Poet of the Body: New York's Walt Whitman," a major exhibition at the Grolier Club that will open on May 15, and the author of a forthcoming book of the same title. Karbiener is the president and founding member of the Walt Whitman Initiative, a 501c3 nonprofit organization serving as an organizing center for cultural activism and poetry-related events.



**Kristen J. Nyitray** is Associate Librarian and Director of Special Collections and University Archives, and University Archivist at Stony Brook University. Among her publications are the books *Long Island Beaches* (2019) and *Stony Brook: State University of New York* (2002) and articles published in *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* and *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*. She has provided commentary on Long Island history in several film and television projects. A member of the Academy of Certified Archivists, she is recipient of the State University of New York Chancellor's Award and the President's Award (Stony Brook University) for Excellence in Librarianship. Under her directorship, Special Collections was honored by the New York Board of Regents by receiving the prestigious New York State Archives' "Annual Archives Award for Program Excellence in a Historical Records Repository."



**Andrew Rimby** is a Ph.D. Candidate in the English Department at Stony Brook University. He researches 19th-century American and Victorian literature from a queer trans-Atlantic perspective. His dissertation examines the resurgence of the myth of Narcissus in mid to late 19th-century American and Victorian texts that rely on the myth to establish homoerotic male desire. He is part of the Whitman Bicentennial Consortium organized by Karen Karbiener and he is currently on the organizing committee for International Whitman Week (IWW) which will be at NYU, in May. In 2017, he was an IWW seminar participant in Creteil, France. Andrew is also a queer activist who has advocated for equal access for LGBTQ\* students at Stony Brook.



**Joshua Ruff** is Chief Curator and Director of Collections & Interpretation at The Long Island Museum of American Art, History & Carriages in Stony Brook, New York. He earned his M.A. in History from Stony Brook University in 1996 and was awarded a Winterthur Research Fellowship in 2000. He is a Senior Lecturer at St. Joseph's College, where he teaches a wide range of courses in American History, including Public History and Long Island History.



**Susan Scheckel** is Associate Professor of English at Stony Brook University, where she specializes in nineteenth-century American literature and culture. She is currently completing a book (including a chapter on Whitman's Civil War writings) titled, *American Genealogies of Nostalgia*, which traces the changing meanings of nostalgia in the United States, from its entry into the medical lexicon during the Revolution, through its accumulation of distinctive associations with race and gender, to its reappearance during the Civil War as a deadly disease of soldiers, and finally to its transformation after the war from a physiological condition to an affective state. Scheckel has also been active in advancing experiential learning at SBU, as Associate Provost for the Integration of Research, Education and Professional Development (2016-17) and as co-chair of the Experiential Learning Committee at SBU.



Image: 1873 Central Railroad map of Long Island. G.W. & C.B Colton, Library of Congress.