Note from the editors

We would like to welcome you to the twenty-sixth issue of 49th Parallel, which we hope will provide some early Autumn reading before the new academic year begins in earnest. We would like to thank all our contributors for such a fascinating range of articles and reviews, and, as always, our readers for their continued support and interest in the journal.

Our four featured articles engage with a range of modern and contemporary North American literary texts to explore critical questions of race, sexuality, nationhood, historiography and subjectivity. Graeme Abernethy considers the representation of a nameless African American fisherman in F. Scott Fitzgerald's unfinished novel The Love of the Last Tycoon (1941), in order to interrogate Fitzgerald's symbolic use of race against the backdrop of 1930s Los Angeles and notions of American exceptionalism. Christopher Vardy continues the focus on Los Angeles with his close reading of James Robert Baker's 1993 novel Tim and Pete. Locating the text socially, culturally and politically, Vardy argues that Baker "uses palimpsestic urban spaces to radically conceptualise contemporary American history" in the wake of the AIDS crisis.

Moving north of the border, Nadine Flagel considers Lawrence Hill's exploration of Black Canadian identity in his family saga Any Known Blood (1997). In particular, Nadine examines Hill's play with genre, focusing on the slave narrative nested within the novel as emblematic of his wish to transgress and reconceptualise traditional boundaries of personhood. Finally, Natalie Wall explores the trope of passing in Hill's work, alongside fellow authors Shani Mootoo and Danzy Senna. For Wall, these writers challenge definitions of passing as a purely racial concept, suggesting instead that the intersectional nature of passing - incorporating discourses of class, gender and sexuality - reveals its centrality to all social acts.

This issue also features three papers discussing contemporary American domestic and foreign affairs. Maria Ryan considers Obama's economic, health and foreign policy while
in office to argue that his governing ideology is inherently one of conservatism. Scott Lucas draws on his recent work with EA Worldview (previously Enduring America) to argue that the confluence of recent world events with new media has increasingly decentered America as the focal point for understanding contemporary geopolitics. Bevan Sewell, responding to both Ryan and Lucas, argues that both offer strong, but broadly uncontroversial, opinions. Sewell suggests that the realpolitik of re-election has driven some of Obama's choices in office, highlighting how the debate has become increasingly about his effectiveness as a political leader. Turning to Lucas, Sewell raises the problem of disciplinary blinkers in assuming America was previously the centre of international events. He also questions whether new media has significantly changed the mechanics of protest and revolution, rather than simply facilitating better means of communicating beyond national boundaries: of getting a message to the very America that Lucas suggests has been decentered.

We welcome reader feedback to the issues and ideas raised in the above articles and discussion. We are keen for 49th Parallel to be an active site of academic debate and in due course we will be working with EA Worldview to provide a platform for greater discussion. In the meantime, please email any correspondence to us at: 49thParallel@bham.ac.uk or contact us via twitter @49th__Parallel.

This is sadly the last issue that three of us - Hannah, John and Ceren - will be involved with as editors. We have all had a fantastic time working on 49th Parallel and wish Ben great luck in continuing to develop and grow the journal as general editor. We would also like to warmly welcome the expanded team of new editors - Bart, Dan, Katie, Mădălina, and Rebecca - and wish them every success in their new roles.

Thanks for reading - we hope you enjoy the issue!
Hannah Durkin, John Horne, Ben Offiler, Ceren Sengezer