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(Re)Presenting the 'Black' Diaspora: Identity, Space and Historical Re-enactment

This panel is concerned with the (re)presentation of the Black Diaspora, from what Paul Gilroy has popularized as “the Black Atlantic,” to the Underground Railroad and related trajectories as memory work that supplements, challenges and/or exceeds official History. For example, while Chatham Township in Southern Ontario was an economic, political and intellectual centre for Black Canadians in the 19th century, the vibrant history of that area and more specifically the role of thousands of individuals, who fought for abolition by raising funds, training newcomers and by delivering national and even international lectures, is only partially and marginally recorded in Canada's national history, with key figures chosen to represent that particular era (e.g. Josiah Henson whose life inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*). Local history projects such as Uncle Tom's Cabin Historical Site perform a bifurcated function, both relying on and playing up such readily recognized figures and moments and yet utilizing them to tell a more nuanced, black-centred and detailed history of early Black settlement in Southern Ontario. Remembering the past or re-enacting it through film, paintings, fiction, dance and music has been a way for communities to re-visit and retell important historical events. In 1840, British painter J. M. W. Turner exhibited **The Slave Ship**, his representation of the mass-killing of Africans aboard the *Zong*, a British slave ship (1781). With his poem **Bill of Rights** (1998), the novelist Fred d'Aguiar chose to remember the 1979 Jonestown Massacre in Guyana. This panel specifically seeks to explore the ways in which the history of the Black Diaspora is and can be re-enacted and re-presented that buttress, trouble and/or provide alternatives to official history. Preference will be given to papers that examine the educational and performative aspect of such re-enactments and the ways in which they trouble the taken-for-grantedness of hegemonic national and regional history, historiography, space and place making and identity politics.