

Weisenburg's dissertation, "The Afterlife of Loyalism: Liberty and Empire in the Long Nineteenth Century," traces the literary history of the British American Loyalists as it spreads through the Atlantic and across the North American continent during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in order to reassess our understanding of the origins of cultural nationalism and the early literary history of the United States and Canada. As a result, it implicitly argues for a reconsideration of American literature as developing in a simultaneously hemispheric and transatlantic response to British empire. By following both the trajectories of the historical loyalists as well as the U.S. and Canadian cultural appropriations of the loyalists' histories, my dissertation argues that a loyalist past, as a register of difference, becomes necessary for a variety of emergent national identities in America. While savaged in their own time, by the mid nineteenth-century the loyalists symbolize a much more variegated population often taken up to address the ambiguous nature of questions of belonging and origin within a national imaginary.

Weisenburg's project explores what it meant to identify with loyalty in the Americas during the age of revolutions as well as how later writers reify the category of loyalty into a modular cultural and literary trope. He argues that this reification of loyalty allows for the appropriation of the loyalists for a variety of rhetorical and political ends. While other scholars of history and literature have focused primarily on the loyalists within the context of American Revolutionary fervor, this study proposes to account for the place of the loyalists within a *longue durée* of literary history. The continued presence of and concern over the loyalists' role in the American Revolution registers a subtle yet consistent counter history to the development of American letters broadly conceived. The primary objective of his dissertation is to produce a thorough study of loyalist cultural and literary practices in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as setting a precedent for an aesthetics of irrecoverable loss coupled with a healing of remembrance. Doing so will better show how the adaptation of British American literary practices influences the growth and maturation of Anglophonic culture during the divisive age of revolutions. His project asks in what ways the loyalists influenced the early national United States' conception of itself; how they change or challenge the management of the British Empire in the wake of revolutionary losses; and in what ways they affect the cultural development of the Canadian territories. His dissertation also theorizes the cultural significance of the concept of "loyalty" as it relates to literary practice during successive periods of violent and wide spread political upheaval, and in doing so reconsiders what it means to be "loyal" not only during the Revolution, but also during the War of 1812, during the filibuster schemes and revolts in Upper Canada in the late 1830s, and throughout the Anglophonic Atlantic.