

HISTORY WORKSHOP

The Department of History

Tuesdays ~ 12:30-1:30 pm ~ ZOOM

Circuits of Dissent

Dr. Edward Larkin

University of Delaware

November 10, 2020

12:30-1:30 pm

[Zoom ID: 946 2190 5729](#)

P/W: UDHistory



One of the central questions taken up by Lydia Maria Child's historical novel *Hobomok* is the possibility of coexisting with people from whom we differ, whether politically, culturally, racially, or theologically. The novel portrays the difficulty of maintaining constructive relationships and even simple dialogue across significant differences of opinion. The novel repeatedly thinks about this problem in spatial terms: the distances between England and New England, Plymouth and Salem, and between different Native American communities become crucial buffer zones for the mediation of dissent. My project uses mapping and visualization techniques to study the characters' movements across these zones to show how instead of imagining a community of dissent, in which different ideas and races might live in harmony, the novel proposes a spatial distribution whereby distance between communities of similar people becomes foundational to the creation of an effective state. Unable to imagine a functioning community of dissenters, Child's novel envisions a federal-imperial model in which the articulation across space creates the possibility for the negotiation of difference.

Edward Larkin is Professor of English and Material Culture Studies at the University of Delaware and teaches courses in American literature and culture from the seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth century.