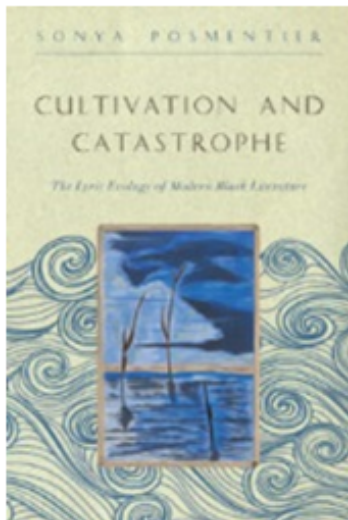


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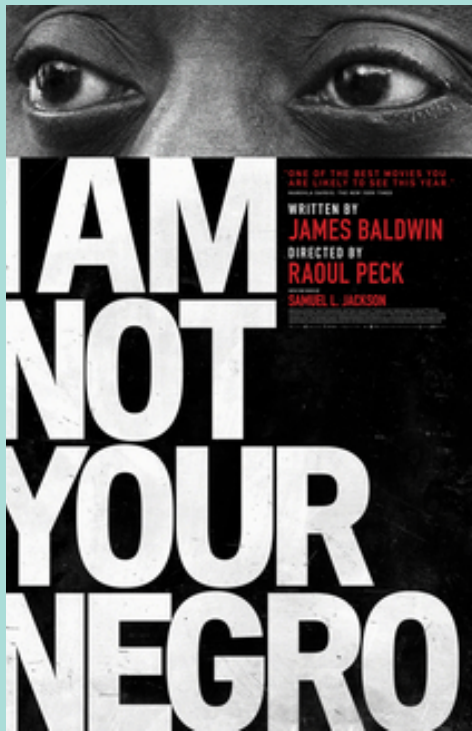
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English Department Screens Raoul Peck's "I Am Not Your Negro"

by Gina Elbert

In 2017 James Baldwin is something of a hero reborn. Vastly popular when he was alive in the 1950s, '60s, '70s, and '80s, his work was fading from view until it started to experience a resurgence this year. Considering recent social and political tensions, this might come as no surprise. His legacy, however, extends far beyond his participation in the civil rights movement and his moving novels. He has also touched thousands of readers and writers with his unique style, incredible life story, and extensive catalog of works.

In order to honor this legacy, on Tuesday, October 25, the English Department hosted a screening of the 2016 Oscar-nominated documentary *I Am Not Your Negro*. The screening, attended by three or four dozen students, was introduced by Baldwin's niece Aisha Karefe-Smart, a public speaker, activist, cultural critic, and author of works such as *Dining While Black*. Noting how Baldwin himself was unable to attend college, Karefe-Smart emphasized the wealth of opportunities that are available to members of her and expressed admiration for their hard work. She expressed her wishes that every single student could, as many others have in the past, find something in Baldwin's life or body of work that would strengthen and inspire them.

Her address was followed by a 93-minute showing of *I Am Not Your Negro*, which was based on a thirty-page manuscript that Baldwin was working on at the time of his death. It follows his involvement in the civil rights movement, specifically with his friends Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Medgar Evers, all of whom were assassinated before the age of 40. Samuel Jackson narrates letters written by Baldwin that supplement the manuscript, which director Raoul Peck pairs with clips from Baldwin's television interviews, movies that illustrated his points about popular depiction of black characters, and other images. The film juxtaposed footage of the 1950's and 1960's civil rights movement with recent news videos about the Black Lives Matter movement and the riots in Ferguson, Missouri, prompting the audience to consider the relevance of Baldwin's words in a new era.

Like all English department events, this event provided a welcoming atmosphere and food for thought for the many students who attended. The audience left with increased appreciation of and interest in the work of James Baldwin, a man whose words have proved to be timeless.

“Every single student could...find something in Baldwin's life or body of work that would strengthen and inspire them.”

A Variety of Well-Paying Jobs for English Majors

by Beth Sattur



On October 3, 2016, George Anders from Forbes published a list of eleven different jobs for English majors that pay at least \$60,000 a year: communications directors (\$128,000), editorial directors (\$92,000), executive editors (\$91,000), content strategists (\$90,500), content marketing managers (\$82,100), editors-in-chief (\$74,900), content managers (\$72,200), senior writers (\$71,400), web producers (\$69,900), technical writers (\$69,700) and technical editors (\$69,500). So why do so many people still ask English majors: “Do you want to be a teacher?” In part, it is because of older generations’ mistaken fixation on the uselessness of the liberal arts degree. This ignores the versatility and expertise of liberal arts concentrators. As the Forbes list implies, the recent emergence of social media and related advertising has helped to create more jobs in “content creation,” and thus more opportunities for today’s English major.

The English major is also attractive to graduate and professional schools. If law school is in your future, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2011 that lawyers made \$130,490 a year on average, a number that includes first year graduates as well as more seasoned attorneys. If working in higher education is your goal, know that jobs are very hard to come by, even if full professors can make anywhere from \$88,000 (SUNY) to \$223,900 (Columbia) depending on school prestige and subject. One look at NYU’s PhD Alumni pages suggests that many were able to find postdoctoral teaching positions, despite the shrinking job market.

According to Ed Gandia’s 2012 Freelance Industry Report, the freelance sector also pays more than is expected. One-third of those who responded indicated that they received more than \$70 an hour, and another quarter said they made between \$50-\$70 an hour, so less than 50% of the respondents made less than \$50 an hour. Tutors, especially for the SAT, ACT, and GRE can earn up to \$100 an hour, freelance or otherwise. With the need for content creation growing, the value of content creators is on the rise, even ones who are not exclusively attached to one brand. And if this job market keeps changing, as it must, English majors will be the ones who are able to adapt.

NYU supports the professional development of its undergraduates with resources like the Wasserman Center. The Center is available for appointments with individual career coaches to help you identify a dream, no matter the major. There are hundreds of English majors at NYU, and finding a job should not be a concern for any of them. Whatever your particular interest is—editing, writing, authoring a book, becoming a lawyer, a professor, or—yes—a teacher—you will find support here, and a fulfilling career based on pursuing the major you love.



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NYU Welcomes Professor Lenora Hanson

by George Hajjar



Professor Lenora Hanson

Lenora Hanson has recently joined the NYU English Department as an assistant professor. This semester Professor Hanson is teaching “Literature of Riots” and pursuing her research, which is related to the intersection between science and literature.

As its title suggests, Professor Hanson’s class focuses on writings about riots. Using political science, economics, the science of the body, etc. (other disciplines considered to be under the heading of “moral philosophy”), the class works to understand riots as a concept. There is a specific aesthetic of riots that persists, and is quite thought provoking: accounts of riots are fraught with flames and apocalyptic sentiment. Some questions that are considered are: why are riots associated with violence? What does violence mean? What does the specific nomenclature surrounding a mass of people do to the whole? To the individual?

Professor Hanson is interested in the 18th century philosophy of “associationism”—how humans form ideas through association. Part of her research questions how the individual that is posited by associationism leads to the instability of riots and crowds. Moreover, she has noticed that crowds in power lead to a “violence” against the hierarchy, or to property, and not to the individual. The concept of the “crowd” exposes a division between the individual and the collective. In Professor Hanson’s words, riots become the “anathema to polite civil society,” destroying property and combatting authority.

This interest in combining politics and protest with literature, for Professor Hanson, comes from the fact that “literature and science inform each other.” Ideas of life, the individual, and the collective can’t be separated from politics and science. Rioters, often, are described with machine-like imagery. Similarly, slaves are often pictured as something vegetal, belonging to the earth. These terms are organized around dehumanizing people, and are a direct result of the moral philosophy of the era.

Professor Hanson says that she has been adjusting to her new life at NYU and going on runs to explore the city beyond. As someone who loves movies, she encourages anyone who is interested in talking about film or who just wants to say hello to come to her office hours. Welcome Professor Lenora Hanson, we are happy to have you on our faculty!

“Ideas of life, the individual, and the collective can't be separated from politics and science.”

In Memory of Professor Kenneth Silverman

by William Jordan Williamson

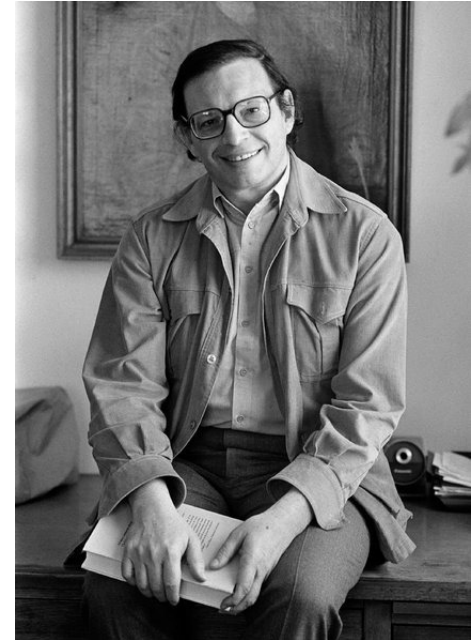
Current and former NYU English faculty, in addition to students, friends, and family, gathered at Fales Library on November 8th to celebrate the life and work of Dr. Kenneth Silverman, who passed away this summer at the age of 81. Dr. Silverman is survived by his daughter, Willa; his son, Ethan; his brother, Alexander; three grandchildren; and his partner, Jane Mallison.

Dr. Tom Augst, chair of the English Department, started the evening with a summation of Dr. Silverman's life and work. Born in New York City and educated at Stuyvesant High School and Columbia, before spending 37 years in the NYU English Department and retiring in 2001, Dr. Silverman was, Dr. Augst noted, a lifelong New Yorker. Though it must have been a challenge to sum up such a wide-ranging career, Dr. Augst admirably distilled his interests and achievements. Professionally, Dr. Silverman distinguished himself as a literary biographer, an area that requires a "breadth and detail" of research, Dr. Augst said, that we might find hard to appreciate today, in an era when mass information is constantly available to us.

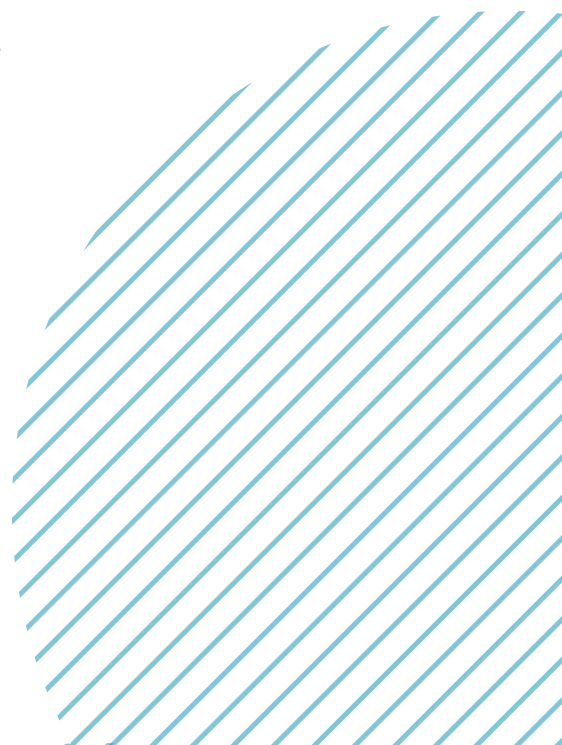
Dr. Silverman wrote authoritative biographies of several key American figures, including Edgar Allan Poe, Samuel Morse, and John Cage, in addition to *A Cultural History of the American Revolution*. His biography of Cotton Mather, though, published in 1984, stands out even among other impressive works: it won the Pulitzer Prize in Biography or Autobiography and the Bancroft Prize for works in American history. Dr. Silverman's career, defined by his interest in and gift for biography, Dr. Augst noted, "testifies to the literary craft of writing lives back into history." The life of Cotton Mather, for instance, Dr. Silverman illuminated—he might have formerly been regarded as what Dr. Silverman called a "gargoyle" of American bigotry, but with the attention of biography, he stands as perhaps the "first unmistakably American figure."

At NYU, Dr. Silverman shared his enthusiasm for the discipline of biography through his direction of the Biography Seminar, and his passion for American literature and history as the co-director of the American Civilizations program, along with his teaching in the English Department. Several of his colleagues from the Biography Seminar spoke after Dr. Augst, in addition to colleagues in American Studies and some in the English Department who shared a friendship with him, if not a field of study. The evening was certainly not as rigorous as, for instance, *The Life and times of Cotton Mather*, but it was, similarly, an evocation of a life and times. Dr. Silverman's work as a biographer was, he said, often "hard work against long odds." For scholarly work in literary biography, Dr. Silverman's assessment is no doubt true, but no one who spoke in remembrance of him seemed anything but glad to celebrate the life of someone who himself celebrated so many.

Dr. John Maynard organized the evening, with help from Marvin Taylor at Fales, offering colleagues the opportunity to reflect on Dr. Silverman's time at NYU. Nine friends and colleagues of his spoke, remembering both Dr. Silverman's scholarship and his friendship, and Ms. Mallison concluded the evening with a reading of a poem.



Professor Kenneth Silverman



Cultivation and Catastrophe: The Lyric Ecology of Modern Black Literature

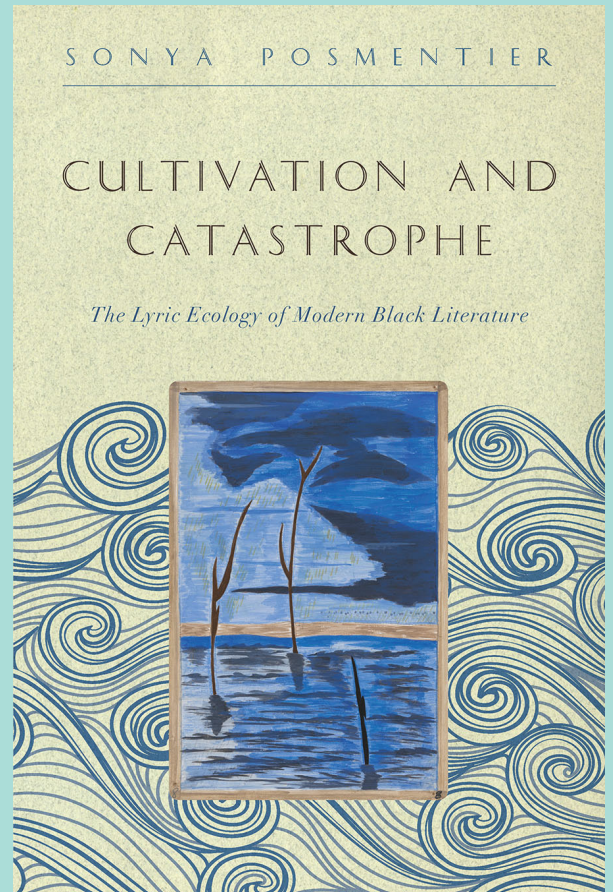
by Beth Sattur



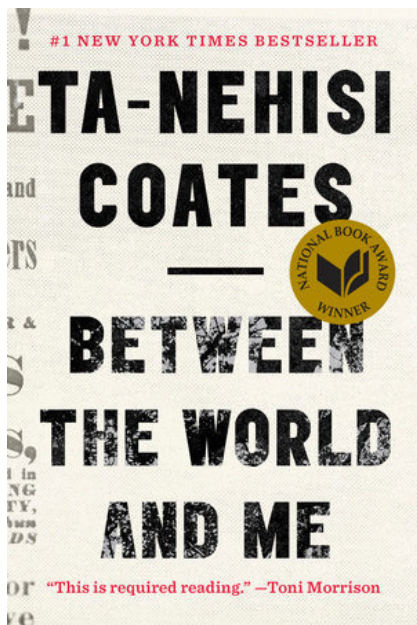
Professor Sonya Posmentier

The Johns Hopkins University Press published Professor Sonya Posmentier's book by this title in Spring 2017. Professor Posmentier realized that she wanted to write a book like this while she was still in school. "I was taking a class in graduate school on pastoral literature," she tells me as we discuss the intricacies of her new book. It wasn't a class on black literature at all, more of a transhistorical overview; "We were reading things from Virgil to the present." It was she who made the connection. Noting the ways that 20th century black literary experience had moved away from nature in its encounter of urban experience, she also noticed a persistent concern with agricultural labor and the experience of environmental disaster. Without displacing the importance of the city, she saw that 20th century black literature remained attentive nature in specific ways: "This is one important aspect of black historical and black literary experience in the 20th century that we haven't fully accounted for." Part of the uniqueness of her book is its focus on the significance of compulsory agricultural labor, both during slavery and the Reconstruction period when sharecropping was the only option for many recently freed slaves. (Sharecropping was a system where ex-slaves did the fieldwork for someone else who owned the field, in exchange for board and low wages, but the landowners would often insist that they incurred debt and tenants had to keep working to pay it off, effectively keeping the system of slavery alive.)

Cultivation and Catastrophe discusses not only the lost agricultural lifestyle but climate and nature as well. Disasters like Hurricane Katrina disproportionately affected the black community and were not handled well by the government, while the Flint water crisis is still ongoing. Climate change affects black and indigenous communities the most, Professor Posmentier notes. For a distinctive look into the relationship of blackness and nature, when and whether that relationship is tempestuous or not, look no further than this new book.



Prof. Posmentier is currently teaching a class entitled "Black Poetry and Social Movements," which revolves around the question of what poetry and activism have to do with each other. "I've never really believed that literary study or poetry replaces activism," she says, but study—reading and writing—is a crucial compliment. She is currently working to develop a related class for Spring 2018 that will be directed at the idea of "sanctuary." It started very much as a response to the current administration's attacks of immigration, but the course will ask students to think more expansively too, about climate and other pressing matters of concern.



TA-NEHISI COATES' *BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME*

Thesis Topic Process

By George Hajjar

Two Seniors, Porter Yelton and Devon Lawler, are taking part in a year-long course in which they sculpt a 40-60 page thesis. Both students are preparing graduate school applications and want to practice their craft with topics that are meaningful to them. What makes a good topic?

Porter has long been interested in English literature. This is partially because of his mother, who is an English teacher, and because of books he read in his youth. Most notably, in highschool he read *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath, which revealed to him the empathetic nature of storytelling. Soon, he became interested in what he calls “the new stuff”—contemporary works that students don’t really get exposed to pursuing a typical English degree.

He has decided to concentrate on post 9/11 writings and believes he can “say something potentially important” about the condition of being post 9/11.

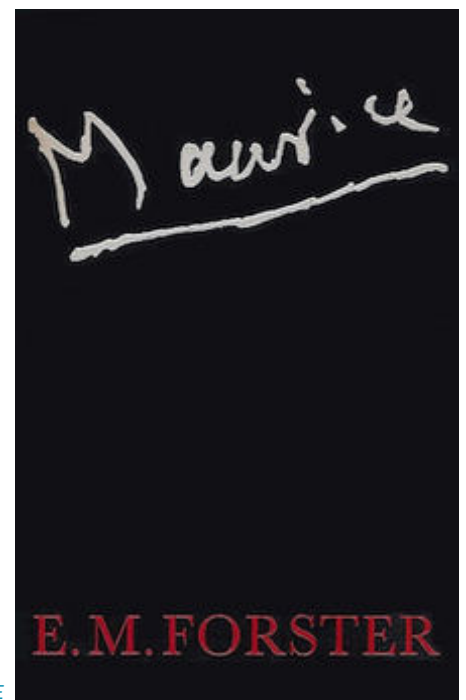
After he read Lorrie Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs*—a book classified as a “post 9/11 work” that never mentions 9/11—Porter questioned what it meant to live in a post 9/11 world. After he read Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* he began thinking about the “American dream.” Right now, Porter is concentrating on how this dream is effected by 9/11—whether it died with this tragedy, whether it only existed for “certain people,” whether it never existed at all.

Where Porter is focused on “unspeakable” events, Devon is concentrating on two authors that attempted to give a voice to a topic that had been silenced for centuries before them—homosexuality. Among the Decadents of the 1890s were those who sought “to revive a discourse... [left dormant] since the ancient Greeks.”

Devon has been fascinated by the works of E.M. Forster and Oscar Wilde, two Related imagehomosexual authors who were writing in a time when this identity was considered dangerous. He was exposed to their works in Senior Seminar, a class that is taken before the thesis writing process. He wants to give Forster the credit the author deserves: even though he isn't experimenting with form, like many of his contemporaries, there is a lot that can be learned from him.

Devon thinks he will focus on *The Picture of Dorian Grey* by Oscar Wilde, and *Maurice* by E.M. Forster, neither published during its author's lifetime. Using Oscar Wilde to background Forster's work, Devon wants to “create strands of clear literature into the past,” reviving the reputation of Forster, and showing that this topic remains unquestionably relevant today.

The writers of The Blotter wish Devon and Porter good luck in their writing pursuits.



E.M. FORSTER'S MAURICE

Calling South Africa: Skype as a Tool in the Classroom

by Gina Elbert



Professor Isabel Hofmeyr

Introduction to Postcolonial Studies: Post-Apartheid South African Literature is no ordinary English class. Led by Professor Isabel Hofmeyr, who is currently visiting NYU from the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, its syllabus includes canonical South African authors like J.M. Coetzee and Zakes Mda alongside younger, newer authors like Gabeba Baderoon and Lauren Beukes. That may not be extraordinary in itself, but continue reading: she also assigns videos of comedy routines, articles like Zanele Muholi's "My Year as a Dark Lioness – in pictures," and the Rhodes Must Fall movement-centered poem "The Black Imagination."

The class has also added academic interviews to the list of genres it explores. Throughout the semester, students have been given the opportunity to speak with South African authors via Skype link-ups every few weeks. On November 1st, students spoke to academic and feminist poet Gabeba Baderoon, author of collections like *The Silence Before Speaking*, closely followed by novelist, short story writer, and former student of Professor Hofmeyr, Niq Mhlongo, on November 8th and novelist Henrietta Rose-Innes on November 29th. Discussion topics range from multilingualism ("How does multilingualism affect poetry?") and issues in translation ("How do you translate the self?") to specific thematic or academic issues ("How do we upend Western academic influence colonizing scholarly development?") and the process of writing ("What is the difference between the author and the narrator?").

This level of communication is rarely seen between students and the authors they study in their class. People on both ends of the conversation benefit from it: authors are able to explain their ideas and raise awareness of the history behind their stories, while students gain insight into issues in South African politics and society. Ellen Cooper, a senior major in Comparative Literature, told me that she was even able to take advantage of the interviews as research for her honors thesis. She said, "I asked Gabeba Baderoon if she was inspired by the work of Caribbean authors (whom I'm writing about for my honors thesis), and we had a fruitful discussion about the similarities between Caribbean and South African culture that helped me think about my thesis in a new way."

Outside of the Contemporary Literature Series Lab, which itself is only offered once a year, it is rare to find such a high level of engagement between students and contemporary authors in the classroom. Most of the people in the class began the semester with little knowledge of South African literature, but after studying its many different aspects, that is no longer the case. Professor Hofmeyr's class stands on its own in providing students with opportunities to speak to multiple international authors using advanced technology.

Fall Jamboree: MA Theses in English

by William Jordan Williamson

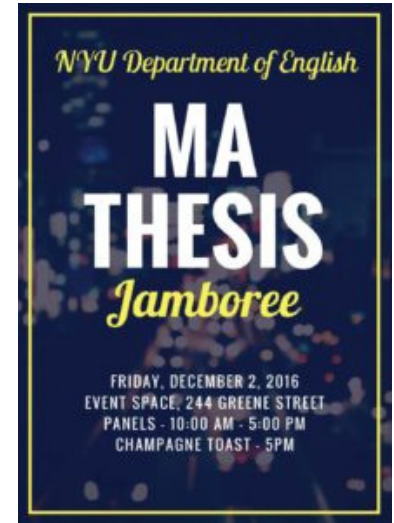
The English MA students who opted to write their theses in the fall presented their work at the MA Thesis Jamboree on Friday, December 1. Nine students gave talks of about ten minutes each, offering condensed versions of their theses, reflections on the process of researching, developing, and writing, and thoughts on future areas of inquiry that their work might suggest, as well as expressing appreciation for their advisors, for the help of their classmates, and for Dr. Elizabeth McHenry, who directed the thesis workshop this semester and, along with Lisette Florez, organized the Jamboree. Each student also fielded questions from the audience, which was generally composed of friendly interlocutors. All in all, the event was, according to Joe Hogan, one of the students to present, “exhilarating and cathartic,” highlighted by the “challenging, probing, helpful” questions from the audience.

The nine students were grouped into three panels, each, as one audience member said, at least as strong as something you might see at the MLA. The panels were organized roughly by chronology, with the first panel focused on medieval and Renaissance literature. Melanie Grieder presented her work on “Feminine Prophecy in Revolutionary England,” which focused on the use of prophetic speech to participate in religious and political arenas by Anna Trapnel and others in revolutionary England, and was directed by Dr. Ernest Gilman. Nora Rowland, who also worked with Dr. Gilman, was next. Her thesis, “A Rogue Press ‘if your horse be not too weak’: Martin Marprelate, Subversion, and the Subject of Omniscience,” explored a subversive press published under the name Martin Marprelate that became a character itself. EG Asher closed the panel with a study of a trope depicting Jewish people in medieval England, “Se Baleful Ant Se Bitter: Reading the Hermeneutical Jew in Medieval Virginité Literature,” directed by Dr. Martha Rust.

The second panel focused on modernism, and was characterized too by interdisciplinary approaches. Sophie Dess, who worked with Dr. Kelly Sullivan, spoke first. Her thesis, “Molly, Winnie, Mouth: Exploring a Systematic Reckoning with the Insufficiencies of Language through the Women of Beckett and Joyce” traced the use of and resistance against rhetorical tropes of femininity in modernist literature. Then Emily Isayev presented “Object or Agent? Victorian Femininity and Shakespeare’s Miranda,” on depictions of Miranda in the paintings of John William Waterhouse, directed by Dr. Greg Vargo. Joe Hogan then presented “‘An imaginary art that we are still waiting’: Ulysses before Film Theory,” an exploration of Joyce’s techniques as prefiguring developments in film, directed by Dr. John Waters. Finally, Devon Clifton presented her thesis on the depiction of the traumas of the modernist period in the novel *Nightwood* by Djuna Barnes, “‘Those Who Seek with Lamentation’: *Nightwood*, Affect, and the Bodily Calamities of Modernity,” directed by Dr. Patrick Deer.

The third panel was slightly less chronologically distinct. Ben Hulett, who worked with Dr. Jennifer Baker, presented first. His thesis chronicled Thoreau’s evolving views of other species called “Receiving Other Animals: Henry David Thoreau’s Poetic Reception of His ‘Brute Neighbors.’” Samuel Teets gave the final presentation, “Embodying Archive: Asian American History, Memory, and ‘Dance,’” which examined *I Hotel* by Karen Tei Yamashita and the possibility of recording history through non-textual means, and was directed by Dr. Pacharee Sudhinaraset.

Dr. Thomas Augst, chair of the English Department, concluded the ceremony with praise for the way all nine students made “intellectual projects their own” and created, amongst themselves, a “community of scholars”—a context in which scholarship becomes more than just individual, and occasionally lonely, research and writing. Then Dr. Juliet Fleming, director of the MA program until the end of the year, described “how changed” the cohort is since she first met everyone last fall, invoking Satan’s words to Beelzebub after the fall in *Paradise Lost*. The group, she said, looked “haggard” following sustained scholarly labor, but had also bonded into a group capable of producing individually impressive work while illuminating each other’s scholarship. Cami Ryder, a Graduate English Organization representative who herself will be writing a thesis soon, closed the ceremony by congratulating her classmates, and wishing them good luck with the rest of the semester, before shifting the Jamboree to its inevitable conclusion, a champagne toast and the distribution of commemorative tokens.



“The event was exhilarating and cathartic; challenging, probing and helping.”

A Conversation with Frances Ferguson on “Rape and the Rise of the Novel”

by William Jordan Williamson

The Eighteenth-Century British Literature Workshop in the NYU English Department hosted “A Conversation with Frances Ferguson” on October 17th, offering an opportunity to discuss with Dr. Ferguson her landmark essay “Rape and the Rise of the Novel.” Dr. Ferguson published “Rape and the Rise of the Novel” thirty years ago this year, and the talk at NYU is one of several she has given reflecting on the groundbreaking essay, including a symposium on the essay in late September at Princeton.

The event at NYU, which was hosted by Dr. Wendy Lee and organized by Elizabeth Berajano of the Eighteenth-Century British Literature Workshop, allowed for a more informal talk on Dr. Ferguson’s work. Dr. Lee introduced Dr. Ferguson, who currently teaches at the University of Chicago after past appointments at Johns Hopkins and Princeton, and is working on two book projects, *Designing Education* and *A Brief History of Reading and Criticism*. “Rape and the Rise of the Novel,” though, was the focus of the evening, and Dr. Lee offered a brief account of the essay, which she said influenced her own decision to pursue a career in academia.

“Rape and the Rise of the Novel” focuses on *Clarissa*, Samuel Richardson’s 1748 epistolary novel and, according to Dr. Ferguson, along with Richardson’s *Pamela*, the first “full” example of the “psychological novel.” As a category of law that necessitates an understanding of subjective states, Dr. Ferguson argues, an early novelist like Richardson could discover in a narrative centered on rape—in the novel, Lovelace’s rape of Clarissa—the possibility of depicting “the importance of psychology as the ongoing possibility of the contradiction between what one must mean and what one wants to mean.” This contradiction, along with the epistolary presentation of the novel’s material, establishes a mode for the novel distinct from the model of free indirect discourse that would later become dominant.

Dr. Ferguson’s talk reflected on the status of the essay thirty years after its original publication in *Representations*, and she gave a few updates on it. Notably, she applied the model of “writing to the moment” that she outlined in “Rape and the Rise of the Novel”—a model that allows a character like Clarissa to register her nonconsent to or disagreement with occurrences that she has little formal ability to object to—to James Comey’s writing of memoranda around his meetings with Donald Trump. The model of “writing to the moment” that Comey and Clarissa employ might now be seen as a way of responding to a world that presupposes the consent of its subject mostly by formally preventing them from dissenting. The introduction of Comey to the model, though, provoked some worry from the audience about losing the original essay’s particular focus on rape and rape law for broader notions of consent.



Dr. Frances Ferguson

Dr. Ferguson seemed almost less concerned about preserving the original force of her essay than the audience did and was, with the detachment of thirty years since writing it, able to look with surprise, for instance, at her “relentless” analysis of legal forms she undertook, and to reflect that she was probably “unaware of how ambitious [she] was being” in the essay. Thirty years after its publication, though, it is obvious that the essay fulfills the ambitions Dr. Ferguson might have had in writing it. Indeed, if anything, the conversation demonstrated that while its anniversary occasions a look back at it, “Rape and the Rise of the Novel” is as important a text today as it was when Dr. Ferguson first wrote it.

WELCOME DR. GENE JARRETT, OUR NEW DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES AND A FACULTY MEMBER IN ENGLISH

by George Hajjar

Dr. Gene Jarrett is happy to return to New York after almost three decades of being away. Born in the Bronx, Dr. Jarrett attended Stuyvesant High School, before going to New Jersey to study literature at Princeton University. His favorite parts of the city include Washington Square park, Central Park and City Island. Because he has already lived in the city, adjusting to New York from his previous city of employment, Boston, has not been an issue for him.

To Dr. Jarrett, undergraduate education comes with a host of opportunities for the individual to grow. Undergrad education gives the chance for people in underrepresented groups to have access to opportunities that they wouldn't get otherwise. It is important to the development of the mind, and in creating a sense of belonging within a community. He hopes that he can facilitate in this process both within the English department, and in NYU's College of Arts and Science.

Dean Jarrett is currently working on a biography of poet Paul Dunbar, a central figure in his first two books. He is interested in how some African American writers tended to avoid writing racialized characters in a white society. For example, Dunbar's first book lacked a black character in its cast. Dr. Jarrett is trying to construct a comprehensive biography of Paul Dunbar that charts his life, including the details of his relationships with other major figures like Theodore Roosevelt, as well as with his family.

In delving so deep into the life of another person, biography as a writing style reveals the imperfections of people. Dr. Jarrett wants to explore how people work through challenges. This was one of the reasons why he cares so deeply about Paul Dunbar. Dunbar died young, his parents were former Kentucky slaves, and he didn't receive any formal education. Despite this, he was still able to make a successful life for himself. Dunbar worked through his challenges to be able to become the poet, playwright, and novelist he is remembered as. Dr. Jarrett is publishing this book with Princeton University Press, and the biography is expected to be released by the end of 2019.



DR. GENE JARRETT

Although he did not teach a class this semester, Dr. Jarrett hopes to start teaching undergraduate or graduate classes within the next few years. He has experience teaching Postbellum American literature classes. For example, African American 19th century literature, and Corporate Capitalism in American Literature in the 19th century. In a similar vein, he is interested in the the relationship between the humanities and computational thinking. As an undergrad he studied both English and Mathematics and wants to bring math rigor to literary study.

Dr. Jarrett has an ingrained sense of pride in NYU. His sisters-in-law and mother-in-law all graduated from this school; and his first book, and last monograph were published by its press. He believes that NYU is at the "nexus of higher education." The academy faces many challenges today, and NYU can be a leader in creating a better future for college students and educators. Welcome to the department, Dean Jarrett.

John Freeman and Javier Zamora Poetry Readings

by George Hajjar



John Freeman



Javier Zamora

The Lillian Vernon Creative Writers House recently held an event to celebrate Copper Canyon Press and its two latest releases: *Maps* by John Freeman, and *Unaccompanied* by Javier Zamora. Every seat in the house was filled, and everyone was eager to hear these poets recite their work.

Michael Wiegiers, the Editor-in-Chief of the publishing company, introduced John Freeman first. He mentioned that, in a conversation with the poet, Wiegiers asked Freeman why he would choose to do poetry, because he already has a readership for his nonfiction and essay work. Freeman responded, “because I think in poetry.”

John Freeman, writer, literary critic, and NYU’s artist-in-residence began his reading by explaining how *Maps* came to be. As an undergrad, he had applied for a poetry workshop, but had been declined. This deterred him from writing poetry for 15 years; however, he turned back to poetry after a recent tragedy in his family—the death of his mother. Even though the content of *Maps* is serious and emotional, he maintained a positive and lighthearted attitude while he read “the blinding,” “repeat,” and even “blackout,” a poem about how his fiancée broke up with him. His poetry is introspective and crosses many borders, both physically and psychologically.

One theme of the work is overcoming tragedy. His mother was an anglophile, enthralled by French culture and history, however, she never once left the United States. With NYU, Freeman has had the ability to teach classes in Paris. After his mother passed away, he started seeing her all over the city. He wrote a poem, entitled “Via” about following one woman in particular, who looked like his mother.

Next Wiegiers introduced Javier Zamora, a graduate of the NYU Creative Writing Program. Wiegiers mentioned how he had met Zamora while he was still in school. He said that this reading was special because the Lillian Vernon House was where *Unaccompanied* began, for both Wiegiers and the poet.

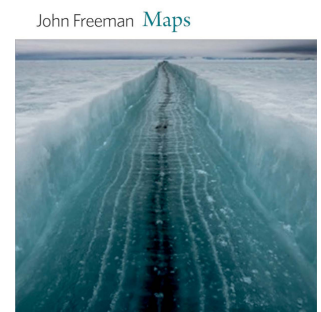
Javier Zamora, born in El Salvador, writes about his experience crossing the border into the United States on his own. Because of the civil war within the country, around 20 percent of the population of El Salvador immigrated to the US. Among these people were Zamora’s father, then his mother, and at the age of nine, himself.

Mixing English and Spanish in his poetry, Zamora tells his own story, something deeply personal and relevant to today’s topics of border politics and immigration. He writes about leaving his cousins and grandparents, and his own parents leaving him.

One story, entitled, “how I learned to walk,” talks about his time in his town before crossing the border. Zamora told the audience that, when he was one, his father left for the US. This became a story among the townspeople. As he grew older, he was told that he tried to follow his father when he left, thus his first steps were made to find him. Zamora himself doesn’t believe this, but, he said, it made a good poem.

In this work, Zamora plays with what a poem can be. In “Cassette tape,” Zamora writes about how he used to communicate with his parents. They would deliver each other a cassette tape, listen to the message, then record over it their new message. This poem has a side a, side b, fast forward and rewind section, and the meter emulates the squeak of the cassette tape making its revolutions.

The Blotter congratulates Copper Canyon Press, John Freeman, and Javier Zamora for their powerful additions to the literary community.



Professor Paula McDowell Publishes *The Invention of the Oral*

by Gina Elbert

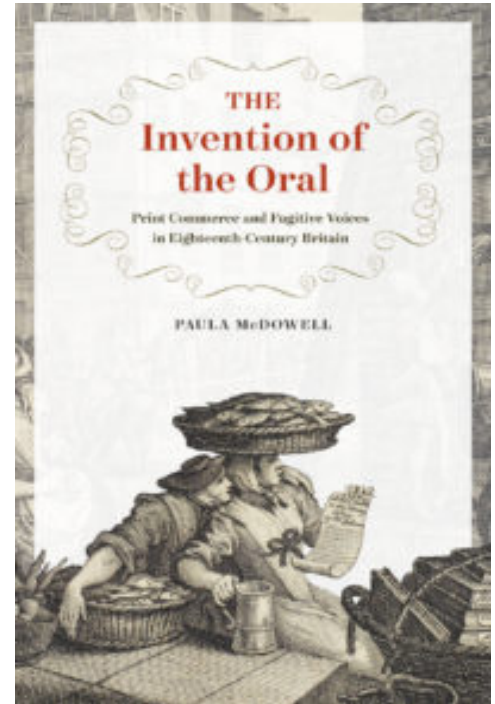
Have you heard? In June of this year, Associate Professor Paula McDowell published her book, *The Invention of the Oral: Print Commerce and Fugitive Voices in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (University of Chicago Press). In eight enticing chapters, plus an introduction and a coda, Professor McDowell explores eighteenth-century oral culture in light of everything from the Billingsgate Fish Market to Samuel Johnson's travel writing to Jonathan Swift's classic *Tale of a Tub*. Each chapter tackles its own topic, contrasting various abstract ideas about orality with the social and historical practices of the time period.

Oral culture and print culture have long been considered as part of a binary – the latter supersedes the former once it takes hold in society. However, Professor McDowell argues, that's not true, just as digital culture has yet to completely replace print culture today. She explores the binary as a heuristic, or a tool for learning and discovering that has its own history of development. "Oral culture" as a term did not exist in eighteenth-century Britain and neither did "print culture," because they were labels that were invented in the mid-twentieth century by historians and academics looking back on the period. Back in the (Georgian) day, "culture" itself only referred to agricultural cultivation. People were not aware of the print-centered future that was to come, but there were distinctions made between oral and print at the time that revealed much about their value systems. *The Invention of the Oral*, whose title refers to emergence of an umbrella concept that yoked together wildly diverse practices and traditions, situates itself at the intersection of eighteenth-century orality and the beginnings of a complex print society.

The book, Professor McDowell told me, grew out of her first project, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace, 1678-1730* (Clarendon Press, 1998). There she explored the role of middle and lower-class women's political activism in the print industry, where they served as authors, publishers, booksellers, hawkers, ballad-singers, and more. The latter two, hawkers and ballad-singers, were contributors to the very oral culture that she studies in her present book.

Professor McDowell is very proud of all the research and digging she did in order to make the book the best that it could be. And she should be, especially as in many ways her life and career have been leading up to this book release from the beginning. The first in her family to go to college, Professor McDowell is from Vancouver, Canada, where she was an honors English student at the University of British Columbia. "Like every other woman who ever wrote an undergrad thesis on the eighteenth century," she said, "I wrote mine on Jane Austen." After applying to law school and an English Ph.D. program at Stanford, she attended the latter and was told she needed to choose a concentration. Her choice was the eighteenth century, largely thanks to her previous interests in Austen, though she could just as easily have chosen Canadian Indigenous Art. Since then, she has published *The Women of Grub Street* and *Elinor James: Printed Writings* and, of course, *The Invention of the Oral*.

What's next for our illustrious professor? Another scholarly book and a novel about the Great Plague, she says. She is excited to turn to these projects. Each book is different and each one teaches her something new about what she studies as she researches it. As she said, "I've been in college more than thirty years and I'm still learning." The Blotter congratulates Professor McDowell on her groundbreaking new book!



SPOTTED!

AN NYU ENGLISH MAJOR IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

Watermelon Man

Metropolitan Diary

By MAGGIE LEWIECKI OCT. 16, 2017

Dear Diary:

It was 9:30 at night and I was finally leaving campus. I hadn't slept or eaten enough to do anything but fall into bed and try again in the morning.

As I started to climb down the steps to the subway at Union Square without having decided whether to take the R or the 6, I saw a sign poking out from a building facade down the block: Joe's Pizza, at 14th Street and Fourth Avenue.

After getting a slice, I decided to eat outside. I leaned against a chest-high table and reached into the open window for a napkin. The fresh tomato sauce smeared on my face as I twisted my head around to get my mouth around the slice.

On the other side of the sidewalk, a man with a jawline that resembled Superman's was juggling three small watermelons while a friend filmed him and a man at a nearby fruit stand shook his head.

He was not a very good juggler. One of the melons fell, hit a woman passing by on the ankle and rolled into traffic. She scowled, and the melon popped under the tire of a car passing by.

The juggler decided to leave. He realized he didn't need the other two melons. He shrugged and held one of them out toward me, balancing it on one palm. I reached out with both hands and took it.

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COMMENTS

Exciting Spring Electives and Senior Seminars Taught by New Faculty

by Gina Elbert

November has finally come and on college campuses this means the second round of midterms, starting to think about final paper topics, and most importantly choosing classes for the spring semester. This year, registration for spring 2018 classes is from Monday, November 13 to Friday, November 17. The English department's offerings are robust and feature a variety of classes, from the core courses on British and American Literature to Women of Color Feminisms, the Rise of the Graphic Novel, and cross-listed classes like Dante and His World. If you're a student and anything like me, you're still trying to figure out which among this myriad of classes you want to take. I recently spoke to Professor Jini Kim Watson, Director of Undergraduate Studies, and Mary Mezzano, Undergraduate Assistant, about a few of the coolest classes on offer this spring. They pointed me to three classes, all taught by new members of the department faculty, each of whom provided me with details supplementary to those on the department website.

City & Literature, taught by Professor Ato Quayson

Tuesdays from 3:30 PM to 6:10 PM

To hold a book in your hands is like standing before the gates of a new city. This is the rationale around which Professor Quayson has built what he calls a "literary tour of different cities," including London, Los Angeles, Mumbai, New York, Dublin, Kinshasa, and Accra. This tour will encompass a variety of genres, from detective fiction and science fiction to modernist and post-modernist texts and spatial theory. Professor Quayson, who joined the faculty this year, says "Prepare to acquaint yourself with terms such as chronotopes, spatial morphologies, anamorphism, and many more as well as with new ways of re-imagining the cities of your choice."

Lyric Conditions: Survival & Reproduction 18th C to Present, taught by Professor Lenora Hanson

Thursdays from 2:00 PM to 4:45 PM

The Blotter met Professor Hanson a few weeks ago (read more here) through her Literature of Riots class. She's coming back this spring with a class on lyric poetry that, she says "is obsessed with, and confused about, the difference between living versus nonliving things and animated subjects versus inanimate objects." Focusing on texts from the 18th century, as well as the contemporary literary world, the class will use lyric poetry as lens for discussing the "right to life" and "what happens to the political and ethical categories of personhood, rights and sentience if we cannot tell the difference between the living and nonliving." Professor Hanson hopes that "this class will help us to consider how lyric poetry's frequent inability to distinguish between such categories might help us to devise new answers to pressing questions about related kinds of political and environmental violence."

Victorian Psychologies of Focus, taught by Professor Adrian Versteegh

Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:55 PM to 6:10 PM

Professor Versteegh is a post-doctoral fellow whose research focuses on nineteenth and twentieth-century urban literature. With a special interest in sleep, distraction, and modes of attention, he will be teaching a course that focuses on the intersection of these topics and Victorian literature in an effort to explore the roots of modern culture's own obsessions with mental hygiene, the 24-hour economy, media technologies, worry, and the material culture of attention and distraction.

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