English MA Thesis Celebration, December 6, 2019

Nicholas Bloechi

My thesis focuses on the function of prophecy in two works of Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* and *Battle Pieces and Aspects of War*. Many critics have thought about prophecy as a thematic concern for Melville, but few have considered how prophecy's disposition towards the future may have organized his thoughts on narrative and history. To this end, I have proposed a way of reading *Moby-Dick* that sees Melville crafting a narrative in response to millennial predictions of American futurity that were embodied in the nineteenth century preacher. What emerges from this historical context is a way of reading the novel that sees its two principal protagonists engaged in a dialogue concerning the journey of the Pequod in light of its destination. This is then brought to bear on Melville's poetic response to the history of the Civil War in *Battle Pieces*. It is here that I believe we can see the author engaging in a particular prophetic voice. In contrast to the optimism of his contemporary poets, Melville sees the future not as the divinely ordained promise of an American destiny but a consistently looming threat to ideals of a democratic nation.

Letizia Mariani

In my project, "Babelic Baedeker: Mina Loy's Anti-Nationalist Translingualism," I examine Mina Loy's overlooked translingualism as it manifests in intersections between languages. I argue that Loy self-consciously constructs a pan-Atlantic tongue by employing translingual words that interrupt the English body of her poems. This form of translingualism frees language from the exclusive homogeneity of modern patriarchal nationalism and allows Loy to imagine a space in which language is no longer a function of nationhood and geohistorical pluralities can exist.

Omar Ibarra
Abortive Potentialities and Masochistic Time:
Pornography and Dance in the Cinema of Gaspar Noé

The subject of my thesis is a study of the pornographic body cinema of Gaspar Noé in relation to what Linda Williams refers to as the *long adolescence of American cinema*. As opposed to sexual aesthetics which rely on marginalizing, eliding, or hiding sexuality, in Noé's cinema there is a direct presentation of sex as masochistic, solipsistic, and (self-)destructive which brings the relationality and intensities that underlie sexuality to light. Over the course of the thesis I study cruelty and the difference between masochistic and sadistic cinema, Noé's usage of drugs in creating a chemico-cerebral aesthetic scheme where the image is modulated through a series of qualitative intensities, the filmed active body and how it implies an economy of physicality and a spacing of bodies (of which dance is the highest example) that is to be read, and finally the specification of the sexualized body which appears in Noé's cinema as in a process of

exteriorized becoming, relational, and tensed in performance with attitude. This analysis is posed in contradistinction to specific cinematic theories and traditions that center around filmed sexuality. In the last section of the thesis I place Noé's performative body within the time-schemes that he sets up in order to show how he intends the body to be masochistically tensed in space and time, and also discuss his central image, the abortive image, as it is placed within the time-scheme and its relation to privacy in his cinema. These themes speak back to the image of the body developed in Noé and complete a full justification of it.

Dan Truong

How does one escape the pull of an event as totalizing and traumatic as the Vietnam War? Contemporary Vietnamese-American poets Diana Khoi Nguyen and Hai-Dang Phan mobilize their postmemory of the War to create new modes of representation that attempt to wrest narrative control from the state that has worked to maintain the Vietnam War in an unchanging, melancholic mode. Through their formal and temporal experimentation, Nguyen and Phan enact a reparative mourning for the Vietnamese-American subject that enables a future that may be determined by, but not beholden to, the War.

Margaret McCurry

The Book of Margery Kempe demonstrates a pervasive ineffability *topos* which it endeavors to resolve by way of xenoglossia. My thesis employs Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic philosophy of language to study the xenoglossic miracles substantiated by both author and protagonist. By miraculously translating her life's story from word to text, Kempe channels *the symbolic* and successfully captures the ineffable in written expression. Within this text, Margery's cries function as semiotic utterances which operate as xenoglossic translations between the ineffability of the Divine and man. In doing so, Margery Kempe, the medium, *is* her message; that is, she effectively activates and embodies her message by breathing significance into her written and verbal expression.

Andrew Tuoma

"Pilgrimage and Pills" places Herman Melville's *Clarel* in conversation with Stephen Crane's *Black Riders and Other Lines* to examine how poetry and storytelling responded to the dwindling patience of late nineteenth-century readers and the intensifying cultural imperative for immediate information. As the mass-circulation newspaper and the proliferation of alphabetical indexes, appendices, and abridgments transformed reading into information retrieval, Melville and Crane worked to preserve the generative forces of ambiguity and indeterminacy by devising narrative poems that defy easy conversion into data. Where Melville's massive octosyllabic poem is an outright assault on clarity and speed-reading, Crane enlists brevity and impatience as allies in his insurrectional project and coopts the newspaper's style to enact a less passive reading experience.

Samantha Sontag

This thesis explores the manipulation of gender and sexuality in Kevin Powers' novel, *The Yellow Birds.* Intervening in a conversation that has predominantly been guided by trauma theory, this thesis mobilizes queer theory and affect theory to develop new ways of reading and understanding contemporary war literature. Through an analysis of the warped relationship at the center of the novel, that of three U.S. soldiers, I develop a model of weaponized desire. This model is particularly concerned with bodies and the affective forces that move between them. I suggest that the pervasiveness of U.S. war culture produces an abstracting effect, which allows war and its actors to be ideologically manipulated into bodies of desire or indifference. The body of the U.S. soldier is eroticized while the bodies of gendered, sexualized, or racialized Others are erased. Weaponized desire, then, appropriates affect in a way that makes the eroticized body of the U.S. soldier an object of desire, closely intertwining violence and intimacy to then erase the subjecthood of bodies that fall outside of this cyclical desire. The novel, through its overly aesthetic narration orientated towards the three U.S. soldiers, productively exhibits the insidious effects of the abstraction and manipulation I suggest. It is thus through an analysis of the tension between the narrative voice and the structure of the novel that I develop weaponized desire and its violent affective and epistemological effects.

Margaret Iuni
Firing the Canon: The Pedagogical Necessity of Incorporating Young Adult Literature in the Secondary Classroom
While the genre of young adult literature has garnered public favor over the course of the last fifty years, high school literature lists have continued to privilege canonical works and disregard newer publications designed for young audiences. In this thesis, I argue that educators can foster social consciousness and historical understanding of literature by framing their lesson plans around overlapping elements of linguistic and social capital of the canon and unrecognized linguistic and social currency of YA literature. This essay will enable teachers to treat plot and style of YA novels with the same methods applied to the high school canon rather than simply treating newer texts as a scaffold for "Great Books." "Firing the Canon" offers a prospectus of the problem and potential practicum for application by examining two textual pairs for the contemporary classroom. First, I explore Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) and Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* (2017) in order to analyze linguistic value of narrative voice and the social implications of institutionalized American racism. Then, I pair William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) and Benjamin Alire Sáenz's *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (2012) to illuminate the linguistic art of punning and the social implications of prohibited love. Challenging static canonical literature lists with #OwnVoice young adult literature promises to revitalize a decontextualized curriculum by incorporating more progressive pedagogies.

Emily Fenster

Mapping the Mariners' Church: Finding Community in 19th-century New York

The diary of Henry Chase offers a rich, on-the-ground look at missionary work and domestic life in New York City during the 1820s but it requires a new way of reading in order to

examine these patterns. Chase expanded the community of the Mariners' Church from November 1821 to February 1823 by reaching out to sailors and their families. By digitally mapping the diary and reorganizing its data by venue, we can see how different kinds of locations influenced how Chase used printed publications in his missionary efforts. Chase focused on tract distribution in more public areas but emphasized personal interactions in more private spaces. Using digital mapping tools allows us to examine one class of these locations – the family home – even further to reveal individual narratives and the smaller communities that existed at each address. Reading the diary chronologically obscures these narratives, but by reorganizing the diary to focus on its spatial data we can recover those stories.

Casey Hampsey

Using nostalgia studies as a jumping point, I examine the discursive role nostalgia plays in game-making, specifically in the practices of an exemplar community of indie game-makers who produce games in a loosely defined genre called "Motherlikes." These are games that in at least some way ape the aesthetic and the aboutness of the Mother series, a trilogy of role-playing games (RPGs) that released between 1989 and 2006. I show that the genre identifier isn't art style, or purely RPG-esque game mechanics, or whether there's a specific way to play the game, but rather that every game in this loosely defined genre approaches the topic of nostalgia, and childhood, from a particular discursive framework. In the same sense that literary genres can develop a discourse within their "canons," Motherlikes use ludology alongside written narrative to do this discursive work with nostalgia. In examining these games, I want to study the way games "talk to" each other, produce and reflect cultural norms and iconoclasms, and preserve the history of the form.

Auriana Desombre

Vying for Voice: Trauma, Maturation, and Social Reform in Young Adult Literature

Abstract

Trauma in young adult literature serves to explore individual maturation and perform a particular cultural work by advocating for social reform. *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson and *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas serve as examples of young adult texts that address traumatic material; in *Speak* (1999), Laurie Halse Anderson tells the story of Melinda as she struggles to face a sexual assault she is not yet ready to discuss. Angie Thomas's novel *The Hate U Give* (2017) examines police brutality through Starr Carter, who witnesses a police officer kill her friend. By applying trauma theory to these narratives and examining the role of "voicey" narration within these texts, this thesis explores the way the narrator expresses their traumatic experience in each of these texts, and the way trauma impacts their narrative voice to achieve individual maturation and advocation for wider social change.

MA Thesis Celebration Fall 2020

Panel one, 9am-10:15
Jae-Yeon Yoo
Lucia Cardelli
Joe McLaughlin
Yolanda Mackey
Noelle Viger

Panel two: 10:30-11:45am
Morgan Mitchell
Surya Jayakumar
Timothy Gress
Richard Martorelli
Maria Nunez

Jae-Yeon Yoo,
"Playing With Revolution: Cathy Park Hong's World of Untranslatability in *Dance Dance Revolution*"

My thesis focuses on Cathy Park Hong's hybrid-genre poetry collection, *Dance Dance Revolution* (*DDR*), which draws explicit attention to the issue of multilingualism with its invented pidgin, "Desert Creole." While prevailing scholarship has mentioned *DDR*'s witty tone in passing, my reading frames Hong's playful aesthetics as crucial to *DDR*'s examination of language, ethnicity, and capitalism. I argue for a conceptualization of "revolutionary play" that is inextricably connected to untranslatability and defamiliarizes standardized English; refrains from serious, grandiose statements on revolution or linguistic hybridity, choosing instead to satirize and nuance its own presentation of multilingualism; and re-defines revolution precisely through its evasive slipperiness. Ultimately, this playfulness is integral to how *DDR* challenges Anglophone dominance and the neoliberal commodification of multiculturalism. I conclude by exploring how *DDR*'s self-reflexive indeterminacy urges readers to theorize new interpretations—or translations—of the text for themselves.

Lucia Cardelli,
"Low Theory: Queer Amateurship and the Post-9/11 Homo-Nation"

This thesis investigates the homonational significance of (sub)cultural amateur texts of the early 2000s. The works I analyze, much like my archive, epitomize post-9/11 amateurship, while also representing exceptional instances of low theoretical textuality. As queer (sub)cultural responses to national efforts of homo-normativization paralleled a post-9/11 anti-Muslim sentiment, I consider queer amateur texts of the early 2000s that depended upon such homonational process. In my first chapter, I explore the temporal and mediatic consequences of such relation by analyzing the webpage "The Homophobe Agenda" and the zine editorial "Anonymous Boy on Equal Marriage Rights." My second chapter, focusing on the online zine *Punkymo* and the web journal entry "A Woman In My Arms," addresses online ephemera within an emo (sub)cultural context. These amateur pieces, I argue, constitute remnants of an ever-shifting conglomeration of September 11 residua. By documenting these fragments through the conditions of their survival and access, I question contemporary notions of the internet and of zine circulation, interrogating the consequences of their potentially nation-serving, homo-normalizing functions.

Joe McLaughlin,
"Queering Sublime: Walt Whitman, Audre Lorde, and the Promiscuous Philosophies of Difference"

The sublime is a fairly queer thing, never fitting neatly into the more stable paradigms of aesthetic categorization. The stuff of terrifying beauty, of excess, the ominous darkness of night, the craggy mountains of despair, and a foreboding storm over the sea, the sublime provides a feminized and racialized notion of excessive power, of threatening *jouissance*, of immense magnitude that assaults the Kantian ethical agent. It is a site of conflict, an unhappy marriage between passion and reason which in turn produces the liberal, propertied individual in its purposive appropriation of the imagination. Reintroducing the problematics of mastery and freedom into sublime studies, I argue that the sublime has always provided a framework for understanding difference that carries with it patriarchal and white-supremacist ideologies. In response, I theorize a counter-sublime tradition of experiment and mutation in the work of Walt Whitman and Audre Lorde. Reading Whitman's under-acknowledged importance to Lorde's political and philosophical project, I join these two in a call for the queering of the Western philosophical cannon's most cherished assumptions about sameness, difference, freedom, and subjectivity. Reading the compliments and collisions between these two major American poets, I ask what a promiscuous philosophy might look like, and how such an intervention could reconfigure radical politics. Symptomatic of this aim is the queer sublime, a rearticulation of subjectivity which refuses the tired definition of freedom which demands a sacrificial, sublime object in exchange. Working to articulate how Whitman and Lorde both crafted a queer sublime, this project begins to purposefully depart from what Lorde calls 'the master's house,' which is also the house of mastery, in order to move towards a queered 'house of difference,' a paradoxical and impossible theory which nonetheless arrives a queer future, glimpsed within moments of erotic contact, communal ecstasy, and sublime hapticality.

Yolanda Mackey,
"Re-imagining the Harlem Renaissance: Social Movements and Allyship"

Traditionally the Harlem Renaissance (HR) has been seen as a cultural and literary moment in African American history spanning from the 1920s to 1930s. However, in 2009 the discovery of Claude McKay's Amiable with Big Teeth, initially written in 1941 but denied publication, supported the possibility of an expanded view of the HR. The novel, now in circulation posthumously nearly seven decades later, is perhaps McKay's most political. It reveals the inner workings of the neighborhood and provides a glimpse of a nightlife that centered on rallies and meetings in church basements as opposed to a swingin' nightclub, suggesting that the HR was more politically charged than initially thought. Through this expansion and reorientation of the HR to newly understand it as a social movement, I analyze moments of allyship, through accounts both real and imagined, attempts both successful and failed, by turning to the works of authors such as Alain Locke, Zora Neale Hurston, Carl Van Vechten, and Claude McKay.

Reframing the HR as a social movement poses questions regarding intra- and interracial tensions and collective identity and action. Scholars such as Emily Bernard have suggested that the involvement of white scholars compromised the mission of the Harlem Renaissance. I argue that a model for allyship would have provided structure and clearer expectations for the role to be played by white intellectuals that supported the movement. I lay out what I find to be some of the most provocative moments of the HR when recast as a social movement. In Locke's case, he was a leader that provided a manifesto for the movement but succumbed to imitating patriarchal behavior in his relationship with key black women writers of the Renaissance, including Hurston. Van Vechten, regarded as the infamous white friend of the HR and whose actions were borderline appropriation, went on to become the most financially successful author of the period, while authors such as McKay died in poverty.

At both the intra- and interracial level, we can ask the simple yet difficult question: what does it mean to be an ally? In searching for the answer, I hope to turn to the HR for lessons of allyship and develop a model that can inform our present moment.

Noelle Viger,
"Land Locke[d]: Deconstructing American Sovereignty Through Social Contract Theory and Anishinaabe Justice with *The Round House*"

This thesis focuses on contemporary struggles of power regarding issues of sovereignty and law in the United States. I examine Anishinaabe writer Louise Erdrich's novel *The Round House*, and question how social contract theory, as theorized by John Locke, has laid the foundation for American law and judicial processes. Locke's influence on the formation of the American government and law systems has led to the dissemination of justice in the American context being dependent on land ownership and title. The novel's focus on the epistemic difference between Anishinaabe and American justice can be used to illustrate the inability of social contract theory—as it was written and operates in the United States—to account for multiple political and sovereign entities existing within a body politic. This inability destabilizes and deconstructs the legitimacy of American sovereignty from its most base level.

Morgan Mitchell,
"The Dangers of Fraternization: Brotherhood in Early Modern Revenge Tragedy"

Early modern revenge tragedies are virtually obsessed with brothers. Whether it's brothers killing brothers or (more commonly) brothers helping brothers kill other people, revenge plays center almost as much on fraternal relationships as they do on revenge. In my paper, I seek to examine the intrinsic link between brotherhood and revenge that early modern dramatists capitalize on and the ways in which revenge serves to both reflect and magnify English Renaissance issues of brotherhood, as well as investigate the unique quandary that brotherhood poses as a relationship between two men. To do so, I explore the key fraternal relationships in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus,* Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy,* and Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy,* ultimately arguing that revenge tragedies reveal the impossibility of achieving "perfect" brotherhood in the early modern era, regardless of the approach to the relationship the brothers take.

Surya Jayakumar,
"Catholicism and Memory in *Hamlet"*

This thesis will first explore the theme of memory in *Hamlet*'s Ghost and Mousetrap scenes and will then discuss the manner in which that theme is related to the treatment of Catholicism in the play. I will argue that the relationship between Hamlet and the Ghost figures the relationship between the nominally Protestant Shakespeare and the Catholicism of his heritage. I will further suggest that Claudius figures the Protestant establishment and Gertrude the England that has substantially turned away from Catholicism and embraced Protestantism. I will touch upon biography and history in support of my points.

Tim Gress,
"Retrieving the Future: Card Catalogs and the Digitization of Our Literary Past"

Recent scholarly discussions of library card catalogs have focused their attention on preserving the information described on paper cards through digitization. While these scholars have drawn attention to the valuable and often unique description of books preserved on physical cards and not online that may

have otherwise been lost, several questions remain unanswered: why have card entries come to look as they do now? Does standardization exist between institutions? Can we learn more from these cards by studying them in their original contexts? What agencies, if any, might the cards reveal? Through a close reading of individual cards, my thesis attempts to answer these and other questions which discus the relevance of card catalogs in an age of digital scholarship.

Drawing examples from original card catalog entries for rare books at the Library of Congress, the Morgan Library & Museum, and the New York Public Library, I apply notions of classification asserted by Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star in *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* to produce a new and critical reading of catalog cards that focuses on cards as complete entities, not as a series of interchangeable data points. Focusing on the decision-making process that lies behind the creation of each paper card, I seek to show how, when properly read and understood, card catalog entries afford scholars a research experience that is not available through electronic search methods. Specifically, I describe how these entries have preserved the interests and values of the philanthropic book collectors behind the creation of a variety of rare book libraries during the early- twentieth century. Reconsidering the place of the card catalog in a primarily digital environment provides a new perspective on the works and institutions which this seemingly antiquated resource describes.

Richard Martorelli,
"Whitman's 'Bitter Sprig': Cynical Materialism in the 1860 'Leaves of Grass' Cluster"

The "Leaves of Grass" cluster is an understudied group of poems that existed in *Leaves of Grass* from the 1860 to 1881 editions. While Whitman is consistently brought back into the contemporary political moment as a figure of liberal values, the "Leaves" cluster offers a vision of Whitman *contra* Whitman at his most 'liberal'—challenging the political efficacy of his work, the ethics of his characteristic style of identifying with 'multitudes,' and the novel social assemblages he imagined occurring in the object he made, throughout time. My paper explores this cluster as a moment of cynicism in the 1860 *Leaves*, arguing that it functions as a challenge to Whitman's dominant optative mood—that in which the future is valorized as a potential site for political and economic change. Through a close reading of several poems in the cluster, I center the anti-secession, anti-capitalist political project of the 1860 *Leaves of Grass* counterintuitively, in a scene of intense personal doubt and self-criticism. Through an intensive criticism of the self, Whitman produces, or gestures towards, an immediate continuity between his experience of national anxiety in 1860 and the (broadly understood) "contemporary" moment of inequality in America. "Leaves of Grass" recuperates an alienated sense of individualism into a vision of shared materiality that overcomes the mediation of the commodity form. An understanding of Whitman's cynicism makes available new lines of inquiry into a poet that continues to shape the ideology of American hegemony throughout the globe.

NYU English Department, MA Thesis celebration: Dec 10, 2021
10am-1:45pm

Panels		Director	Second Reader

Panel 1: 10am-11am

Emily Brown	"The Vanishing Corpse and the Cleansed Temple: Archaeology and National Identity in *St. Erkenwald*."	Rust	Momma
Leo Johansson-Lebrón	"Thomas Browne: Empiricist Poet"	Mann	Shaw
Nick Pagano	"The Exchange of Reason: Language, Logos, and the Pharmakon in Milton's *Areopagitica*"	Gilman	Archer
DJ Ross	"The Early Modern Corpus: Knowledge and Destruction in John Donne's 'An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary'"	Gilman	

Panel 2: 11:05-12:05

Louise Akers	"Nunc hic, nunc illic: On Wordsworth's Paragrammatical Physics"	Hanson	Shaw
Beatrice Masih	"The Changing Tides of Empire: The Motif of the Sea and the Development of Character in *Dombey and Son*"	Vargo	Regaignon
Jagreet Sekhon	"The Emperor Has No Clothes, or, Narrative Metalepsis in *Sartor Resartus*"	Vargo	Samalin
Sarah Schwartz	"What Makes a Copy a Copy? Digital Consciousness and the Artificial Other in Greg Egan's *Permutation City* and 'Learning to Be Me?'"	Baker	Hoover

Panel 3: 12:10-1:25

Camille Baptista	"My ppl, yr napalm: American English in the Neocolony"	Shaw	Urayoán Noel
Faith Jeffers	"Reading for Revolution: The Politics, Aesthetics, and Literary History of 2020's Antiracist Reading Lists"	Posmentier	Thakkar
Kelly Saenz	"The Disrupted Memory and Cold War Storytelling in McMurtry's *The Last Picture Show* and Thomas Rivera's *And the Darth Did Not Devour Him*"	Deer	Trujillo
Yuxin Zheng	"Beyond a Paper Son's Chinatown: Spatial Politics in Fae Myenne Ng's *Steer Toward Rock*"	Sudhinaraset	Sandhu
Parth Chhabra	"The Lion, the Robot, and the Zoo: Speculative Fictions of Urban Transformation in Contemporary Singapore"	Deer	Watson

Emily Brown   "The Vanishing Corpse and the Cleansed Temple: Archaeology and National Identity in *St. Erkenwald*."

Europe in the Middle Ages was a land where the past and present were always touching. Cities contained the ruins of previous civilizations, whose culture and faith were often at odds with the Christian present. As a result, medieval Europeans destroyed many artifacts, or turned them into *spolia*, taking a piece from an artifact and using it in a new, often Christian context. The process of spoliation is illustrated in the fourteenth-century poem *St. Erkenwald,* in which seventh-century Londoners unearth the tomb of a Pagan judge, whose corpse is perfectly preserved and able to speak. By baptizing the corpse as a Christian, the Londoners attempt to reconcile their past and present. In a similar way, the poet, by forming the poem through the *spolia* of many older stories, synthesizes a new history and identity for London and for England, shaping it as the successor to Rome, destined to one day rule all of Great Britain. By reading *St. Erkenwald* through an archaeological lens, the themes of appropriation, anachronism, and identity-formation become clear as England begins its quest for empire.

Leo Johansson-Lebrón   "Thomas Browne: Empiricist Poet"

Stanley Fish famously called Thomas Browne, country doctor from Norwich and author of delirious prose pieces, a "bad physician." Contemporary reviewers were equally confounded by his writings, which largely consisted of unique meditations on topics in early modern science. What is it then about Browne that separates him from the swiftly codifying modes of scientific description that would come to define prevailing conceptions of the Enlightenment and Western modernity? I propose that an answer can be found through a formal analysis of his style. To do this, I diverge from a stylistic account of Browne's prose—which to date has been the predominant method in analyzing his language—in favor of poetics. As an empiricist poet, I argue, Browne describes the world through hieroglyphic and image rather than the objectivist representation of conventional Baconian empiricism. By mobilizing the image as a tool of empiricism, Browne opens up new frontiers of description that emphasize the limits of human perception while simultaneously subjecting theology to disruptive forms of empirical analysis. This dual movement of Browne's baroque prose therefore complicates the conventional and dominant contexts of theological and Royal Society discourse and positions Browne as not only the inventor of neologisms like "suicide" and "hallucination," but also as creator of a method of analysis that destabilizes both of the dominant forms of period knowledge and offers compelling insights into the relationship between perceiver and the world. Through my reading of Browne, I hope to show his contribution to the history of ideas, in that his de-instrumentalization of scientific discourse provides a countercurrent to some of its dominant forms of descriptive practice, emphasizing a human mastery over nature, that radiated out from the Royal Society and into the colonies—with disastrous effects.

Nick Pagano   "The Exchange of Reason: Language, Logos, and the Pharmakon in Milton's *Areopagitica*"

This paper examines John Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644) through two main philosophical concepts: logos and the pharmakon. In seeing how they're invoked in Milton's writing, we get a more nuanced picture of his currency of reason and the larger plan for the redemption of human reason that *Areopagitica* offers. I divided my paper into three parts to more precisely contain its

concepts. The first acts as the entry point into logos where I sketch its history and provide initial connections to Milton's text as well as the larger sense of tradition that allows for these types of invocations. Part two is where the three main aspects of logos are uncovered in *Areopagitica*—material as a bridge to a divine position, dynamism, specifically the dynamism of truth, and an emphasis on the unification of individual experience. In housing these features, Milton's currency of reason is given its distinctly linguistic form of instability, application, and exchangeability. In part three, the pharmakon is presented as an extension of logos, made to inhabit the other side of the currency. This final section is concerned with logos and the pharmakon's interplay in Milton's work as well as the larger implications in the history of rhetorical reproduction. In this final section, I analyze a brief section from *Paradise Lost* (1667) that I see as exemplary of Milton's cautionary approach to the pharmakon, and to linguistic exchange more generally.

DJ Ross   "The Early Modern Corpus: Knowledge and Destruction in John Donne's 'An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary'"

In my thesis I consider how knowledge was acquired from books and bodies in the context of early modern public anatomies and how these bodies were spoken for after their deaths. Drawing on the scholarship around early modern anatomy, as well as on the executed body on the scaffold, I move to an analysis of John Donne's treatment of Elizabeth Drury, the daughter of his patron, in his 1611 poem "An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary." Donne uses the occasion of the first anniversary of Elizabeth's death to look at the disintegration of the world, and he does so via the language of anatomy. In doing this, he is also dissecting Elizabeth herself and regarding her more as separate parts and an idealized being than as a real teenage girl. This historical framework informs how the violence that Donne inflicts upon Elizabeth in cutting up her metaphorical body mirrors that which the state and the medical field enacted upon the physical bodies of disenfranchised people at the time.

Louise Akers   "Nunc hic, nunc illic: On Wordsworth's Paragrammatical Physics"

How does grammar survive? Why do some linguistic mechanisms persist across millennia, while others, like the Ancient Greek Middle Voice, become obsolete? If, as Roland Barthes suggests in *The Rustle of Language,* there is no *progressive* theory of language, instead it adjusts according to material contingency rather than evolutionary complexity, is it possible to trace the suppression and resurgence of certain verbal forms? Grammar is a force of habit; invisible and susceptible, it emerges historically. Like the laws of physics, linguistic morphology renders fathomable the innumerable phenomena of language that we could not otherwise handle gracefully. In this thesis I map the ways in which the influence of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* on Wordsworth's poetics destabilizes the hyperregulated subject he advocated for in his verse at the level of grammar. I focus on the poet's use of the subjunctive mood and the Greek Middle Voice, which I argue occurs in modern English despite its nominal obsolescence, to show the ways in which radical potential and intransitive affectability link Romantic physiological notions of susceptibility with both Epicurean atomism and contemporary quantum theory.

Beatrice Masih   "The Changing Tides of Empire: The Motif of the Sea and the Development of Character in *Dombey and Son*"

This thesis examines the use of the motif of the sea in Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son*. By doing so, I argue that Dickens uses this motif as a stand-in for the cultural impact of British imperialism on identity formation. Specifically, I examine key moments in Florence Dombey's character arc to establish a relationship between colonialism and the development of a sense of self. I also take up other characters' relations to the sea and more broadly to waterways. Engaging with discourse on Victorian maritime fiction, I position Dickens' novel as not only a domestic fiction, but one that also mobilizes key elements of the maritime. By doing so, I suggest that *Dombey and Son* exemplifies the complex and nuanced nature of the relationship between the individual and the British Empire. Much criticism on this novel centers on the domestic plot and family structures and how those mediate shifting ideas about class and family position. I wish to pivot the conversation to engage with how these critical insights are being impacted by the mobilization of the recurrent motif of the sea.

Jagreet Sekhon   "The Emperor Has No Clothes, or, Narrative Metalepsis in *Sartor Resartus*"

The goal of my project is to illuminate how Thomas Carlyle's rhetorical uptake of Augustan polemics, as well as his analyses of German Romanticism, influenced the paradoxical narratology of *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34), a phenomenological intermixing of literary and philosophic traditions. I do not claim that the work is necessarily a first and last of its kind, but that it is a noteworthy first which informed a series of lasts: as George Eliot remarked, "the reading of *Sartor Resartus* was an epoch in the history of their [generation's] minds." Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Gérard Genette, Elaine Freedgood, and Anne Mellor, I will focus on the ways in which narrative metalepsis and romantic irony work in *Sartor Resartus* to construct an intentionally self-conscious narrative that signals its own ontological flexibility. Thomas Carlyle manages to instill a doubt that ruptures notions of "Reality" in the Age of Enlightenment, as the reader toggles between factual and fictional worlds through a complex form of realism. This rupture invites the reader to "become a Seeing man" (93) and imagine a multiplicity of worlds, which force the reader to reckon with distinctly British and German ideologies; the complexity of *Sartor Resartus* thus arises from its highly difficult performance as a *balancing* act, in which one ideology must never entirely subsume the other. We, as readers, are always faced with (at least) two worlds, and two characters, that may never agree but must always coexist.

Sarah Schwartz   "What Makes a Copy a Copy? Digital Consciousness and the Artificial Other in
                         Greg Egan's *Permutation City* and 'Learning to Be Me?'"

In my thesis, I examine Australian 'hard science fiction' author Greg Egan's novel *Permutation City* (1994) and his short story "Learning to Be Me" (1990) where I map the ontological concerns that arise from transhumanist philosophy as they are juxtaposed to the concerns Egan attributes to digital consciousness, the Artificial Other, and human personal identity. Transhumanism is a social, political, and philosophical movement borne from Enlightenment thinking that argues for the improvement of the human condition through advanced technology. One such theoretical transhumanist technology is whole brain emulation (WBE) or digital consciousness. WBE is a theoretical technology that works to scan the brain's structure and develop a faithful software model of it, this model can then be used to create a digital persona of the scanned person's brain. In his work, Egan grapples with the complexities of the WBE process as he questions transhumanism's literal take on a theoretical technology. While readers and scholars have analyzed how Egan tests the limits of hard sf, they have failed to discuss his specific relationship with transhumanism or the way he disagrees with the transhumanist understanding of hard sf. I

argue that Egan's works persist as theoretical texts that challenge transhumanist philosophy by suggesting inconsistencies between a digital copy of a person and its original. I first turn to Egan's novel *Permutation City* (1994) to understand Egan's perception of the difference between a digital copy of a person and a 'real' person and then turn to his short story "Learning to Be Me" (1990) which further explores the nature of technological consciousness and questions if the physical death of the brain is equal to the death of the person it inhabits.

Camille Baptista   "My ppl, yr napalm: American English in the Neocolony"

This paper considers contemporary developments in the way poets of diaspora, writing in the United States in the 21st century, present and destabilize the English language as a neocolonial tool. Following Heonik Kwon in arguing for the use of the lowercase term "cold war" to describe a contemporary global state of continued colonial operations, interests, and power imbalances, and borrowing frameworks from Lorgia García-Peña and Lisa Lowe to guide critically paralleled discussions of disparate experiences of diaspora, I examine historiographically contentious Englishes in poetry by Don Mee Choi and Tommy Pico to argue they inhabit a contemporary cold-war temporality. Rather than pursuing the "postcolonial" reflection or remediation that many scholars identify in late-20th-century archaeological poetics, the 21st-century poems examined here exist in a distended war time. Finally, this paper suggests Pico's digital-ecological language offers a counter-historiographical poetics for the age of digital archives, a development relevant both to poetics and media theory.

Faith Jeffers   "Reading for Revolution: The Politics, Aesthetics, and Literary History of 2020's Antiracist Reading Lists"

This paper examines the literary and political function of the antiracist reading lists that proliferated on social media in the summer of 2020 by tending to questions of *what*, *how*, and *why* we read in moments of political upheaval and revolutionary possibility. Addressing critiques that caution against the didactic conflation of "antiracist self-help" (e.g. *Me and White Supremacy*) with Black fiction, the paper defends the lists' generic variety, which requires an interdisciplinary reading method drawn from the tradition of Black critical studies. Through a close reading of one of the most prominent and hotly contested works of literature on the lists, *The Bluest Eye*, along with analysis of Ibram X. Kendi's widely circulated reading list, antiracism emerges not as a genre of literature, but as an ideologically-oriented, reparative reading method. This paper engages the literary history of antiracist reading lists with John Guillory's study of canon formation and Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's theory of study within and beyond academic institutions. Through these frames, antiracist reading lists emerge as modern iterations of para-institutional collective sites of study, engaging centuries-old debates over the politics and aesthetics of Black literature and the function of pedagogy in racial formation and liberatory possibility.

Kelly Saenz   "The Disrupted Memory and Cold War Storytelling in McMurtry's *The Last Picture Show* and Thomas Rivera's *And the Darth Did Not Devour Him*"

Through a close reading of Larry McMurtry's *The Last Picture Show* and Tomas Rivera's *…And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*, my thesis argues that the novels, set in Texas during the Korean War, destabilize the dominant Cold War narratives about Texas propagated by the Western genre and
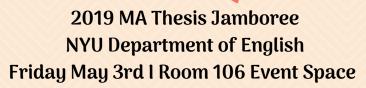
uncover new modes of storytelling and remembering. This allows for the possibility of new conceptions of Texan and Tejano identities.

Yuxin Zheng   "Beyond a Paper Son's Chinatown: Spatial Politics in Fae Myenne Ng's *Steer Toward Rock*"

This thesis examines the spatial politics of Chinatown in Chinese American author Fae Myenne Ng's second novel *Steer Toward Rock* (2008). Setting the story of a paper son in San Francisco Chinatown during the 1960s, Ng foregrounds various physical, mental, and symbolic spaces throughout the novel. As Ng builds organic links between Chinese American individuals and Chinatown, the U.S. mainstream society, and China in her story-telling, she represents Chinese immigration history as embodied human experiences grounded in concrete spaces across geographic boundaries and time. To explore Ng's construction of a transnational and intergenerational Chinese immigration story, I draw on the works of Asian American scholars such as Sau-ling Cynthia Wong and Wenying Xu to examine Chinatown as an intimate home, a family space, a space of labor, and a liminal space between the U.S. and China in *Steer Toward Rock*, specifically by close-reading the characters' movements within and beyond Chinatown, their multifaceted relationships with the place, and Chinatown's internal and external conflicts.

Parth Chhabra   "The Lion, the Robot, and the Zoo: Speculative Fictions of Urban Transformation in Contemporary Singapore"

In my thesis project, I read two works of contemporary speculative fiction from Singapore—*Lion City* by Ng Yi-Sheng and *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye* by Sonny Liew—against a critical landscape engaged with questions about the relationship between speculation, urban form, and futurity. Using the work of theorists who position the urban landscape of Singapore itself as a kind of speculative fiction, I argue that these texts find themselves entangled with and responding to the state and capital's visions of the future. Rather than simply resisting capitalist futurities, *Lion City* imaginatively recreates the state's speculations at various sites (the zoo, the mall, the airport) to literalize and critique its underpinning logics. Liew's graphic novel, on the other hand, uses various speculative modes to allow us to access the affects of radical possibility experienced (and subsequently shut down) in Singapore's early postcolonial history. In this way, both works redescribe Singapore's history and urban landscape to critique the city-state's capitalist practices and transformations.

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9:30 | Doors open | Coffee, Tea, Breakfast Refreshments

10:00 | Brief Welcome

10:00 (ish) |PANEL ONE [four 7 minute presentations followed by Q&A]

Tyler Burdick. "A Lens into the Mind: William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, and an Exploration into Human Consciousness."
Advisor: Prof. John Waters.
Abstract: This thesis seeks to evaluate William Wordsworth's role in the development of a Romantic understanding of consciousness with an eye towards exploring the continuity of such ideas into the years beyond the Romantic era. The core Wordsworthian concept I consider here is that of consciousness stemming from an engaged and active mind. To understand the means through which such an idea takes form in Wordsworth's writing, this paper will rely predominantly on close readings of passages from *The Prelude*, both the 1805 and 1850 editions, as well as some selections from "Intimations of Immortality" and "Lines composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey." To flesh out the environment in which Wordsworth wrote, this paper draws on the biographical work of Stephen Gill and the historical and critical contexts provided by Jerome McGann, Alan Richardson, and Eugene L. Stelzig, among others. Such work is used to contextualize the burgeoning Romantic-era understanding of the mind both as a physical organ and a theoretical agent of consciousness. In addition, this paper also seeks to understand the foundations Wordsworth drew from in constructing his conceptualization of consciousness, to consider what extent the active mind is distinctly Wordsworthian, and what elements, if any, persist in later 20th- and 21st-century developments in consciousness. Ultimately, this thesis explores Wordsworth's writings as part of a psychological and philosophical conversation that persists to this very day.

Jenny Ambrose. What About Teeth: The Unstable Romantic Symbol in Poe's "Berenice". Advisor: Prof. Josephine Hendin.
Abstract: This paper examines Edgar Allan Poe's short story "Berenice" (1835) as reflective of Poe's early critical engagement with the prevailing Romantic philosophy of the early nineteenth century in America, Transcendentalism. I focus on the process in which the narrator of "Berenice" comes to evaluate his wife's teeth, which are natural objects, as symbols that exceed their materialness and represent ideas. I specifically examine the natural object as Romantic symbol as Ralph Waldo Emerson would formulate it in *Nature* (1836), for it established the transcendentalist philosophy of renewal and wonder, precepts Poe was unabashedly critical of in his own writings with his focus on fantastic decay and horror. Through "Berenice," Poe situates himself against the emerging Emersonian transcendentalism of the early 1830s by testing the transcendentalist's mode of evaluation and thought, and subsequently, reveals that the (forced) unification of the natural object with its potential meaning remains a construction of his own making and is so at the expense of the object itself.

Sarah Shea. "The Body as Palimpsest: Race, Class, and Gender in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*." Advisor: Prof. Pacharee Sudhinaraset.
Abstract: My thesis explores Zora Neale Hurston's representation of the black female body in her 1937 novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. I understand the body as a site of cultural inscriptions that form a palimpsest. Much as a palimpsest is a document that has been erased and overwritten in such a way that both texts are visible - the first as an imprint on the page and the second through the writing medium (ink) - the body of Janie (the protagonist of *Their Eyes*) has been violently erased of her own ideas of romantic love (inspired by her experience of nature beneath a pear tree) to be overwritten by the expectations of her community in Eatonville (an all-black town) of how a widowed, middle-class, black woman should behave. I draw from Judith Butler and Patricia Collins, among other scholars, to inform my reading of Hurston's portrayal of Janie performing to the community's expectations to preserve the imprint of her own inscriptions. It is only through reclamation of the latter that Janie disrupts the artificial dichotomy of self and other, and recognizes the palimpsest of her body as dialogic rather than oppositional.

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Lynnae Freeman, "THERE IS NOTHING EXCEPT WHAT YOU SENSE": Jenny Holzer, Female Rage, and the Illusion of Political Art's Language. Advisor: Prof. Patricia Crain.

Abstract: This thesis explores the socio-political significance of Conceptual artist Jenny Holzer's *Inflammatory Essays* (1979-1982). The first arc of the project situates Holzer in the Conceptual Art movement of the 1960s and 1970s by examining how her work expands upon the decrees set out by artist/theorist Joseph Kosuth, and embraces revisions described by art historian Terry Smith. The second re-opens scholarly conversation surrounding Jenny Holzer's politically conscious work to include the often over-looked *Inflammatory Essays*. I explore them as mini treatises on the terror of the female gendered experience. Through a close reading of three of her most female-coded *Inflammatory Essays*, this portion unpacks what Holzer tells us when we bother to read into the lines as opposed to focusing on her work's austere aesthetics. The final arc parses the *Inflammatory Essays*' enduring relevance and examines the consequences of using them as models for political action in the 21st century, with particular focus on the way we "do" protest in a liberal, consumerist, post-modern episteme. Relevant research questions include: how is specifically feminine rage demonstrated through Holzer's characteristically un-attributable language? What makes Holzer's work so attractive to those looking to symbolize their political activism? What are the implications of building a protest movement solely based on anger?
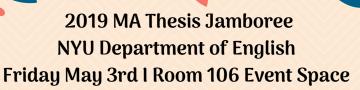
11:00 | Break

11:15 | PANEL TWO [three 7 minute presentations followed by Q&A]

Alessandra Albano. "Re-reading the Gothic: The Science of Degeneration and Vulnerability of the Mind in Stoker's *Dracula* and Well's *The Island of Dr. Moreau"*. Advisor: Prof. Dara Regaignon.

Abstract: Various scholars have examined the influence of degeneration theory on 19th century Gothic novels, yet the stakes remain obscure. My thesis proposes that the central contradictions and paradoxes within degeneration theory invited authors to creatively explore and comment upon important social concerns. By focusing upon quintessential degeneration texts, Cesare *Lombroso's Criminal Man* (1876) and *Nordau's Degeneration* (1895), I explore the powerful influence of degeneration theory in Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Well's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896). I especially focus on the major social paradox at the crux of degeneration theory: if certain social classes and races possess characteristics which made them superior to degenerates and lower classes, then why was it possible to identify such characteristics among supposedly acceptable members of society? This paradox reveals that it is not solely foreign others, criminals, people living in urban areas, or the mentally ill who are susceptible to degeneration, but all members of society. Degeneration theory included empirical evidence to delegate certain groups as "other," but its incorporation into the Gothic paradoxically revealed the fear of rampant and inescapable social degeneration.

Melissa Bean. "'Once More with Feeling': Communication Networks, Photography, and Subjective Experience in *Dracula*." Advisor: Prof. Greg Vargo.

Abstract: My thesis explores the role of information technology in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*—such as the phonograph, the newspaper, and the penny post— in relation to the novel's notable lack of photography. I open with a discussion of the role of photography in defining the boundaries of the "real" in late nineteenth-century art and science and Stoker's treatment of the photograph in the published novel and his unpublished notes. Then, drawing from analysis by scholars such as Kittler, Wicke, and Winthrop-Young, I explore the ways in which the aural and written information technologies in *Dracula* are laden with affective possibility. From there, I open onto a discussion on bodies and the variety of extra-natural ways they communicate in the text, ranging from telepathy to physiognomy. While many scholars credit the modern informational network and its accuracy in capturing and reproducing the truth for defeating Count Dracula, I seek to refocus the discussion on the way Stoker challenges dominant methods of knowledge production and verification by focusing on the subjective, unverifiable, and personal aspect that llies at the heart of the increasingly mechanized truth-production apparatus.

Matty Ma. Enclosure, Linearity and the Construction of Narrative: A Joint Reading of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Fall of the House of Usher". Advisor: Prof. Tom Augst.

Abstract: This paper examines Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Fall of the House of Usher" in relation to each other, and in light of Poe's remarks on narrative construction in "The Philosophy of Composition." It looks at physical enclosures in both stories, and by extension how enclosure functions as a model for inference and narrative. Ultimately, it seeks to make sense of the apparent contradiction between Poe's insistence on constructing narratives "with the denouement constantly in view," and his own characters' breaking away from the narratives that others have planned for them.

12:00—12:30pm | Lunch and Dessert | Catered in the Event Space

12:30 |PANEL THREE [four 7 minute presentations followed by Q&A]

Katie Clark. "Space at Stake", Advisor: Prof. Carolyn Dinshaw.

Abstract: The overarching purpose of my thesis is to make a scholarly intervention into two related current global crises, one involving millions of people forced into tents and encampments and another involving peoples whose tent cultures are being globally marginalized and destroyed. I do so by reaching back to the past to illustrate the tent as a space for human agency and identity construction in the Middle Ages. Simultaneously, I identify the technology of the tent, which now stands in confrontation with recent technologies, as the complex cross-cultural precursor to some of those technologies. My thesis examines the tent in medieval literature not only as a space, but also as an object. I assert that the tent is a compositional form like the book that obscures the relationship between host and guest, between one who is familiar and one who is foreign. I argue that the tent is a peculiar space in which human agency is shared with an object, and where systems of power supported by more permanent spaces are conflated and renegotiated. Through the process of shared agency, the tent renders the medieval dweller not just a person, but one with a moving site. I assert that the the technology of the tent is now being employed and manipulated to control marginalized peoples and cultures and that this has been made possible by the foreignizing of the tent in the modern world. I evaluate the medieval tent as a space that continually appears in manuscripts to renegotiate the terms of public and private space in the Middle Ages. Moreover, I analyze the tent in medieval texts and textiles as a space-object that was used to address the topics of women's space and consent. Finally, I discuss the tent as a space-object of desire, modeled on both human and animal bodies, which allows for the ever-shifting and creative reimagining of an emergent "self" in medieval literature. I anchor my work in Marie de France's lai *Lanval* because it depicts female agency, a topic still at stake today.

Campbell Tillotson. "The Motion Picture of Dorian Gray". Advisor: Prof. Lisa Gitelman

Abstract: My thesis investigates Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) through a transmedial lens, positioning the novel as a literary work that makes an anticipatory gesture toward the advent of motion pictures. Through a close reading of the text that incorporates the author's own doctrines of aestheticism I argue that both Wilde's only novel and the accompanying circumstances of his life and celebrity, most notably his involvement in a landmark court case over the copyright laws of photographs, indicate a desire for the cinematic medium latent in art and society before the fact of its "technical" arrival.

Anna Oseran. "Sa(l)vaging Hope: Precarity, Mourning, and Multispecies Kinship in Jesmyn *Ward's Salvage the Bones*." Advisors: Prof. Nandini Thiyagarajan and Una Chaudhuri.

Abstract: This thesis aims to explore the human-nonhuman relations in Jesmyn Ward's 2011 novel *Salvage the Bones*. Using the work of Anna Tsing and her concept of 'collaborative survival' in her 2015 text *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, I explore the ways in which the characters in Ward's novel, through conditions of precarity, shared experiences of mourning, and an engagement in multispecies kinship, enact radical acts of collaboration with the nonhuman world. I argue that these three categories of collaboration are what ultimately lead to, and enable the characters' survival of Hurricane Katrina. Previous readings of human-animal relations in *Salvage the Bones* have argued that the novel blurs species lines in an effort to illustrate the precarity of black southern life. In my thesis I complicate and extend these readings by suggesting that these blurred species lines also evoke potentiality. Ward, in her retelling of one family's experience in the days leading up to Hurricane Katrina, imagines a world in which entrenched concepts of species hierarchy and mastery are partly undone.

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Megan Ferguson. "'No dreaming may stand still': Toward a Utopian Politics of Desire in Samuel Delany's *Dhalgren* and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*." Advisor: Prof. John Archer.

Abstract: My thesis project seeks to reclaim utopia's reputation. Often dismissed as series of 'impossible' desires displaced onto a future that is always 'not yet', I posit instead utopian possibility as the means through which we may be collectively incited to *act.* I engage Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940) in an exploration of works by Samuel Delany and Marge Piercy. I argue that the protagonists of their novels, *Dhalgren* (1965) and *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1966), complicate our understanding of Benjamin's messianism as inherently collective, positing instead alternative forms of collectivity: collectivity in dystopia, collectivity when imprisoned, collectivity when hope feels impossible. Ernst Bloch's *A Principle of Hope* (1954) considers that 'the dreamer' is always thinking beyond the present, however painful this present may be, reaching into projected possibility to manifest the 'not-yet' in the now. I consider, however, that the novels' depiction of hope found among the fragments of trauma marks a critical break from the European utopian tradition, and it is this shift I am interested in tracking across the novels. I suggest radical collectivity is mobilized by a liberating desire, for it is through collective desiring we may unsettle fixed linear teleologies, opening up new realms of possibility. I argue the protagonists' so-called 'madness' facilitates an ability to connect with Benjamin's 'weak messianic power' across temporalities, and is bound up with the desire to dream of new worlds —worlds, the novels allow us to consider, we may not, in fact, be powerless to create.

1:30 | Break

1:45 | PANEL FOUR [two 7 minute presentations followed by Q&A]

Julia Catalano. "What the Body Remembers:" Fashion, Borders, and Troubled Bodies in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*. Advisor: Prof. Patrick Deer.

Abstract: Using Bessel van der Kolk's 2014 *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* as a point of departure, this paper uses trauma theory, fashion theory, phenomenology, and border theory to explore the nearly invisible importance of the physical body in trauma, taking Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September* as the central object of inquiry. Van der Kolk reveals that trauma is not fully explained as a mental wound; its physical invisibility is inseparable from the obscuration of the mental wound. Van der Kolk's assertion that the body's processes continue to change along the paths instituted by trauma provides key evidence of the ways the invisibility of trauma strengthens it, both mentally and physically. Not only does trauma physiologically alter the body, but it alters the body's very experience of being in the world. Bowen's novel is full of bodies, bodies whose presence and absence are critical to the text. Trauma, when conceptualized as a wound to the mind, seems to separate the mind from the body, but the characters of *The Last September* often seem too aware of their bodies, at times unsure of what to do with them in the inundation of sensation. The trauma infusing Bowen's texts is widely recognized; as a result of the traditional conception of trauma as a wound to the mind, there is a tendency to read the bodies actually present in the text as disembodied, as less present than the houses and the past inhabitants of houses. Hardly non-present, these bodies are often overly-present, are often overly-felt. Through the lens of domesticity, Bowen engages with the problem of writing the female body, a problem which I analyze through fashion theory and feminist and queer phenomenologies. The over-presence of the Anglo-Irish bodies in the text mark a distinct absence of Irish nationalist bodies. The novel's silences around the Irish body mirrors the networks of silences in Anglo-Irish gossip that resists providing compromising information to the British, that at times works to camouflage the Irish bodies from a violent British gaze. This paper asks if this bodily absence emphasizes the social norms and constraints that kept those bodies from certain spaces or itself perpetuates those norms. The novel is structured around a system of decorum facilitated by arrivals and departures. Both present and absent bodies are constantly in movement, rotation, and discomfort, which makes them at times challenging to pin down. Furthermore, interaction between people in the text is often bodily; interactions are often defined by impact, by body bumping up against body, acknowledging bodily boundaries. This paper uses fashion theory to connect the bodily boundaries in question with spatial borders. This is a novel that questions which bodies have a right to exist in certain spaces, that questions which bodies have a right to exist in a rapidly changing Ireland, complicating the tropes of arrival and departure that structure the novel. Clothing, borders, bodies, and trauma converge on the site of memory; this paper's final section puts these sites of memory in conversation to interrogate attempts to classify and rank certain types of memory when facing the question of national definition.

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Wyatt Sarafin. "Give Us Back Our Sun:" Narrative and the Archive in William Kentridge's *The Refusal of Time*. Advisor: Prof. Wendy Lee.

Abstract: This paper will draw on the time-based media developing in William Kentridge's *The Refusal of Time* and its particular narrative engagements. That Kentridge recuperates, and does not repudiate, a narrative function is surprising and unlikely, but that recovery is the core of the installation. By "refusing" time, Kentridge opens up an experience and a theory of narrative that is neither reified time of capitalism, nor tragic and historical teleology, but rather something else entirely. An array of graphic devices is deployed—architectural blueprints, zoetrope drawings, and scientific schema. Their presence, I argue, make the claim for postcolonial "Southern temporalities," in opposition to the enterprise of European standardized time. Additionally, over the course of this paper, I hope to make an important contribution to the study of narrative across media. In Kentridge's artworks, the plastic form distances itself from but constantly intervenes in a narrative "storyworld." These interventions not only have significant implications for the study of the visual arts, but also for the ways we theorize violations of narrative levels in other hybrid media.

2:15-3:30pm | REMARKS, TOAST, FESTIVITIES

Emily Brown   "The Vanishing Corpse and the Cleansed Temple: Archaeology and National Identity in *St. Erkenwald*."

Europe in the Middle Ages was a land where the past and present were always touching. Cities contained the ruins of previous civilizations, whose culture and faith were often at odds with the Christian present. As a result, medieval Europeans destroyed many artifacts, or turned them into *spolia*, taking a piece from an artifact and using it in a new, often Christian context. The process of spoliation is illustrated in the fourteenth-century poem *St. Erkenwald,* in which seventh-century Londoners unearth the tomb of a Pagan judge, whose corpse is perfectly preserved and able to speak. By baptizing the corpse as a Christian, the Londoners attempt to reconcile their past and present. In a similar way, the poet, by forming the poem through the *spolia* of many older stories, synthesizes a new history and identity for London and for England, shaping it as the successor to Rome, destined to one day rule all of Great Britain. By reading *St. Erkenwald* through an archaeological lens, the themes of appropriation, anachronism, and identity-formation become clear as England begins its quest for empire.

Leo Johansson-Lebrón   "Thomas Browne: Empiricist Poet"

Stanley Fish famously called Thomas Browne, country doctor from Norwich and author of delirious prose pieces, a "bad physician." Contemporary reviewers were equally confounded by his writings, which largely consisted of unique meditations on topics in early modern science. What is it then about Browne that separates him from the swiftly codifying modes of scientific description that would come to define prevailing conceptions of the Enlightenment and Western modernity? I propose that an answer can be found through a formal analysis of his style. To do this, I diverge from a stylistic account of Browne's prose—which to date has been the predominant method in analyzing his language—in favor of poetics. As an empiricist poet, I argue, Browne describes the world through hieroglyphic and image rather than the objectivist representation of conventional Baconian empiricism. By mobilizing the image as a tool of empiricism, Browne opens up new frontiers of description that emphasize the limits of human perception while simultaneously subjecting theology to disruptive forms of empirical analysis. This dual movement of Browne's baroque prose therefore complicates the conventional and dominant contexts of theological and Royal Society discourse and positions Browne as not only the inventor of neologisms like "suicide" and "hallucination," but also as creator of a method of analysis that destabilizes both of the dominant forms of period knowledge and offers compelling insights into the relationship between perceiver and the world. Through my reading of Browne, I hope to show his contribution to the history of ideas, in that his de-instrumentalization of scientific discourse provides a countercurrent to some of its dominant forms of descriptive practice, emphasizing a human mastery over nature, that radiated out from the Royal Society and into the colonies—with disastrous effects.

Nick Pagano   "The Exchange of Reason: Language, Logos, and the Pharmakon in Milton's *Areopagitica*"

This paper examines John Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644) through two main philosophical concepts: logos and the pharmakon. In seeing how they're invoked in Milton's writing, we get a more nuanced picture of his currency of reason and the larger plan for the redemption of human reason that *Areopagitica* offers. I divided my paper into three parts to more precisely contain its

concepts. The first acts as the entry point into logos where I sketch its history and provide initial connections to Milton's text as well as the larger sense of tradition that allows for these types of invocations. Part two is where the three main aspects of logos are uncovered in *Areopagitica*— material as a bridge to a divine position, dynamism, specifically the dynamism of truth, and an emphasis on the unification of individual experience. In housing these features, Milton's currency of reason is given its distinctly linguistic form of instability, application, and exchangeability. In part three, the pharmakon is presented as an extension of logos, made to inhabit the other side of the currency. This final section is concerned with logos and the pharmakon's interplay in Milton's work as well as the larger implications in the history of rhetorical reproduction. In this final section, I analyze a brief section from *Paradise Lost* (1667) that I see as exemplary of Milton's cautionary approach to the pharmakon, and linguistic exchange more generally.

DJ Ross "The Early Modern Corpus: Knowledge and Destruction in John Donne's 'An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary'"

In my thesis I consider how knowledge was acquired from books and bodies in the context of early modern public anatomies and how these bodies were spoken for after their deaths. Drawing on the scholarship around early modern anatomy, as well as the executed body on the scaffold, I move to an analysis of John Donne's treatment of Elizabeth Drury, the daughter of his patron, in his 1611 poem "An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary." Donne uses the occasion of the first anniversary of Elizabeth's death to look at the disintegration of the world, and he does so via the language of anatomy. In doing this, he is also dissecting Elizabeth herself and regarding her more as separate parts and an idealized being than as a real teenage girl. This historical framework informs how the violence that Donne inflicts upon Elizabeth in cutting up her metaphorical body mirrors that which the state and the medical field enacted upon the physical bodies of disenfranchised people at the time.

Louise Akers "Nunc hic, nunc illic: On Wordsworth's Paragrammatical Physics"

How does grammar survive? Why do some linguistic mechanisms persist across millennia, while others, like the Ancient Greek Middle Voice, become obsolete? If, as Roland Barthes suggests in *The Rustle of Language,* there is no *progressive* theory of language, instead it adjusts according to material contingency rather than evolutionary complexity, is it possible to trace the suppression and resurgence of certain verbal forms? Grammar is a force of habit; invisible and susceptible, it emerges historically. Like the laws of physics, linguistic morphology renders fathomable the innumerable phenomena of language that we could not otherwise handle gracefully. In this thesis I map the ways in which the influence of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* on Wordsworth's poetics destabilizes the hyperregulated subject he advocated for in his verse at the level of grammar. I focus on the poet's use of the subjunctive mood and the Greek Middle Voice, which I argue occurs in modern English despite its nominal obsolescence, to show the ways in which radical potential and intransitive affectability link Romantic physiological notions of susceptibility with both Epicurean atomism and contemporary quantum theory.

Beatrice Masih "The Changing Tides of Empire: The Motif of the Sea and the Development of Character in *Dombey and Son*"

This thesis examines the use of the motif of the sea in Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son*. By doing so, I argue that Dickens uses this motif as a stand in for the cultural impact of British imperialism on identity formation. Specifically, I examine key moments in Florence Dombey's character arc to establish a relationship between colonialism and the development of a sense of self. I also take up other characters' relations to the sea and more broadly to waterways. Engaging with discourse on Victorian maritime fiction, I position Dickens' novel as not only a domestic fiction, but one that also mobilizes key elements of the maritime. By doing so, I suggest that *Dombey and Son* exemplifies the complex and nuanced nature of the relationship between the individual and the British Empire. Much criticism on this novel centers on the domestic plot and family structures and how those mediate shifting ideas about class and family position. I wish to pivot the conversation to engage with how these critical insights are being impacted by the mobilization of the recurrent motif of the sea.

Jagreet Sekhon   "The Emperor Has No Clothes, or, Narrative Metalepsis in *Sartor Resartus*"

The goal of my project is to illuminate how Thomas Carlyle's rhetorical uptake of Augustan polemics, as well as his analyses of German Romanticism, influenced the paradoxical narratology of *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34), a phenomenological intermixing of literary and philosophic traditions. I do not claim that the work is necessarily a first and last of its kind, but that it is a noteworthy first which informed a series of lasts: as George Eliot remarked, "the reading of *Sartor Resartus* was an epoch in the history of their [generation's] minds." Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Gérard Genette, Elaine Freedgood, and Anne Mellor, I will focus on the ways in which narrative metalepsis and romantic irony work in *Sartor Resartus* to construct an intentionally self-conscious narrative that signals its own ontological flexibility. Thomas Carlyle manages to instill a doubt that ruptures notions of "Reality" in the Age of Enlightenment, as the reader toggles between factual and fictional worlds through a complex form of realism. This rupture invites the reader to "become a Seeing man" (93) and imagine a multiplicity of worlds, which force the reader to reckon with distinctly British and German ideologies; the complexity of *Sartor Resartus* thus arises from its highly difficult performance as a *balancing* act, in which one ideology must never entirely subsume the other. We, as readers, are always faced with (at least) two worlds, and two characters, that may never agree but must always coexist.

Sarah Schwartz   "What Makes a Copy a Copy? Digital Consciousness and the Artificial Other in Greg Egan's *Permutation City* and 'Learning to Be Me?'"

In my thesis, I examine Australian 'hard science fiction' author Greg Egan's novel *Permutation City* (1994) and his short story "Learning to Be Me" (1990) where I map the ontological concerns that arise from transhumanist philosophy as they are juxtaposed to the concerns Egan attributes to digital consciousness, the Artificial Other, and human personal identity. Transhumanism is a social, political, and philosophical movement borne from Enlightenment thinking that argues for the improvement of the human condition through advanced technology. One such theoretical transhumanist technology is whole brain emulation (WBE) or digital consciousness. WBE is a theoretical technology that works to scan the brain's structure and develop a faithful software model of it, this model can then be used to create a digital persona of the scanned person's brain. In his work, Egan grapples with the complexities of the WBE process as he questions transhumanism's literal take on a theoretical technology. While readers and scholars have analyzed how Egan tests the limits of hard sf, they have failed to discuss his specific relationship with transhumanism or the way he disagrees with the transhumanist understanding of hard sf. I

argue that Egan's works persist as theoretical texts that challenge transhumanist philosophy by suggesting inconsistencies between a digital copy of a person and its original. I first turn to Egan's novel *Permutation City* (1994) to understand Egan's perception of the difference between a digital copy of a person and a 'real' person and then turn to his short story "Learning to Be Me" (1990) which further explores the nature of technological consciousness and questions if the physical death of the brain is equal to the death of the person it inhabits.

Camille Baptista   "My ppl, yr napalm: American English in the Neocolony"

Faith Jeffers   "Reading for Revolution: The Politics, Aesthetics, and Literary History of 2020's Antiracist Reading Lists"

This paper examines the literary and political function of the antiracist reading lists that proliferated on social media in the summer of 2020 by tending to questions of *what*, *how*, and *why* we read in moments of political upheaval and revolutionary possibility. Addressing critiques that caution against the didactic conflation of "antiracist self-help" (e.g. *Me and White Supremacy*) with Black fiction, the paper defends the lists' generic variety, which requires an interdisciplinary reading method drawn from the tradition of Black critical studies. Through a close reading of one of the most prominent and hotly contested works of literature on the lists, *The Bluest Eye*, along with analysis of Ibram X. Kendi's widely circulated reading list, antiracism emerges not as a genre of literature, but as an ideologically-oriented, reparative reading method. This paper engages the literary history of antiracist reading lists with John Guillory's study of canon formation and Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's theory of study within and beyond academic institutions. Through these frames, antiracist reading lists emerge as modern iterations of para-institutional collective sites of study, engaging centuries-old debates over the politics and aesthetics of Black literature and the function of pedagogy in racial formation and liberatory possibility.

Kelly Saenz   "The Disrupted Memory and Cold War Storytelling in McMurtry's *The Last Picture Show* and Thomas Rivera's *And the Darth Did Not Devour Him*"

Through a close reading of Larry McMurtry's *The Last Picture Show* and Tomas Rivera's *...And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*, my thesis argues that the novels, set in Texas during the Korean War, destabilize the dominant Cold War narratives about Texas propagated by the Western genre and uncover new modes of storytelling and remembering. This allows for the possibility of new conceptions of Texan and Tejano identities.

Yuxin Zheng   "Beyond a Paper Son's Chinatown: Spatial Politics in Fae Myenne Ng's *Steer Toward Rock*"

This thesis examines the spatial politics of Chinatown in Chinese American author Fae Myenne Ng's second novel *Steer Toward Rock* (2008). Setting the story of a paper son in San Francisco Chinatown during the 1960s, Ng foregrounds various physical, mental, and symbolic spaces throughout the novel. As Ng builds organic links between Chinese American individuals and Chinatown, the U.S. mainstream society, and China in her story-telling, she represents Chinese immigration history as embodied human experiences grounded in concrete spaces across geographic boundaries and time. To explore Ng's construction of a transnational and

intergeneration Chinese immigration story, I draw on the works by Asian American scholars such as Sau-ling Cynthia Wong and Wenying Xu to examine Chinatown as an intimate home, a family space, a space of labor, and a liminal space between the U.S. and China in *Steer Toward Rock*, specifically by close-reading the characters' movements within and beyond Chinatown, their multifaceted relationships with the place, and Chinatown's internal and external conflicts.

Parth Chhabra   "The Lion, the Robot, and the Zoo: Speculative Fictions of Urban Transformation in Contemporary Singapore"

In my thesis project, I read two works of contemporary speculative fiction from Singapore—*Lion City* by Ng Yi-Sheng and *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye* by Sonny Liew—against a critical landscape engaged with questions about the relationship between speculation, urban form, and futurity. Using the work of theorists who position the urban landscape of Singapore itself as a kind of speculative fiction, I argue that these texts find themselves entangled with and responding to the state and capital's visions of the future. Rather than simply resisting capitalist futurities, *Lion City* imaginatively recreates the state's speculations at various sites (the zoo, the mall, the airport) to literalize and critique its underpinning logics. Liew's graphic novel, on the other hand, uses various speculative modes to allow us to access the affects of radical possibility experienced (and subsequently shut down) in Singapore's early postcolonial history. In this way, both works redescribe Singapore's history and urban landscape to critique the city-state's capitalist practices and transformations.

ENGLISH MA THESIS PRESENTATIONS
Friday May 6th, 2022 - Event Space

<u>Program</u>

9:45 – Coffee
9:55 – Welcome: Jini Kim Watson, MA Director

<u>10:00-11.00 Panel 1</u>

Mandy Abokhair   **Advisor:** McDowell   **Reader**: Regaignon
Factoring the Facsimile: An Exploration of the Manuscript and Facsimile of Mary
Shelley's *Mathilda*

Katherine Humes   **Advisor:** Lee   **Reader:** Crain
"It takes but a moment of imagination": A Rereading of Emily Dickinson's Prose Fragments and
Drafts

James Douglas   **Advisor:** Baker   **Reader:** Gilman
Signifying (sur)Faces: The Face, Interpretation, and Subjectivity in *Moby-Dick*.

Michael Tingley   **Advisor:** Mann   **Reader:** Wofford
Greater Than Almanacs Can Report: A Theory of Theatrical Quality and Wind as Actor in the
Plays of William Shakespeare

11:00-11:15 – break

<u>11.15-12.15 Panel 2</u>

Theara Coleman   **Advisor:** Posmentier   **Reader:** McHenry
Mother-Wit and Communal Inheritance: Conjure Feminism in Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in
the Ring*

Emile Hu   **Advisor:** Watson   **Reader:** Trujillo
"Only Fathers Lived There": Settler Colonial Refusals in Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor was
Divine*

Ruby Wang   **Advisor:** Watson   **Reader:** Deer
I'll leave it up to your imagination: Ethical Postmemory Poetics in Don Mee Choi's *DMZ
Colony*

Jasmine Precious   **Advisor:** Bianchi   **Reader:** Mann
Haemon as Parthenos: Relationality in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and Sophocles' *Antigone*

Thesis Abstracts (in order of presentations)

Mandy Abokhair   **Advisor:** Paula McDowell
Factoring the Facsimile: An Exploration of the Manuscript and Facsimile of Mary
    Shelley's *Mathilda*

Facsimiles of manuscripts are used as tools for accessibility; they take what is on the manuscript page and present it in a way that is more readable and approachable. While recreating the original, they also operate as their own object separate from the manuscript, their own rhetorical genre. Looking at the manuscript and facsimile of Mary Shelley's *Mathilda*, it becomes clear that facsimile is a valuable tool for researchers. Both active and retroactive edits are found in *Mathilda*—active edits being edits made in the process of writing the page and retroactive edits being edits made after the page was completed. The interiority and physical environment of Shelley is expressed within both the manuscript and facsimile; the facsimile simply presents it in an accessible way. In a facsimile edition, the editor's presence is evident; one can see their decisions working alongside the author's, as they choose what to keep and what to edit out of the facsimile. Beyond its reproducibility, elements such as typed text instead of handwritten, modernized spellings, clarifications in layout, and other small changes mean that the facsimile becomes an object in which multiple audiences can explore; it is no longer limited by physical access or readability.

Katherine Humes   **Advisor:** Wendy Lee
 "It takes but a moment of imagination": Reclaiming Emily Dickinson's Prose Fragments
    and Drafts

In claiming the status of Emily Dickinson's prose fragments and drafts as complete poems, I emphasize their visual arrangement, material shaping, and textual orientation. The interactive rhythms of these fragments exemplify Dickinson's signature poetics and deserve analysis alongside the canonical poems. My thesis joins the conversation begun by feminist critics Adrienne Rich, Susan Howe, Marta Werner, and Virginia Jackson around the visual orientation of Dickinson's manuscripts. My goal is to orient the manuscripts known variously as "scraps," "prose fragments," and "drafts,"—the writings never editorially recognized as "poems"—at the center of Dickinson's poetics. Collectively, these manuscripts are not recognized as complete poems, and the prose fragments are not recognized as poems at all. Through a series of comparative readings, I argue these "extrageneric materials," as Werner calls them, are not only visually and materially consistent with the recognized poems. My readings demonstrate how the material surface and markings must be treated as integral to the poem. In the formative editorial and print history of Dickinson's work, a battleground between masculine institutions and editors and feminine (and feminist) critics over practices of circulation and experience emerges. Dickinson's editors preferred a standardizing approach—though maintaining eccentricities such as dashes, capitalization, and spelling—altering the shape of the poems and choosing a single word where often several are supplied; on the other hand, feminist critics argue for a holistic approach, positing the visual and material elements of Dickinson's poetry are equally important as prosody. My thesis builds on the scholarship of Howe, Werner, and Jackson to argue the prose fragments and drafts can be treated as poems rather than as drafts and/or fragments.

James Douglas   **Advisor:** Jennifer Baker
Signifying (sur)Faces: The Face, Interpretation, and Subjectivity in *Moby-Dick*
As many scholars have claimed, *Moby-Dick* is a novel obsessed with interpretation. This essay seeks to extend that argument, specifically at the textual level of faces and facial interpretation. Melville uses faces to probe the limits of facial interpretation and to explore how facial interpretation constitutes subjectivity. To carry this out Melville treats the face as an interpretable surface, a text filled with marks and signs. These signs compel the reader of the face—usually Ishmael, but also Ahab—to attempt to decipher the face's meaning. Melville's intense attention to faces also significantly demonstrates that the production of subjectivity flows through faces, both in active interpreting and in being interpreted. This two-way process—of interpreting and being interpreted, of looking at a face and the face "looking" in its outward appearance—is a function of what Deleuze and Guattari call the "binarization" or "biunivocalization" of the face. In other words, the face comes into being always-already in relation to (at least) one other facial subject. This essay examines a variety of faces, not all of which are animate or even textually present: these include the "face" of the doubloon; Ahab's lined, despotic face; the whale's inscrutable face; and Ishmael's absent face. The interpretation of the face in Melville's novel exposes the instability, slipperiness, and maddening interminability of interpretation itself, whether of faces in the novel or of the novel as a textual whole; and the novel establishes the principal role of facial interpretation in the interpellation of the human subject. As readers we have no choice but to be swept into the novel's swirling vortex of interpretation—and interpret the face we must, if only in response to Ishmael's invitation to us to engage the whale's face: "I but put that brow before you. Read it if you can."

Michael Tingley   **Advisor:** Jenny Mann
Prithee, Allow the Wind: Shakespeare's Elemental Stag
Fewer than ten extant accounts constitute the body of our knowledge of sixteenth-century playgoing experiences. This paper proposes an historical phenomenological method to relish in the vanished details of early modern playing and challenge period-bound assumptions. Logics of representation consider whether a cloud floating over the Globe in 1602 loses its credentials to reality and bends to theatrical submission because Hamlet gestures to it. Shakespeare's scripts pluck out and encode one or two of the actual meteorological elements a playgoer could be experiencing as when Hamlet asks, with equal effort to antagonize Polonius and convince him of his madness, "Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?" then "a weasel" and finally "a whale" – is this enough to make the weather play? What are the borders of an amphitheater, and can actors theatricalize the firmament? Incentivized by these questions, I bring my argument that drama unveils a thing's theatrical quality – its potential to act within a narrative – to mentions and personifications of wind in Shakespeare's plays. Such referrals reflexively highlight the audience's theatrical experience, hailing the wind and enrolling it as a non-human actor, in both the dramatic and Latourian senses. Experienced only as a touching, wind embodies and locates an audience. Consequently, accounts of early modern playing that confine the practice to representing reality forget the borderless wind and the role it plays as an unrepresentable actor in Shakespeare's corpus.

Theara Coleman   **Advisor:** Sonya Posmentier
Mother-Wit and Communal Inheritance: Conjure Feminism in Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring*

This thesis examines fictional representations of conjure in Black women's fiction, focusing on the ramifications of speculative fiction on the preservation and redistribution of traditional spiritual knowledge that could otherwise be inaccessible to culturally disenfranchised Black people. In reading Nalo Hopkinson's post-apocalyptic novel *Brown Girl in The Ring* and drawing on the scholarship of conjure feminists, I aim to illuminate how both she and her fiction are conduits to the intellectual inheritance of conjure. Conjure is the folk magic tradition of African Americans rooted in the practices of ancestral veneration, spirit work, and herbalism. Historically, conjure rituals and the intellectual history of conjure has been passed down intergenerationally through our maternal elders. Though these practices are not gender-exclusive, there is an enduring image of the conjure woman being the conduit for disseminating the rituals and history of the tradition. After years of spiritual assimilation and lost ancestral knowledge, many of us who lack access to spiritual elders turn to Black women's fiction for examples of the tenets of conjure in practice. Black feminist theorists conceptualized *Conjure Feminism* to think about the enduring histories of conjure interwoven into Black women's writing practices in the form of "mother-wit, root medicine, food as ancestral memory, mothering, and spirit work." Black women's fiction provides an opportunity to see the tenets of conjure in practice for those orphaned from the tradition of matrilineal knowledge inheritance. I argue that works of black speculative fiction, such as B*rown Girl in The Ring,* are a fertile medium for representations of conjure and that they serve as an entryway into the intellectual inheritance of our foremothers. Black female writers like Hopkinson embody the conjure woman in their capacities as world builders and gatekeepers of the magic of conjure.

Emile Hu   **Advisor:** Jini Kim Watson
"Only Fathers Lived There": Settler Colonial Refusals in Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor was Divine*

When the Emperor was Divine contends with the role of literary representation in both its immediate context of Japanese American Internment and the continuing histories of U.S. settler colonialism. While the novel performs an obedient historical trajectory of internment history, its representation of namelessness and anonymity track onto a reading of racialized identity that is displaced from the individual and onto the land through which they move. I trace Julie Otsuka's refusal of identity through the text's dynamic point of view that moves from the third person perspective of the family, as unnamed historical agents, to the collective "we" voice, then to the father's first-person account. Although absent of an embodied encounter between Asian and Native, *When the Emperor was Divine* calls for an analysis of internment alongside settler colonialism through its engagement with the Asian settler figure and the legal redress presented in the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. How does the novel's encounters with the colonial genealogy of land intersect with the subjects' ability to assume recognized social and political positions or points of view? How does the aesthetic form of Otsuka's novel balance the tension between collectivity and incorporation in relation to U.S. multiethnic literature? Through my reading of *When the Emperor was Divine*, I hope to destabilize the temporal and spatial containments of internment history within the larger U.S. imaginary.

Ruby Wang   **Advisor:** Jini Kim Watson
I'll leave it up to your imagination: Ethical Postmemory Poetics in Don Mee Choi's *DMZ Colony*

Situated in the context of the global Cold War, my thesis examines Don Mee Choi's *DMZ Colony* (2020) as a book of ethical postmemory poetry that engages with the history and memory of the Korean War. Choi reimagines the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) as a site for poetic and intertextual intervention weaving together poetry, prose, photographs, and drawings, amongst other materials and forms. Grappling with a fraught history that has been forgotten, repressed, and deliberately erased, Choi resists dominant and official narratives perpetrated by the United States and the South Korean state as powerful agents of memory. If US memory equates the Korean War to the Forgotten War, I also look at how South Korean memory is shadowed by the traumatic effects of the war and the longer condition of South Korea as an authoritarian neocolony. My thesis draws from Marianne Hirsh and her concept of postmemory in which traumatic memories can be passed on and disseminated to those who did not experience the traumatic events firsthand. By using a postmemory poetics as her method of representation, I argue that Choi maintains an ethical distance from victims of trauma, and this space opens up new possibilities of interpretation and intervention as she weaves together both the real and imaginary to fill in and draw attention to gaps where history has been obscured. Thus, *DMZ Colony* engages in the double work of remembering the forgotten and silenced while simultaneously (re)imagining the present, and therefore, future.

Jasmine Precious   **Advisor:** Emanuela Bianchi
The Bride of Hades: Relational Matter in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and Sophocles' *Antigone*

In this paper, I argue that the bride of Hades motif in *Antigone* conceives of death as a valued state, rather than signifying a sterile end. I follow a recent trend in utilizing the concepts of new materialism to explore Greek tragedy, a genre that has a "deep sense of its own materiality" (Telò and Mueller 2). I begin by offering a reading of the archetypal bride of Hades, Persephone, in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Persephone's transition from object of exchange to speaking subject figures the "positive ontology of matter" (Bennett x) and challenges the hierarchical cosmic order of the hymn. The poem suggests the interdependence of the realms of the living and the dead, anthropomorphizing the eternal life of vibrant matter through the bride of Hades. In *Antigone*, the heroine gives voice to untamed nature, challenging the sovereignty of the political order and suggesting the interdependence of the earthly and the human. Receptivity and change become valued capacities. These are integrated into the political order by the male parthenos, Haemon, who, like Antigone, becomes a spouse of Hades.