

Department of English Newsletter

Words Matter

Spring 2021 * Volume X, Issue II

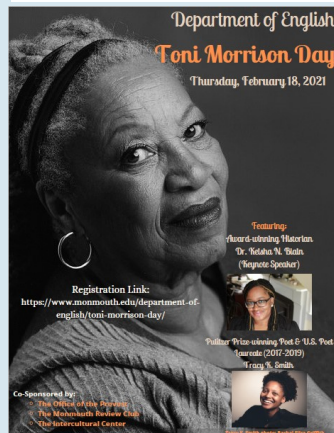
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Second Annual Toni Morrison Day Celebrates African American Author

by Melissa Badamo '21



The second annual Toni Morrison Day, hosted by the Department of English, took place via Zoom on Thursday, Feb. 18. The all-day event celebrated the life of late African American author Toni Morrison and the conversations

of race and marginalization highlighted throughout her novels. The event was co-sponsored by the Office of the Provost, the Monmouth Review Club, and the Intercultural Center.

"This event, although only being held for two years, is so important to the Monmouth English Department community," said Gabriella Arabio, a senior English student who presented at the student symposium portion of the event, where students presented academic pieces surrounding the topics of race and gender. "Through the works of Toni Morrison and other great writers, students and faculty can expand their interests and points of view on important topics such as gender equalities and race."

The event began with a faculty pedagogy panel featuring Dr. Heide Estes, Beth Swanson, and Dr. Abha Sood of the English Department, Dr. Walter Greason of Educational Counseling and Leadership, and Anne Deepak of the School of Social Work. The event followed with a keynote address from Dr. Keshia N. Blain, Associate Professor of African American History at the University of Pittsburgh.

"When we began planning Toni Morrison Day back in September, we knew there was a strong likelihood that it would need to be all virtual this year to accommodate the COVID-19 health crisis, and we decided to approach it as an opportunity, rather than a chal-

Continued on page 2

A Note from the Chair: Dr. Susan Goulding



I will follow in Amanda Gorman's path, and say we have (almost) climbed a hill—individually, and collectively.

What we do now, though, will be the measure of who we are; from the perspective near the top of a hill, we must see our world differently than we did before. There is not to be a return to "normal," for normal has been revealed as rife with inequity, and the suffering and death that have surrounded us will bring a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live. My hope is that this hill has demonstrated the vitality of literature and art, of writing itself, as where we turn for comfort, how we effect change, and how we trans-

form and are transformed. There will be more hills ahead, the peaks and valleys inherent in the human experience. As we move forward, let us be the champions of all that literature and writing—and communities of their study—can do. Let us be enveloped, this year, by the promise of spring, by its possibilities, and its life as we reflect on and grow from our experiences this past year. Be well, and stay safe.

Read youth poet laureate Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem, 'The Hill We Climb' on [CNN.com](https://www.cnn.com).

10:00-10:15 Faculty Preceptor Panel
Moderator: John C. Smith

Panelists:
• Hilda Klee: "Black English, Language Ideologies, and the History of the English Language"
• Walter D. Mignolo: "Global Coloniality: Culture, Power, Knowledge, and the Politics of Education"
• Robyn Wiegman: "Thinking in a Time of Migration: Using African American Literature to Reconsider and Reimagine the Colonial/Imperial Literary Canon"
• Asha Bush: "Racialized Bodies, Wounded Souls: Toni Morrison's 'Sula'"
• Renee Weigman: "Disfranchisement and the 'Sula'"
• James Louis-Jacques: "Sula: A Representation of the Black Experience"
• Nikki Ort: "The Sula Experience"
• Latisha Liang: "Sula: A Representation of the Black Experience"

10:15-10:30 Faculty Preceptor Panel
Moderator: John C. Smith

Panelists:
• Asha Bush: "Racialized Bodies, Wounded Souls: Toni Morrison's 'Sula'"
• Renee Weigman: "Disfranchisement and the 'Sula'"
• James Louis-Jacques: "Sula: A Representation of the Black Experience"
• Nikki Ort: "The Sula Experience"
• Latisha Liang: "Sula: A Representation of the Black Experience"

10:30-10:45 Student Symposium
Moderator: John C. Smith

Panelists:
• Asha Bush: "Racialized Bodies, Wounded Souls: Toni Morrison's 'Sula'"
• Renee Weigman: "Disfranchisement and the 'Sula'"
• James Louis-Jacques: "Sula: A Representation of the Black Experience"
• Nikki Ort: "The Sula Experience"
• Latisha Liang: "Sula: A Representation of the Black Experience"

10:45-11:00 Keynote Speaker: Dr. Estelle N. Blaustein
Moderator: John C. Smith

Panelists:
• Dr. Estelle N. Blaustein: "What the Black Women Think: The Story of Toni Morrison"



Dr. Estelle N. Blaustein is an associate professor of English at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. She is the author of *What the Black Women Think: The Story of Toni Morrison* and co-author of *Black Women Think: The Story of Toni Morrison*.



Tracy K. Smith is the 2012 Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Life on Mars*. She is also the author of *Hope for the Hungry* and *When Did You Leave the City?* She is the co-author of *The Book of David* and *The Book of Ruth*.

Second Annual Toni Morrison Day (Continued from page 1)

lenge," said Beth Swanson, Lecturer of English and Advisor of Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honor Society. "Hosting the event remotely actually worked in our favor because it enabled us to expand our outreach beyond campus. We were able to invite guests and include participants from a much larger community, which resulted in a much more high-profile event."

The student symposium continued afterwards, featuring scholarly readings from five students: MA English student Anthony Clark on the topic of colorism in Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*; sophomore music student Jenae Louis-Jacques on race and cinematography; senior English education student Nikki Ort on the oppression of women in a male-dominated society found in Morrison's novel *Sula*; senior English education student Gabriella Arabio on feminism within the entertainment industry; and English student Latisha Liang on the racial injustice and violence explored in Marilyn Nelson's poem "A Wreath for Emmett Till."

"Presenting my paper for Toni Morrison Day was such a profound experience," Clark said. "Given the powerful literary titan that Morrison is, it was such an honor to be able to discuss her work. She is someone who I have always looked up to both personally and in my writing life, because of her courage to write about emotionally taxing subjects that shift our consciousness."

"The experience of presenting my work at the Toni Morrison Day Event was very rewarding," Arabio said. "The entire audience at the event was extremely supportive and asked thought-provoking questions about the

works presented."

Swanson said, "I felt really inspired by the Student Symposium because so many of the participants were either members of Sigma Tau Delta or former students of mine, and it was wonderful to see how empowered they were by sharing their work and how their presentations led to really important cultural conversations with other students and faculty who attended the session."

The day concluded with a reading by multi-award-winning author, Tracy K. Smith, who received the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and served as 22nd Poet Laureate of the United States from 2017 to 2019. Smith recited poems about femininity, racial identity and culture, sexuality, and power.

"Planning and participating in Tracy K. Smith's readings was truly an honor," said Melissa Lauria, senior English student, President of Sigma Tau Delta, and Editor-in-Chief of the *Monmouth Review*, the student-run literary magazine. "Smith's poetry beautifully follows in Morrison's footsteps, but also celebrates its own nuance and uniqueness. I was absolutely thrilled with the turnout from both faculty and students alike."

Swanson also said that she was thrilled with the turnout of each event. "I couldn't believe the surge in registration we received when our registration went live," she said. "I'm also very grateful to many of our campus partners—like the Honors School, the Intercultural Center, and PGIS—who helped us with promotional outreach. I remember watching the waiting rooms on each Zoom call and being amazed by how many people not

only participated in the celebration, but also attended multiple events throughout the day."

Morrison received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Nobel Prize in Literature. Notable works include *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), and *Beloved* (1987). Feb. 18 would have been Morrison's 90th birthday.

"I believe that students and faculty alike can connect with Toni Morrison's works and legacy, because every archetype of African American people are represented in her books," Clark said. "Thus, she is one of the many authors who have reminded us that African American people are not a monolith. Her works are just as timely in the present day as they were during their initial publications, because the topics that she wrote about are still happening today."

"I hope Toni Morrison Day eventually evolves into an annual whole-campus event, so it sounds like we are off to a promising start," Swanson said. "Toni Morrison's legacy is so far-reaching... I think as a campus community—and as a human community—we share the responsibility to advocate for cultural change that will cut paths towards equality, equity, and the type of shared future Morrison envisioned. I believe this is what Toni Morrison Day really stands for—an opportunity to come together and recommit ourselves to being better, more self-aware, more culturally-responsive, more empathetic, kinder."

Reprinted with permission from Melissa Badamo, *The Outlook* Vol. 93, (Fall 2020-Spring 2021), published February 24, 2021.

Click to view the full schedule.

"Hosting the event remotely actually worked in our favor because it enabled us to expand our outreach beyond campus."

- Prof. Swanson

Dr. Keshia Blain Delivers Keynote Address at Toni Morrison Day

by Melissa Badamo '21

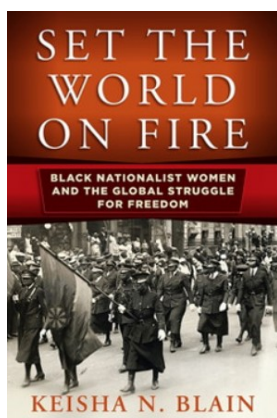
On February 18, 2021, the English Department welcomed author and historian Dr. Keshia N. Blain as the keynote speaker for the second annual Toni Morrison Day. Her keynote address, titled, "What the Black Woman Thinks: The Fiery Pen of Toni Morrison," highlighted the legacy of the Nobel Prize-winning author and discussed a 1971 op-ed Morrison wrote for the *New York Times* about Black women writers.

Blain is known for her extensive publications on the topic of African American history. Her most recent publication, *Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America 1619-2019*, was published in February 2021 and became a #1 New York Times Bestseller. Co-edited with author, professor, and antiracist activist Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, the book features historical essays, short stories, and personal narratives from a community of 90 writers to depict the 400-year journey of African Americans.

Blain has also authored the multi-prize-winning book *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (2018) and co-edited three other books: *To Turn the Whole World Over: Black Women and Internationalism* (2019); *New Perspectives on the Black Intellectual Tradition* (2018); and *Charleston Syllabus: Readings on Race, Racism, and Racial Violence* (2016). Blain's publisher, University of Pennsylvania Press, offered a 30-percent discount of *Set the World on Fire* to Toni Morrison Day attendees from February 11-21.

Blain received her Ph.D. from Princeton University in 2014 and is now an Associate Profes-

sor at the University of Pittsburgh, where she teaches Civil Rights and Black Power, Black Internationalism, and African American Women's History. She is also president of the African American Intellectual History Society and serves as an editor for the *Washington Post's* political history blog, "Made by History." She is currently completing a fellowship at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University.



Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.
Image Taken from Amazon website.

Alex Gilvarry, Assistant Professor of English and Director of the MFA in Creative Writing Program, was instrumental in bringing Blain to Monmouth for Toni Morrison Day. "She was recommended to me by Professor Walter Greason," Gilvarry said. "She had given this really amazing talk at NYU for their Global Studies department. I asked her if she'd like to do our keynote talk on Toni Morrison Day, and she said yes. We were very fortunate to have such a successful historian and New York Times bestseller."

Blain's keynote address also

mentioned her upcoming book, *Until I Am Free: Fannie Lou Hamer's Enduring Message to America*, which will be published on October 5, 2021. The biography highlights Black civil rights activist Fanny Lou Hamer's political ideas and their role in tackling contemporary political issues such as voter suppression, police violence, and economic inequality.

"Her work is so important, especially in this time," Gilvarry said. "We've had so many deaths last summer of Black men and women, and her work focuses on civil rights, the history of civil rights, and people who have not been really written about yet in such detail. Major figures like Fanny Lou Hamer just aren't really taught." Anwar Uhuru, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of English, noted a parallel between Blain's works and the material they teach at Monmouth. "Her work reflects intellectual history," Uhuru said. "I look at the intellectual contributions that have been made of people of African descent. I look at the written artifacts that often appear in literature, so there is that intersection in our work."

Both Uhuru's courses (including Afro-Diaspora Literature, 20th Century African American Literature, and Africana Studies) and Blain's texts explore the history of African Americans from enslavement in the 1600s to present. Uhuru plans on teaching Blain's works in future courses.

"Keisha Blain's work really thinks about women of African descent," Uhuru said. "She's in conversation with other scholars who look at women's intellectual history contributions." Uhuru also mentioned that Blain's works on African American history can help students think about history through multiple perspectives.

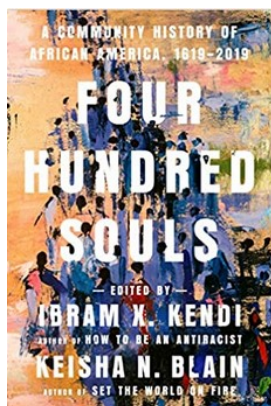
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Dr. Keshia N. Blain,
Keynote Speaker

"Keisha Blain's work really thinks about women of African descent. She's in conversation with other scholars who look at women's intellectual history contributions."

- Dr. Uhuru



Four Hundred Souls:
A Community History of
African America, 1619-
2019. One World, 2021.
Image Taken from Amazon
website.

Dr. Keshia Blain . . . (Continued from page 3)

"In my education—and I find it similar to students I teach—it's taught a specific way from one perspective," Uhuru said. "We're taught who discovered America, who our founding fore parents were, and of course we know that it has been contested—and rightfully so—that we can't discover something that already was established and occupied. Often we say, 'founding fathers,' which excludes women and people of color. That automatically makes students reimagine what our country and world look like."

Uhuru also praised the accessibility of Blain's works. "It's not written in this thick, academic speech, so you can actually read her texts and grapple with it as opposed to having to have an Oxford English Dictionary next to you as you're reading it," they said. "It's readable and approachable."

Zaneta Rago-Craft, Ph.D., Director of the Intercultural Center, also noted the importance of Blain's work within today's political climate. "Dr. Blain's publications are incredibly timely and interdisciplinary in nature," she said. "I think many different students, regardless of what they're studying, can find an

entry point into her scholarship that aligns with their interests. Dr. Blain's most recent edited volume, *Four Hundred Souls*, is also a powerful collection of voices including authors, scholars, artists, and activists that center Black history, organizing, liberation and resilience. I think those themes are important for all of our students to understand."

Although Rago-Craft was unable to attend Blain's keynote address, the Intercultural Center co-sponsored Toni Morrison Day as part of Black History Month programming, which included fiscal and marketing support.

Gilvarry said that about 65 people—including students, professors, and community members—attended Blain's keynote address. "[It] was a great showing for this event because it's only our second annual Toni Morrison Day," he said. "I think last year, we only had like 20 people. We kind of tripled the number this time, which is great...[Zoom] has been good for events like this. Even people who don't live in New Jersey were Zooming in from wherever they were in the country." Toni Morrison Day has already

become a staple in the English Department, as students and professors came together to honor the life and legacy of the late Nobel-prize winning author for two consecutive years. In years to come, the event will continue to grow as additional guest speakers contribute to the conversations about race and gender that Morrison explores in her novels.

Gilvarry also spoke on the future of Toni Morrison Day at Monmouth. "The goal is to bring in a different speaker, scholar, or author of Black literature and history," he said. "We want to find scholars whose work resonates with Toni Morrison's message and resonates with Toni Morrison's work as a Nobel Prize-winning author and an activist."

He continued, "At first, last year it was really more focused on Toni Morrison and her work, and now this year and the year to come, we're broadening the scope of guests where we're going to use it as a day to talk about broader issues in African American history—the issues Toni Morrison was writing about and fighting for."

Reflections on 'Toni Morrison Day 2021'

by Tony Nicholas Clark



When I first heard about calls for students to submit papers for presentation at Toni Morrison Day, I was very excited. Morrison is a quintessential writer who I have always looked up to with much reverence. She captured the trials and triumphs of Black Americans through characters who were as complicated as they were uncomplicated. Through them, she un-

earthed generations of trauma so that the painful experiences of black people would not be forgotten. She was a catalyst for the collective healing of the Black community, by way of encouraging us to reclaim our humanity and continue pressing onward. Morrison has inspired me to use my own writing for the same reasons -- to continue the tradition of "writing for healing." Thus, I want-

ed to participate in Toni Morrison Day, because it has become increasingly more urgent for her work to be discussed and celebrated en masse. The topics that she wrote about are still very relevant in the present day. In order to better understand the ongoing issues of racism, poverty, generational trauma, misogyny, et. al, we

Continued on page 6

Tracy K. Smith Joins Monmouth University's Second Annual Toni Morrison Day

by Faith Earl, M.A. '21

On February 18th, we celebrated the life, works, and legacy of Toni Morrison with Monmouth University's Second annual Toni Morrison Day-- a well-attended event co-sponsored by the Monmouth Review Student Club. This year, we gathered virtually to spend the late Toni Morrison's birthday hearing students, faculty members, and guests speak about Morrison and her legacy as a much celebrated writer and public intellectual whose work explored with unprecedented breadth and complexity issues of racial identity, racial discrimination and violence, Black lives and Black pride, and America's history. Amongst our guest speakers was Pulitzer-prize winning poet Tracy K. Smith, who was introduced by the Monmouth Review's Vice President, Melissa Lauria. Smith served two terms as the Poet Laureate of the United States (2017-2019), and has published four poetry collections, including *Life on Mars*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 2012. Smith, who currently serves as a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, is also the creator of the podcast "The Slowdown," which aims to make poetry accessible and encourages people to make poetry a part of their daily lives. Her work as a poet is deeply invested in voicing the experience of people of color in America and, like Morrison, she draws attention to this country's injustices and wounds, as well as to those aspects that invite celebration and offer hope.

Smith mentioned that in her work, she is constantly coming back to the questions, "What do we do to one another?" and, "What is the effect?" She aims to figure out what choices are made when it comes to our

relationship to the world and one another, and what the effects of these choices may be. She views poetry, and art in general, as a necessity because of the way it urges us to make use of our imaginations, stating that "so much of what we could begin to care about is something that our imagination can alert us to and set in motion." Thus, art and poetry become vehicles that can move us towards a better understanding of ourselves, one another, and the relationship between ourselves and others.

Smith opened her reading by sharing with the audience that she believes her poetry and poetry in general "is about listening past the voices and expectations that we live with in our conscious lives, and listening for undercurrents or cross currents [and] counter currents that can be useful, illuminating, [and] startling." In her poem "Declaration," which is an erasure poem of the Declaration of Independence, this is precisely what she does. This erasure, Smith says, "bears witness to the nature of Black experience in this country over the centuries," by searching the text for the under-currents of their story. The poem extracts the African American voices from a document that is monumental in American history that suppressed or erased them: We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here.

—taken Captive
on the high Seas
to bear—

Smith 'silences' parts of the document in order to give voice to those who had been

unjustly silenced, demonstrating the immense capacity of language and poetry to empower those rendered powerless.

When speaking about the power of language, Smith says that she believes language can help us to "make this good faith effort to bring our own sense of experience and empathy and curiosity and conscience to bear upon our examination of the reality that we live in." This call to investigate the world around us is seen in the next poem that Smith read: "The Greatest Personal Privation." This poem is constructed of language that Smith extracted from letters between a minister and his wife who owned enslaved people. Though they briefly considered supporting the abolitionist movement, they changed their mind because they could not accept the "personal privation" that would come with such support. Here, Smith searched through documents that were ultimately devoid of a Black perspective to find what may have been the story and experience of the enslaved in this situation. In this poem, Smith imagines the perspective of an enslaved woman named Patience. Here are fragments of her voice: "It is a painful and harassing business/ Belonging to her," and "They could dispose of the whole family/ without consulting us-- Father, Mother."

Aside from working on her own poetry, Smith shared with us that for the past several years, she has also been working on translating the poems of the Chinese poet Yi Lei. One of the beautiful things about these translations was the parallels Smith drew between experiences in Yi Lei's work and the experience of a people of color in America. An example of this would be Smith's translation of Lei's poem "Black Hair." For Lei, the context

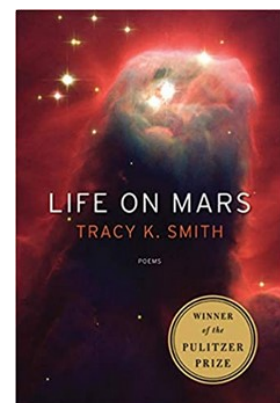
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Tracy K. Smith

**“... so much of
what we could
begin to care
about is some-
thing that our
imagination can
alert us to and
set in motion.”**

- Smith



Life on Mars. Graywolf Press, 2011.
Image Taken from Amazon website.



Smith's reading, sponsored by the Monmouth Review Club, was held at 4:30 p.m.

Tracy K. Smith . . . (Continued from page 5)

of this poem was femininity and youth, but for Smith, the poem also spurred reflections on her racial identity. She said the poem made her think "about what black hair means in [her] body... [her] racial identity and [her] culture." This poem celebrates this culture with lines like, "Black hair like youth runs in March" and "the story of black hair is my story." Smith tells us that Lei's poems "offer consolation" when she is thinking about the United States. For example, in one translation called "Red Wall," one line reads: "Red legacy binding our generations." This line is reminiscent of the experience of Black people in America, having seen generations of their families experience violence, discrimination, and oppression of many forms, from enslavement to police brutality and ongoing systemic racism.

Smith also shared with us some new poems that came out of the historical moment of this past summer of 2020, and which held both the global pandemic of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement. These poems come out of asking herself, "What is it my job to say or to do in the face of what I witness and endure?" Her poem titled "We Feel Now a Largeness Coming On" meditates on the feeling of experiencing this movement unfolding before her

eyes. She reads: "we feel now a largeness coming on,/ something passing into us. We know/ not in what source it was begun, but/ rapt, we watch it rise through our fallen,/ our slain, our millions dragged, chained." Another particularly touching poem that Smith read was "The Elephant in the Poem." This poem came out of an article that Smith read about elephants that were spontaneously dying in large numbers by some unidentified cause. In this article, Smith noticed an "eerie awful irony" between the elephant's mass deaths and the fatal instances of police brutality and racial violence that seemed to come to a head this summer. This poem has "fill-in-the-blank" spaces throughout where the word 'elephant' would have been, so that the reader is left to face the striking parallels between these situations and the language used to describe them. The poem has heart-wrenching, eye-opening lines like, "Some appeared to have died suddenly collapsing chest first while walking or running," and "As ___ populations grow, it is more likely that you will get mass die offs probably on a bigger scale than this death comes to all living things." But perhaps the most striking of all is the closing line, "At this point the deaths do not constitute a crisis," reminding us of the ways that this nation has turned its

heads from this crisis.

When Smith was asked about her relationship to Toni Morrison's work, Smith smiled and said, "awe" and "gratitude." She noted that Morrison's work has taught her how to look at reality in a new, eager way. Smith feels that Morrison did the powerful work of giving America a "humanizing perspective," making her readers feel a deeper emotional connection the horrors of slavery and this shameful part of our national history. Smith states that Morrison ultimately proved to America that there is, and has always been, a "rich, full vocabulary for thinking about the interior life of Black people." Smith's own work utilizes this immense vocabulary to illuminate and bear witness to the experience of Black Americans throughout generations of suffering and overcoming. Smith views Morrison's work as corrective to "an imagination that's been habituated not to expect insight, depth, humanity, complexity in Black life." In Smith's own work, it is evident that she shares the same dedication as Morrison did in giving the Black people in America a voice in a history that has persistently worked to keep them silent and powerless.



Reflections (Continued from page 4)

must remember what led us to this point. Morrison's books and essays are an excellent foundational tool for advancing us all towards that clearer understanding..

Being part of the Student Symposium was an honor. It is always a joy to be in the presence

of people who share my affinity for Morrison. I presented an analysis paper I wrote on her book *The Bluest Eye*. The title of the paper was "Intercommunal Colorism, Generational Trauma, and Its Impact on A Small Black Community in *The Bluest Eye*." I really enjoyed all the feedback I received and was glad to have

reached a wide audience about this serious topic. Additionally, I enjoyed the presentations of other fellow students, as well as the other symposiums that were held throughout the day. Toni Morrison Day was a truly rejuvenating experience, and I am proud to have been a part of it.



MONMOUTH
UNIVERSITY

ENGLISH

CONGRATULATIONS
CLASS OF 2021!

Department Student Achievements

The Department of English is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2020-2021 awards.
We congratulate this year's winners, and thank our donors for their generosity.

The English Award for the Academic Writing Prize—Emma Varga
The English Award for the Creative Writing Prize— Patricia Banfitch
The English Merit Award— Melissa Lauria
The Rising Junior Award— Sarah Curtis
The Caryl Sills English Teaching Award—Kristina Bonadonna
The English Award for Graduate Study— Skylar Daley
The English Award for Graduate Creative Writing— John Vurro
The David Tietge Memorial First Year Composition Academic Essay Award—Nicole Mautone
The David Tietge Memorial First Year Composition Researched Essay Award— Abigail Nechay
The David Tietge Memorial First Year Composition Researched Essay Award— Mary Schuld

MA Theses and Manuscripts Defended

Lisa Barthelme, *O Father*. Spring 2021.
Douglas Bornhoeft, *No Scents of Magic*. Spring 2021.
Chelsea Byrne, *Killer Roadkill*. Spring 2021.
Barbara Coleman, *Wake up and Smell the Coffee*. Spring 2021. **Distinction.**
Faith Earl, "Inventory of the Gone." Spring 2021
Abigail Fenn, *Red*. Spring 2021.
Mallory Green, *Keeping in Touch*. Spring 2021.
Kaitlyn Lash, "No Sympathizing Movement to the Words: Wuthering Heights and the Problems of Adaptation." Spring 2021.
Allison Long, "Superlative: Stories." Spring 2021.
Damian Lubock, *Tales of Jim Bum Bradley*. Spring 2021.
Nicholas Morris, *Telegony*. Spring 2021. **Distinction.**
Jenna Puglisi, *Totally Fine*. Spring 2021.
Brittany Scardigno, "Intangible Violence: Manifestations of Silence in Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation*." Spring 2021. **Distinction.**
Katelyn Snyder, "Intermodernism and British Identity in *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) and *Farewell Leicester Square* (1941)." Spring 2021. **Distinction.**
Connor Surmonte, *Freewheelin'*. Spring 2021.
Amanda Wassel, "Waging War not with Weapons but with Needles: Studying Contemporary Needlework as a Form of Invitational Feminist Rhetoric." Spring 2021.

MFA Manuscripts Defended

Jason Aquino, *You Could Have Hurt Me Better*. Spring 2021.
MacKenzie Svarrer, *Adolescence of Elektra*. Spring 2021.

2021 Graduates

May 2021— 37 UG, 18 GR

Graduates in the Spotlight



Felipe Estrada
B.A. in English
2019 "Rising Junior"
Award Recipient



Mallory Green
M.A. in English
2019 English Merit
Award Recipient



Jenna Puglisi
M.A. in English
2019 English Creative Writing
Award Recipient

Delta Sigma Chapter



SIGMA TAU DELTA

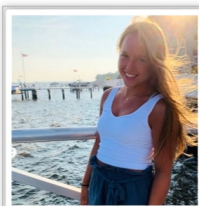
INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

In accordance with public health guidance, the Delta Sigma Chapter held a virtual ceremony this year. Click [here](#) to view the ceremony. We would like to extend our thanks to the hard-working Executive Board, and our congratulations to the 2020-2021 Inductees.

Sigma Tau Delta, Delta Sigma Chapter Executive Board Members



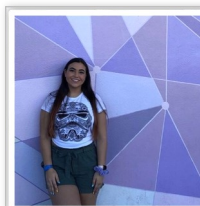
Melissa Lauria
President



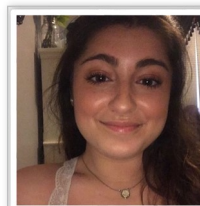
Gabriella Arabio
Vice President



Judith Shingledecker
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SIGMA TAU DELTA OATH

I shall endeavor to advance the study of literature, to encourage worthwhile reading, to promote the mastery of written expression, and to foster a spirit of community among those who specialize in the study of the English language and of literature, ever keeping in mind our international motto:

Sincerity, Truth, Design.

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Allison DeGrushe

Gillian Demetriou

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Logan Lazarczyk

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Emma Varga



Marie-Helene Bertino

“There will always be uncertainty, but what you do as a writer is that you continue to write when everything is telling you to stop.”
- Bertino

M.F.A. in Creative Writing Welcomes Marie-Helene Bertino

by Brittany Scardigno, M.A. '21

Marie-Helene Bertino is an esteemed fiction writer and is the author of the novels *Parakeet* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux 2020), *2 A.M. at The Cat's Pajamas* (Crown 2014), and *Safe as Houses* (University of Iowa Press 2012). She is the recipient of *The Frank O'Connor International Short Story Fellowship* and *The O. Henry Prize* along with a number of other fellowships and special mentions. Her craft builds off of surrealism and challenging conventional standards.

Marie-Helene Bertino is graciously welcomed as a guest speaker for Monmouth's craft-talk series regarding her most recent novel, *Parakeet*. In order for her surrealist elements to flourish, Bertino aims to establish trust and believability between the words on the page and her reader. Our guest author expands on the challenges of working with fantasy when it comes to creating that trust and how critical it is to incorporate as much honesty into the surreal elements of the story as possible. When writing across her experience, Bertino finds that when a writer becomes worried, nervous, or anxious about writing something that can potentially become a tool of oppression, they are charged with the responsibility of “becoming a student of it” until

they have established comfort. Along with her surrealist inspirations, creativity, and intense research methods, Bertino encourages creative writers to push through writer's block and keep on going when everything in the world seems like it's telling you to stop. Her definition of ‘writing’ is, as she admits, extensive. Whether it is “taking notes, walking around and immersing yourself in the world, talking with your friends, or visiting classrooms and answering questions,” she considers activities, such as these, to be forms of writing and creative stimulation themselves. The author also finds inspiration inside films, her deep love for theater, and music. Marie-Helene Bertino has inspired Monmouth's Creative Writing Program with her dedication to challenging conventional standards of women, contributing to the mixture of surrealism and realism, and embracing self-validity through the act of writing. This web-based Visiting Writers Series was held on April 15, 2021, along with a Q & A held afterwards:

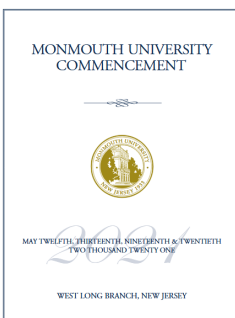
—Was there any point throughout your writing process that you experienced writers block? If so, what motivated you to keep moving?

“It's terrifying to write, especial-

ly to write a novel. You feel like you're trying to pin down every corner of the story inside your brain at the same time and you're never able to do it. For me, it's only until you become friends with that feeling of the unknown that getting past that writer's block becomes easier, although more nebulous. There will always be uncertainty, but what you do as a writer is that you continue to write when everything is telling you to stop. It's so much more than being published, getting awards or fellowships, or getting a job. You need to neutralize the fear and rejection and keep going.”

—The first chapter of *Parakeet* is striking. How did this introductory chapter come about?

“I wanted to build intrigue and interest, and when you're working with supernatural elements you either need to dispense it right away and tell them ‘Hey, this is the world we're in, where grandmothers are birds,’ or drop breadcrumbs along the way. Sometimes people have a bad taste in their mouth when it comes to supernatural or fantasy because it crushes that trust between the writer and the reader, so you need to kind of tell them right from the beginning. Humor is also a good tool for believability.”



Congratulations, M.F.A. in Creative Writing Class of 2021!



Jason Aquino
M.F.A. in English
Inaugural Class of the M.F.A. in Creative Writing Program



MacKenzie Svarrer
M.F.A. in English
Inaugural Class of the M.F.A. in Creative Writing Program

M.F.A. in Creative Writing Welcomes Wayétu Moore

by Deanna Venezia



Wayétu Moore

As writers, we are always seeking to find our own identity through our craft. Wayétu Moore masters the art of self-discovery and patience through her writing, as well revisiting her Liberian roots where the organic beginning of her work lies. On April 7th, the English department welcomed the prolific author of *She Would Be King* and *The Dragons, The Giants, The Women* (Moore's memoir). A multifaceted artist, she studied undergrad as a theatre student which definitely adds a different layer to her writing process. When asked about theatre's impact on her writing, Moore commented on the importance of dialogue and how even for writing novels, reading aloud is a highly effective

component to understanding character and narrative. Furthermore, students and faculty were fascinated to hear her thoughts on the different processes between writing fiction and non fiction. She shared that for the first, to begin with the themes we are most familiar with (love, friendship, family, etc.) and for the latter, begin with the action and plot as you remember it, and figure out the best way to highlight and incorporate these themes. In terms of identity, she advised us all as writers to ask ourselves: "What is fundamental to who I am?" No matter the genre, this is a philosophy that will assist writers in not losing sight of their voice. In addition to her accomplish-

ments, Moore is also the founder of One Moore Book, a non-profit organization that creates and distributes culturally relevant books for underrepresented readers. After being told by a publisher that there wasn't a space for her genre and writing style, she told us how imperative it is to stay true to yourself as a writer, and always practice patience with one's writing. Monmouth was very lucky to have someone like Moore share her experiences as an author. Students were left with ample professional advice (and comfort) with their own writing endeavors.

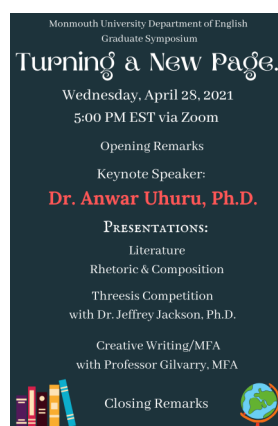
Annual Graduate Symposium Held on April 28

by Deanna Venezia

This year's graduate symposium looked a little different than previous ones. Typically, it is an event designed for graduate students to present original work that they have been working on throughout their program in an informal setting with faculty and close friends. Despite our current circumstances, Zoom did not make it any less memorable. Graduate students still had the opportunity to present excerpts of research or creative writing and receive feedback from faculty and peers. It is evident that our department continues to rise to the occasion during these unprecedented times.

This semester I had the honor of coordinating the symposium, with the guidance and support of our department's unparalleled faculty. It brought me closer to my peers (virtually of course) as I collected their

presentations and realized the incredible talent we have at Monmouth. The event kicked off with our keynote speaker, Dr. Uhuru, followed by the first



portion of the evening, the Scholarly Roundtable, a hybrid of literature and rhetoric/composition students. These students represented two out of the three tracks and present-

ed scholarly research they are proud of. Finally, the graduating creative writing students shared excerpts of their original work during the MA/MFA Graduate Reading, hosted by Professor Gilvary. It was refreshing to hear all of the different voices and perspectives that have continued to thrive through these challenging times.

The symposium is designed to celebrate the students in a more relaxed, non-conference style setting. Events like these are important for students because it offers an opportunity for them to share their work in a low stakes setting and build their confidence while doing so. It is necessary for us to come together as a department and remind one another that no one is alone in their scholarly journey.

Adult Education Series



The Adult Education Series was launched by the Center for the Arts (MCA) in partnership with the University's GRAMMY affiliate initiative.

Monmouth Center for the Arts Hosts Adult Education Series

by James McConville

The tragedies and trepidations of the past year have brought to the forefront the need and desire for additional spaces of education, creativity and collaboration. Monmouth University's Adult Education Series has highlighted this need for additional enrichment spaces, and as Dr. Kenneth Womack can attest, the Series has provided the growing Monmouth University intellectual community with more of these spaces to satisfy their multidisciplinary interests.

Dr. Womack's course, *Understanding Popular Music*, was an integral part of the inaugural cohort last fall, highlighting the strong disciplinary interests at Monmouth University in the areas of popular music and culture. Since the program's launch in 2020, a dozen new learning opportunities have been offered, ranging from Dr. Estes' three-session *Understanding Climate*

Change course to Professor Michael Thomas' *Poetry Appreciation*. Dr. Estes course focuses on the nature of climate change and the future of planet earth, as well as personal, local and national methods and movements needed to stem the tide of cli-

mate change and deeper understanding inherent in the reading and writing of poetry.

The program's Fall 2021 offerings, detailed below, will continue to focus on the small group learning experiences that Dr. Womack has highlighted as one of the corner-stones of the program.



Please visit: <https://www.monmouth.edu/mca/series/adult-education-series/> to learn more about the series.

mate change. Beginning on May 13th, Professor Thomas' *Poetry Appreciation* will lead participants through an introduction to the craft of poetry, as well as a consideration of the poems that carry the most resonance in our lives and the careful reflection

- "History of Philadelphia Soul" (begins September 9th)
- "Writing Memoir" (begins September 30th; with Monmouth University alum Mike Farragher '88)
- "Podcasting for Beginners" (begins October 21st)
- "Self-Publishing, Step-by-Step" (begins November 11th)
- "The History of Simon & Garfunkel, Together and Apart" (begins December 2nd)



EN Faculty news...



Dr. Heide Estes was elected a member of the executive committee for the Old English Language and Literature Committee (LLC) of the Modern Language Association (MLA).



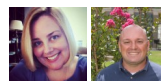
Dr. Mihaela Moscaliuc published her third poetry collection, *Cemetery Ink* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021).

Dr. Moscaliuc prefaced "The New Colossus" Translation Project with an introductory essay in celebration of Poetry Month.



Dr. Kenneth Womack co-edited a new collection of academic writing, *Fandom and the Beatles: The Act You've Known for All These Years* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

Congratulations to the following faculty on being recommended for:



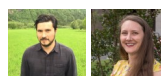
Three-year continuance, Lecturer line:
Prof. BethSara Swanson and Prof. Joe Torchia



Promotion to Senior Lecturer:
Dr. Abha Sood



Two-year continuance, Tenure-Track line:
Dr. Patrick Love and Dr. Anwar Uhuru




Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor:
Prof. Alex Gilvarry and Dr. Courtney Wright-Werner

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Check us out on the Web!

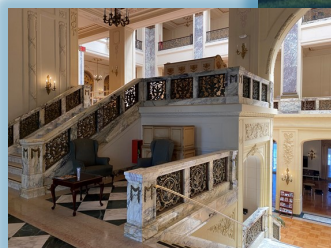
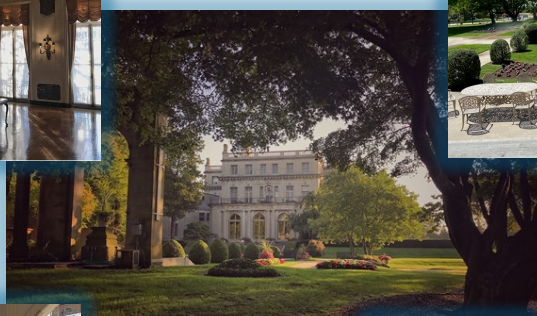
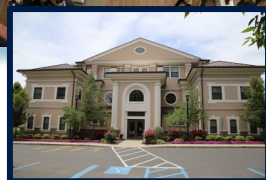
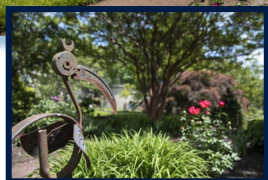
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Our Favorite Places

We asked our faculty, staff and students to share some of their favorite places on campus. Can you picture yourself there?



(Left, clockwise) Blonder Sculpture Garden — Dr. Heide Estes; Plangere Center for Communication Lobby — Michele McBride; DiMattio Gallery, Rechnitz Hall — Dr. Kristin Bluemel; Erlanger Gardens — Bethany Dickerson; “The Blue Room”, Great Hall 104 — Samantha Walton, Sophomore; The benches in front of the Guggenheim Memorial Library — Edie Hetzel; The Hawk at Brockriede Common — Prof. Jennifer Mantle; The English Department Lounge and the Mezzanine of The Great Hall — Brittany Cote, M.A. '21; The Great Hall, First Floor and Exteriors (Photos Courtesy: FotoCavallo) — Prof. Corinne Cavallo