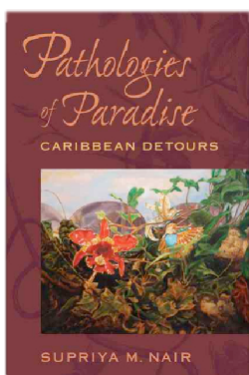
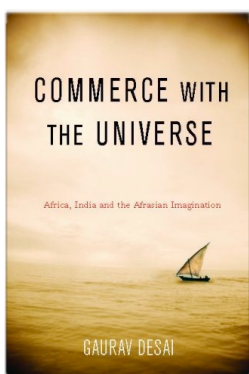


noted

New Books by Faculty



Supriya Nair
*Pathologies of Paradise:
Caribbean Detours*



Gaurav Desai
*Commerce with the Universe:
Africa, India, and the
Afrasian Imagination*

Ed White has recently joined the Tulane English Department as associate professor and Pierce Butler Chair in American literature. He is the author of *The Backcountry and the City: Colonization and Conflict in Early America* (U Minnesota Press, 2005) and *How to Read Barthes' Image-Music-Text* (Pluto, 2012). He has edited a new edition of Hugh Henry Brackenridge's 1792-1815 novel *Modern Chivalry* (Hackett Press, 2009), and, with Michael Drexler, has co-edited *Beyond Douglass: New Perspectives on Early African-American Literature* (Bucknell UP, 2008). Undergraduate Mitch Therieau sat down with him to discuss his research.



An Interview with Ed White

by Mitch Therieau

For Ed White, history and literature aren't just tangentially related tendrils of the humanities – as far as he is concerned, history is literature. Rather than thinking about it as a mere linear progression of concrete events, he prefers to read the narrative of our past as just that: a Narrative with a capital N, complete with plots and subplots, characters and, most importantly, a narrator. In his forthcoming book, *The Traumatic Colonel*, Professor White turns this lens on Aaron Burr, casting him as a character in the self-consciously woven literary

Cont. on page 3

Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé is our new assistant professor of British modernism. She is co-editor of the collection *Wittgenstein and Modernism*, forthcoming from University of Chicago Press in 2014. Undergraduate student Hannah Horowitz sat down with her for an interview.



Faculty Spotlight

Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé

interview by Hannah Horowitz

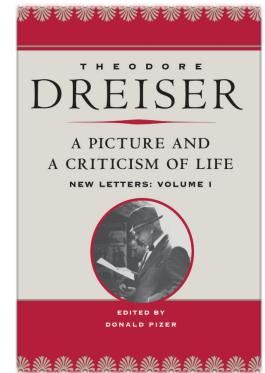
If the dynamism of life were to be assessed on movement (in physical location, thought, and interest), Professor Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé, or Prof. KZY, as her students know her, would win quite a prize. In fact, it took a while to pin down a time to meet the English Department's new assistant professor of British modernism (she wrote in an email to me,

"You're gonna smear me in your interview piece for saying this--and that's fine, that's fine!... but I have to reschedule with you YET AGAIN"). I hardly tell this anecdote to smear her, but rather to call attention to the fact that Professor Zumhagen-Yekplé is a woman with a lot going on. She moved around the country as a child, and spent her final year of high school in San Sebastian, Spain. After obtaining an undergraduate degree in philosophy and political science from Barnard College in New York, she studied French linguistics and phonetics at the Sorbonne, and philosophy at the EHESS in Paris, received a Masters in Philosophy from the University of Virginia, and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of California, Berkeley. She has gone on to hold a variety of positions at prestigious schools on both ends of the country. Since receiving her Ph.D., she has been a postdoctoral fellow in English and a member of the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship of the Humanities at Stanford (2011-2013), as well as a College Fellow in Comparative Literature at Harvard (2011-2013). Professor Zumhagen-Yekplé is co-editor of the collection *Wittgenstein and Modernism*, and brings her focus in British, European, and Latin American modernist literature to the department. Her prowess with languages (she speaks English, Spanish, and French fluently, and also speaks and researches in German), her diverse interests, and wide-ranging education fuel the interdisciplinarity of her current research and writing.

"I always loved literature, but I didn't get to it professionally for a long time," says Professor Zumhagen-Yekplé, explaining her decision to pursue a doctorate in comparative literature. "I'm really interested in questions – people's yearning for answers." Her dissertation incorporated her previous interest in philosophy by employing Wittgenstein to view modernism from a philosophical standpoint, ruminating on the ethical demands literature places upon the reader and the transformational power literature holds. Her current book project, *A Different Order of Difficulty*, deals with many of these same topics, assessing the deployment of modernist difficulty as experienced by contemporary modern authors, and how a brand of modernism that deals with secular engagement with ordinary life and language (and subsequently the relationship between difficulty and transformative yearning) leads to new critical approaches for understanding philosophy and literature, and life. Professor Zumhagen-Yekplé's next book project, tentatively titled *Grace and Disgrace: Modernism's Afterlife*, will trace the legacy of modernism's absorption in difficulty and longing for transcendence by focusing on the ethical and political attention certain modern authors pay to the spiritual themes of fall and redemption, grace and disgrace, atonement and absolution.

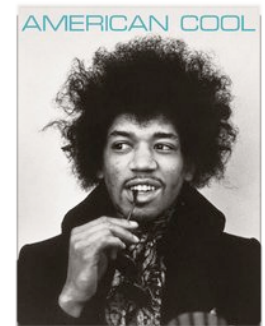
Cont. on page 3

New Books by Faculty



Donald Pizer

Theodore Dreiser: A Picture and a Criticism of Life



Joel Dinerstein

American Cool (Museum Catalogue)
(forthcoming)



Zachary Lazar

I Pity the Poor Immigrant
(forthcoming)

White - Cont. from page 1

tapestry of 18th- to 19th-century America. More specifically, he argues that the public “displaced their paranoid fantasies of slave rebellion” – fantasies spurred by the then-recent Haitian Revolution – onto the figure of Burr, reading the common narrative of Burr absconding to the West to [insert your preferred treasonous fantasy here] as a sort of redirection of an undercurrent of tension in the public consciousness. In other words, the collective “authors” of the body of texts that we read as history from that time made a decision, be it conscious or unconscious, to cast Burr as a certain type of red herring villain who serves the purpose of deflecting the concerns of the “readers” – the public at the time, and possibly even in the present day, where the account of Burr’s insidious plotting still overshadows many of the other more pressing concerns during that time period. It’s history, psychology, and sociology all wrapped up in one – and it’s all literature.

When I sat down to talk with Professor White in his warmly lit office on the first floor of the Norman Mayer Building, I had every intention to find out more about his unique take on American history (something he has explored in past books as well, chief among them being *The Backcountry and the City*, in which he turns a critical eye to the body of texts that traditionally constitutes “early American history” – and identifies a pronounced lack of mainstream voices speaking for the agrarian majority at the time). What I left with, however, was much more. Over the course of our interview, I received a crash course in everything from the evolution of anti-slavery sentiments in the US to the chronology and implications of the Haitian Revolution to the factors in Crèvecoeur’s personal life that influenced the focus of *Letters from an American Farmer* – a text

Professor White has worked intimately with, having translated several sections of a less commonly circulated manuscript.

All of these intellectual threads, disparate as they may seem, are joined together by a common theme: Professor White’s deep-rooted interest in (and passion for) democracy, and for the free exchange of ideas that it permits and necessitates. Even as our discussion shifted from the Slave Narrative class he is teaching next semester to his thoughts on critical literary theory (which he also teaches), Professor White’s conviction that literary criticism can be taught as a dialogue between interpretive impulses rather than a mere analytical process struck me as a perfect example of his commitment to this democratic sort of communication. “It’s not just philosophical,” he says of critical theory. It’s historical, reactive, conversational.

But, specifically in the US and with respect to American history and literature, why is it important to have these sorts of conversations – be they conversations with texts, conversations with critical schools of thought, or simply conversations with other people? The answer, for Professor White, is simple: as he says, “A commitment to democracy is a commitment to education for all.” When we remember that democracy functions best with a well-informed public, we can think about higher education in the liberal arts as a fulfillment of our duty to be optimally democratic citizens. Professor White’s scholarly focus and his instructional impetus seem to be one and the same in this regard, and for this and many other reasons it seems only natural that Tulane would select him as our Pierce Butler Chair in American Literature. ♦

Recent Events



Chang-rae Lee
Writer’s Writer Series
Nov. 14
Freeman Auditorium

Faculty Awards

Peter Cooley

School of Liberal Arts
Senior Mellon Professorship

Michael Kuczynski

School of Liberal Arts
Service Award

T.R. Johnson

Weiss Presidential Fellowship
(Tulane’s highest award for
undergraduate teaching)

Zumhagen-Yekplé - Cont. from page 2

As a teacher, Professor Zumhagen-Yekplé encourages students to trust their own critical interventions. “One of the things I love to do in class is to not shy away from difficulty. I try to get them to learn from each other – I like to lead a class, not always teach.” This semester she is teaching Introduction to British Literature, as well as a graduate seminar on modernism that treats various transatlantic works, incorporating the writings of Kafka, Woolf, Hemingway, and Joyce, to name a few.

Although her work focuses on difficulty, she herself is accessible, kind, and excited. In preparation for our interview, I did a bit of background research. It is always a little difficult not to be intimidated when encountering such an impressive resume, including teaching positions at Harvard and Stanford. Upon entering her office, she almost immediately said, “Hmm, what should I tell you about myself, that I’m a mother of two and love to hike?” We discussed what we love about New Orleans, the balance of home and work, the challenges of motherhood, and the San Francisco Bay Area (where she has lived and where I am from).

This being her first semester at Tulane, Professor Zumhagen-Yekplé is still very new to New Orleans. “There is so much soul and there is a unique beauty to it,” she says. “It’s so cliché, but it really does force you to slow down. And there’s a certain kind of love for the place that is very conducive to learning.” About the students and faculty she says, “Personally, New Orleans has been wonderful so far. The whole faculty is lovely and welcoming, and the students are smart and involved.” ♦

Nghana Lewis is an associate professor of English and African and African Diaspora Studies and has earned the Suzanne and Stephen Weiss Presidential Fellows Teaching Award. Lewis is also the Louis and Leonard Riggio professor of Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship.



Faculty Spotlight

Nghana Lewis

interview by Laura Sibert

A native of Louisiana, Lewis attended Tulane as an undergraduate and fell in love with New Orleans. She left the city to get her Ph.D., but returned to take a position at Tulane in the fall of 2005. Due to Hurricane Katrina, she did not begin teaching until spring of 2006. Lewis also has a law degree and maintains her legal practice in addition to her

professorship. Her legal practice allows her to pursue other areas where her passion manifests, including the criminal justice system, the school-to-prison pipeline, and juvenile criminal justice reform. Lewis said, "As an academic, I'm an idealist. As a teacher at the university, I believe that anything is possible. My legal practice keeps me rooted, so that I have the best of both worlds: a good dose of idealism with a nice balance of realism."

Professor Lewis's teaching interests lie in "turn-of-the-twentieth-century" American, particularly Southern, literature because it shows the nation in a state of reflection and rebirth: "The aftermath of the Civil War is the first time that you have our nation confronted with the question of how it will exist and if it will survive as it was originally conceived. Post-Civil War is an opportunity for the South to re-envision itself because it is literally, geographically, territorially destroyed by the war." In fact, Lewis published her first book, *Entitled to the Pedestal: Place, Race, and Progress in White Southern Women's Writing, 1920-1945*, about this period. Lewis's newest project, *Black Women's Health in the Age of Hip Hop and HIV/AIDS*, on the other hand, is centered in the twenty-first century. In the near future, she will also be writing a third installation to follow two well-received articles on post-Katrina education reforms in New Orleans.

Yet another hat that Professor Lewis wears is that of board member of a not-for-profit organization that she founded named the ESSENCE program (Encouraging Student Scholarship and Excellence through Native-Centered Education Program). According to Lewis, the ESSENCE program is a supplemental educational program that works to build cultural competency among teachers who serve high-risk student populations by integrating information about Louisiana and African American experiences in Louisiana into standard content. Under the umbrella of the ESSENCE program is another organization, N-MESH (Networking: Minorities' Education in the Sciences and Humanities), that serves to create a supplemental curriculum focusing on the arts and humanities for students of science.

The common thread to all of these pursuits is their emphasis on stories and story-telling, Lewis said: "There's a story in everything. If you're reading a book there's a story. If you're working with teachers, there are lots of stories. If you're practicing law you're telling stories, receiving stories and reconciling stories. With Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship, you have to know the story of what precedes what you're trying to change." Lewis continued, "I'm invested in knowing the story or trying to understand the story. I'm invested in undoing stories and retelling stories. I'm invested in continuing that process of building narratives and valuing different experiences." ♦

events

Dec

3 - A Reading by Robert Stone
Stone Auditorium
7:00pm

Feb

TBA - Brenda Marie Osbey, poet
Ian Gallagher Zelazny
Writers Series

13 - Iranian-American poet
Roger Sederat "New Salon"
co-sponsored by The Poetry
Society of America
Freeman Auditorium
7:00pm

Mar

TBA - Novelist Christopher
Tilghman

28 - Award-winning fiction
author Edwidge Danticat
Marriot Convention Cntr.
7:00pm

What We're Reading

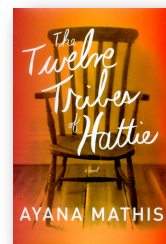
Anne-Marie Womack: *College Unbound: The Future of Higher Education and What It Means for Students* by Jeffrey J. Selingo

Zachary Lazar: *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie* by Ayana Mathis

Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé: *NW: A Novel* by Zadie Smith

Amy Parziale: *Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White* by Lila Quintero Weaver

Melissa Bailes: *The Signature of All Things: A Novel* by Elizabeth Gilbert



faculty in action

Peter Cooley

Peter Cooley, Senior Mellon Professor of English and Director of Creative Writing, gave a reading of his own poetry at the Great Writers Conference in London, England on June 30th and traveled to Paris to view Mary Cassatt paintings for poems he is writing on her work. He has a poem "On the Interstate, on the Gravel Road" in the current issue of *Spillway*, another, "Rodin, 'Ugolino and his Sons,'" in the summer issue of *North American Review*, a third "I-10 from Pensacola to New Orleans," in the current issue of *Miramar*. Cooley has a poem "Poem Choosing to Remain Unfinished" in the anthology *Before the Doors of God: An Anthology of Devotional Poetry* published by Yale University Press. His poem "Company of the Motel Room" appears in the November 4, 2013 edition of *The New Yorker*, with Cooley reading his poem in the digital edition of the issue.

Gaurav Desai

Professor Gaurav Desai was awarded a visiting fellowship at the Cambridge Center for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and the Humanities (CRASSH) in the Easter Term of 2013. During his time in the U.K. Desai conducted research on the life and times of a nineteenth-century Zanzibari princess. He also delivered lectures at the University of Southampton and Leeds University. Professor Desai was also interviewed by the Swedish Public Radio for a special broadcast on the relevance of the humanities today. To listen to that broadcast, [click here](#).

In July, Professor Desai's book *Commerce with the Universe: Africa, Asia and the Afrasian Imagination* (Columbia University Press, 2013) was launched by the British Institute in Eastern Africa in Nairobi, Kenya. The

Chinese News Agency Xinhua reported on the event. To read Xinhua's interview with Prof. Desai, [click here](#).

Joel Dinerstein

Joel Dinerstein is co-curator of an upcoming national exhibition of American Studies and photography, *American Cool*, at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, opening February 7, 2014 and running through September 7, 2014. He is also the primary author of the museum catalogue, *American Cool*, forthcoming from Prestel. For more information on the *American Cool* exhibit, [click here](#).

He has recently published three essays: "The Mask of Cool in Postwar Jazz and Film Noir" in *The Cultural Career of Coolness* (Lexington Press, 2013), "39 Sundays: Second-Line Season" in *Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas* (University of California, 2013), and "Albert Murray, American Metaphysician" in *Virginia Quarterly Review* (blog, September 5, 2013).

Michelle Kohler

Michelle Kohler's essay "Sending Word: Sarah Winnemucca and the Violence of Writing" appeared in the Autumn 2013 issue of *Arizona Quarterly*.

Michael Kuczynski

Michael Kuczynski, the English Department chair, delivered an invited lecture, "The Facsimilist's Tale," on 18th c. copies of medieval books and the digital humanities at Virginia Tech University on October 18, in the university's Digital Discussions in the Humanities and Social Sciences series. He has an essay based on the lecture in preparation for the *Journal of the Society of Antiquaries, London*.

Zachary Lazar

Zachary Lazar's new novel, *I Pity the Poor Immigrant*, will be published by

Little, Brown in April 2014. An excerpt will appear in the December issue of literary magazine *Fence*.

Supriya Nair

Prof. Nair's book *Pathologies of Paradise: Caribbean Detours* was published by University of Virginia Press in September.

Donald Pizer

Donald Pizer continues to publish collections of his essays on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American writers. Volumes on Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, and John Dos Passos appeared in 2013, and two final collections, on Frank Norris and Hamlin Garland, will appear in 2014. In addition, an essay on the relationship of Norman Mailer and Theodore Dreiser to the idea of American literary naturalism is forthcoming in *Sewanee Review*, and he is seeking a publisher for a book devoted to Dos Passos's paintings.

Molly Rothenberg

This past summer, Molly Rothenberg conducted research at the Jane Austen Research Center at Chawton House, Hampshire, England, and participated in the C.L.R. James conference in Glasgow, Scotland. She also participated in two collaborative faculty research projects, one in Malmo, Sweden and one in Luneburg, Germany. She taught continental philosophy to undergraduates at the University of Hamburg. Her latest volume, *Zizek Now!*, co-edited with Jamil Khader (Polity 2013), is being translated into Korean and German. She recently hosted an evening with Michael Ondaatje and Linda Spalding, award-winning Canadian novelists. She has an article on Zizek and the law in a volume from Routledge, and another article on Romantic period comedy and psychoanalysis forthcoming in a volume from Cambridge University Press. ♦

Spring 2013

Boyette Award Winner

Daniel Etzioni

Donald Pizer Award in American Literature

Katherine Hines

"A Studio in the Woods" Residency for an Outstanding

Senior in Creative Writing

Ingram Wilkinson

Pierce Butler Prize for Excellence in English

Ingram Wilkinson

The Henry Clay Stier Award in English

Philip Herman

Award for Service to the Literary Community

Elizabeth Mardiks

Senior Achievement Prize for Excellence in Creative Writing

Mary Katherine Brake

Class of 1903 Shakespeare Prize for Best Shakespearean Essay by a Woman

Rachel Wingate

Dale Edmonds Prize for Best Short Story Written by an Undergraduate

Katherine Hines

Quarante Club Prize for Best Short Story by a Woman

Marie-Claire Serou

Virginia Gleaves Lazarus Memorial Award

Athena Manatis-Lornell



Good things sometimes come in BIG—and unexpected—packages. That was certainly the case this June, when Tulane received a gift copy of the Pennyroyal Caxton Bible (shown below) from Bruce and Suzie Kovner of New York, “In recognition of the academic studies of Tulane University, the aesthetic and scholarly standards of the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, and in particular the Special Collections interest in fine printing.” While these two large folios, bound in vellum, reside in Jones Hall, their influence extends to our department: since Katrina, the English faculty have been engaged in promoting archival research among our

advanced undergraduate and graduate students by way of a certificate program in Documentary Literary Studies.

Following the group experience of a Bibliography and Research Methods seminar, this program places students in on campus collections, such as Rare Books, the Hogan Jazz Archive, and the Amistad Center, as interns who assist in cataloguing and preserving items as diverse as fifteenth-century manuscripts, oral histories of local musicians, and the letters of poets connected with the Harlem Renaissance. The gift of the Pennyroyal Caxton Bible makes possible the expansion of another area of the DLS program: introducing students to the art of fine printing and bookmaking, as it developed from the medieval period into the modern age. Students interested in the art of the printed book can go to Jones Hall and experience the Pennyroyal Caxton Bible alongside a rare page from William Caxton's fifteenth-century edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a copy of William Morris's Kelmscott Chaucer, with woodcuts by the Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones, and a limited edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, with lithographs by the French painter, Henri Matisse.

Barry Moser, the master American printmaker who designed and printed the Pennyroyal Caxton Bible in 1999, including its many dramatic block engravings—Jonah is shown here, after his release from the belly of the whale—has revived a tradition of printing and

illuminating the Bible that goes back to late antiquity and that, in the twentieth century, attracted such magisterial figures as Marc Chagall and Gustave Doré. Moser's achievement suggests that, concurrent with the popular digitizing of texts, the physical book still possesses a gravitas that is capable of attracting artists, art lovers, and readers. Implied by the Pennyroyal Caxton Bible is not only a view of history—the literary past is powerfully present to us in Moser's designs—but also a theory of the book, concerning the aesthetic relations between image and text.

Documentary literary studies, literary history, and literary theory: these are three key themes of our English Department faculty's research and teaching and all of them are splendidly touched on by this surprise bookish gift from Bruce and Suzie Kovner. So feel free to drop by Jones Hall to admire the Pennyroyal Caxton Bible yourself and then head over to Norman Mayer Hall, to explore by meeting our faculty and sampling our classes the wonderful variety and interdisciplinary energy of the Tulane English Department.

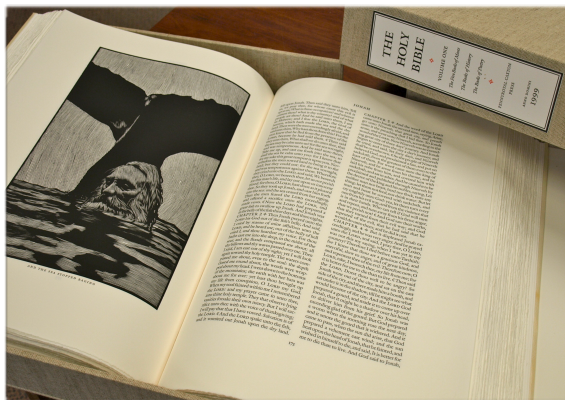
Welcome back to an exciting Fall 2013-Spring 2014 academic year.



Sincerely,

Mike Kuczynski

Chair, Tulane/English



Were you a
Tulane English Major?
Send us your news!

Our thanks to:

Mitch Therieau - Ed White Interview
Hannah Horowitz - Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé Interview
Laura Sibert - Nghana Lewis Interview
Hope Barnard- Design/Production
Michelle Kohler - Publications Coordinator
Barbara Ryan - Distribution

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