

March 2011

News and Events of Interest to
the Graduate Center Community

365 Fifth

A list of Graduate Center events is available online at: www.gc.cuny.edu/events



CUNY Trustees Name Three GC Distinguished Professors

Three members of the doctoral faculty join the ranks of distinguished professors at the Graduate Center: Susan Buck-Morss in political science, Robert Reid-Pharr in English, and Douglas Whalen in speech–language–hearing sciences. The appointments were effective as of February 1, 2011.



Susan Buck-Morss

Susan Buck-Morss, who joined the doctoral faculty in the fall of 2010, is an interdisciplinary thinker of international reputation. Her book *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), which recently won the Frantz Fanon Book Award, offers a fundamental reinterpretation of Hegel’s master-slave dialectic by linking it to the influence of the Haitian Revolution. Her books *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (1977) and *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (1989) have been called “modern classics in the field.” Buck-Morss, who was a longtime professor at Cornell University’s Department of Government, is on the editorial boards of several journals, and her numerous international awards and fellowships include a Getty Scholar grant and a Guggenheim Fellowship. She holds a Ph.D. in European intellectual history from Georgetown University.



Robert Reid-Pharr

Robert Reid-Pharr, who joined the doctoral faculty in September 2001, brings an important perspective on African-American literature and queer theory to the Graduate Center. His first book, *Conjugal Union: The Body, The House, and the Black American* (1999), is a study of nationhood, domesticity, the black body, and gender in antebellum African-American literature and culture. His second book, *Black Gay Man: Essays* (2001), explores his own emotional and intellectual confrontations with the modern world. As the 2002–03 research fellow at the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, he spent the year in Berlin working on *Once You Go Black: Desire, Choice and Black Masculinity in Post-War America* (2007), a study of African-American cultural and intellectual history in late twentieth-century America. He has been awarded fellowships from the Ford Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and holds a Ph.D. in American studies from Yale University.



Douglas Whalen

Douglas Whalen joined the faculty in the spring of 2011. As current vice president of research at the Yale-affiliated Haskins Laboratory, where he has been a researcher for thirty years, he is one of the world’s leading scientists in the fields of speech and phonetics. The central theme of Whalen’s research is the interrelation of speech perception and speech production, and how the two constitute a single system that cannot be understood in isolation from one another. He is the founder and president of the Endangered Language Fund, a foundation sponsoring research on the documentation of dying languages. Whalen also serves as associate editor of the *Journal of Phonetics*, and in 2008 he was elected a fellow of the Acoustical Society of America, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the discipline. He received his Ph.D. from Yale University.

Graduate Center Apartments to Open in August

Located at 165 East 118th Street, the eight-story Graduate Center Apartments complex offers bright, modern, airy, and affordable housing, and provides an easy commute to the Graduate Center for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and members of the faculty. The complex shares the plaza of CUNY's new East Harlem Campus with Hunter College's School of Social Work and School of Public Health. The Graduate Center expects that apartments will be ready for occupancy by August 1, 2011.

The web page for applications is up and running: <http://housing.gc.cuny.edu>. Here you may find a slideshow of the vibrant neighborhood surrounding the facility and answers to FAQs, as well as the application button. Review of applications will begin immediately. Those interested in applying should submit their application electronically as soon as possible. Inventory for faculty housing is very limited (twelve faculty apartments total).

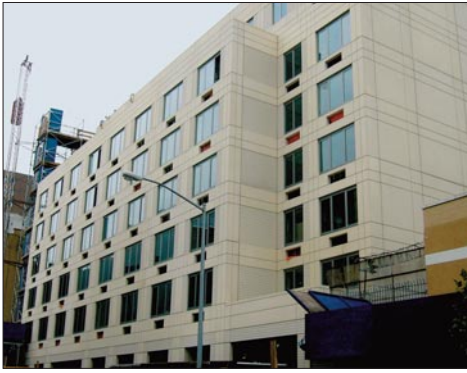


PHOTO: THE BRODSKY ORGANIZATION

GC housing for students and faculty at 165 East 118th Street, New York City. Apply now for August 2011: <http://housing.gc.cuny.edu>.

GC to Celebrate 50th Anniversary During 2011–12

New York State Governor Nelson Rockefeller signed legislation creating CUNY and authorizing doctoral programs on April 11, 1961. The GC will celebrate its 50th anniversary during academic year 2011–12, with special lectures and conferences during the fall and spring semesters. Watch the website for further information.

Faculty Luncheon Topics: Budget Cuts and Life Extension

At this year's annual luncheon for central faculty, held February 8, President William P. Kelly addressed concerns about Governor Andrew Cuomo's 2011–12 Executive Budget, which proposed a 10 percent across-the-board cut for all state agencies as of the first week of February.

In the past three fiscal years, the Graduate Center has suffered cuts amounting to \$6 million but has successfully managed them so far by controlling spending. However, the president emphasized that we must be aware of what the new budget will yield in terms of economic assistance, or lack of it, from Albany. Under the governor's new budget, a "correction" of up to \$11.9 million, carried over from the state's current-year deficit reduction, in addition to a further cut of \$83.2 million will be made across the CUNY system. This will lead to a "95.1 million dollar hole, university-wide, in the fall," said the president.

But given the university's recent 5 percent tuition increase, the \$11.9 million "correction" will be absorbed this spring, Kelly said. Additional tuition hikes may follow. "The university has proposed a 2 percent tuition increase that would, multiplied by CUNY's 262,000 students, reduce the \$83.2 million cut to manageable proportions."

The governor, however, has made no provision for another tuition hike in the budget. "He did acknowledge the spring tuition increase but was silent on the question of whether there would be a tuition increase next year," said Kelly.

There is some good news for the GC community: there will be no retrenchments, no furloughs, and no salary freezes that come out of this year's budget. Still, Kelly reiterated that the GC will respond with the same "austerity measures" it adopted last year: the GC will continue to limit expenditures and make cuts in OTPS (other than personnel services), identify areas of savings, and freeze positions that become available.

Following President Kelly's address, Provost and Senior Vice President Chase F. Robinson (Dist. Prof., GC, History) introduced Bryan S. Turner (Pres. Prof., GC, Sociology), who served as this year's honorary speaker at the luncheon. Turner spoke

with some humor on the topic: “Can We Live Forever? The Social Implications of the ‘Life Extension Project.’”

Turner pulled no punches: “All the news I have about aging is bad. I chose this topic because it would be of extreme interest to virtually everyone in this room.”

He discussed how gerontologists, who study the phenomenon of aging, are attempting to extend human life from a modest 120 years to 5,000 years. But Turner was skeptical. “Can we live forever? Can we even live past 120 years? Basically, the answer is no.”

Extending one’s life expectancy beyond 120 years, Turner reasoned, is undesirable, if not absurd, considering that people would not retain their youth but continue to age. And even when gerontologists manage to stop the aging process, then “old people would have to work forever, because there aren’t going to be a sufficient number of young people to keep the economy going. The problem is that we’ll have a large group of elderly people and a shrinking working class because of declining fertility rates.” He had a wickedly macabre solution to this problem. Picking up on the president’s remarks about austerity measures and freezing positions, he suggested that “until medicine and science can catch up and solve the problem of aging, we should deep freeze the elderly in large storage areas, such as this building. The ninth floor could be reserved for the frozen!” The audience, highly amused, was captivated by Turner’s final comment: quoting Bette Davis, he said, “Growing old is not for sissies.”

— Rachel Ramirez

Interdisciplinary Committees’ Spring News: Faculty Fellows and Launches

In October 2009 the Graduate Center was awarded a grant of \$2,415,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to be expended over approximately four years for the creation and support of three academic centers or committees, including funding for faculty and student fellowships, research, seminars, and conferences. The committees address emerging issues in the areas of science, religion, and globalization and social change. With a cadre of senior faculty in place, the committees, which awarded postdoctoral and student fellowships in the fall, have now selected their first midcareer faculty fellows and have announced their spring semester launches.

Joining the committees for the spring 2011 semester are fifteen midcareer fellows—five for each committee—selected from the ranks of newly tenured faculty at City University colleges on the basis of scholarly merit and the relevance of their research to the committee’s area of concentration. With competitive fellowships supported by the City University Chancellor, the midcareer fellows are released from courses for the semester and will take part in the weekly research seminars of their committees.

The Committee for Science Studies

At the Committee for Science Studies, chaired by **Jesse Prinz** (Dist. Prof., GC, Philosophy), the spring seminar theme is “Mind and Nature,” and midcareer fellows are **Christa Davis Acampora** (Assoc. Prof., Hunter, Philosophy), with a research focus on “Creativity, Evolution, and Morality”; **Chris Braun** (Assoc. Prof., Hunter, Biology, Psychology), researching “Dialectical Psychology: Nurturing the Nature of Mind”; **Victoria Pitts-Taylor** (Prof., Queens, Sociology), director of the Center for the Study of Women and Society at the Graduate Center and coordinator of the Women’s Studies Certificate Program, with the current research project “Bodies with Brains: Neuroscience in Everyday Life”; **William Gregory Sakas** (Assoc. Prof., Hunter, Computer Science, Linguistics), with a research project on “A Computational Basis for the Study of Language Learning and Cognition”; and **Jason Tougaw**, an associate professor of English



Jesse Prinz

PHOTO COURTESY OF JESSE PRINZ, SUBORTEX.COM

at Queens College, whose current project is “If the Writer Is an Organism: Brain Memoirs and Neuroscience.”

The launch event for the Committee for Science Studies, scheduled for March 28, will feature a lecture by Eric Kandel at 6:30 p.m. in Proshansky Auditorium. Kandel, who received the 2000 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, is professor of biochemistry and biophysics at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and a senior investigator in the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. He was also the founding director of the Center for Neurobiology and Behavior, which is now the Department of Neuroscience at Columbia. Kandel’s book *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind* (W.W. Norton), which chronicles his life and research, was awarded the 2006 Los Angeles Times Book Award for Science and Technology. Those wishing to attend this free public program should visit the events listings on the GC home page and register online.



Bryan S. Turner

The Committee for the Study of Religion

At the Committee for the Study of Religion, chaired by **Bryan S. Turner** (Pres. Prof., GC, Sociology), the spring seminar theme is “Violence, Religion, and Sacred Space” and midcareer faculty fellows are **Ana Mercedes Acosta**, associate professor of English at Brooklyn College, whose project, “Stages of Enlightenment,” focuses on religious epistemologies of Catholicism and England’s Protestant sects during the Restoration and the eighteenth century; **Manu Bhagavan** (Assoc. Prof., Hunter, History), researching a book tentatively titled “K. M. Munshi: The Life of a Militant Gandhian”; **Andrea Khalil** (Assoc. Prof., Queens, French, Middle Eastern Studies), researching a book on the impact of Algeria’s 1988 bread riots on the interaction of Islamism, democratization, and cultural production in the 1990s; **Robbie Root**, associate professor of anthropology and sociology at Baruch, with current research in Swaziland on the potential of Christianity as a public health asset; and **Alisse Waterston**, John Jay College professor of anthropology, researching “Sacred Memory and the Secular World: The Poland Narratives.”

The launch conference for the Committee for the Study of Religion, scheduled for May 4–5, aims to provide an opportunity for in-depth discussion on the theme “Islam in Europe and America.” Craig Calhoun, president of the Social Science Research Council, will introduce the second day of the conference, which will include the following speakers and topics: Ulrich Beck, professor of sociology at Munich’s Ludwig Maximilian University and the London School of Economics, “A God of One’s Own: Religion and Cosmopolitanism”; Jocelyne Cesari, research fellow in political science associated with the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and the Center for European Studies, Harvard University, “Behaving, Belonging, Believing: Religiosity among Muslims in European and American Cities”; Danièle Hervieu-Léger, director of studies at l’Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris, “The Rise of the Religious Subject: Some Reflections on the Historical Development of Religious Individualism”; Sherman Jackson, professor of Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Michigan, “Islam and Muslims in America: The Wages of Religious Agnosia”; Christian Joppke, professor of political science at the American University of Paris, “Can Muslims Live in a Liberal Society?”; and Saba Mahmood, associate professor of sociocultural anthropology at UC–Berkeley, “Religious Freedom: Minorities and Geopolitics, A Middle Eastern Genealogy.” For updates about the conference, see <http://studyofreligion.gc.cuny.edu/pages/events.html>.

The Committee for the Study of Globalization and Social Change

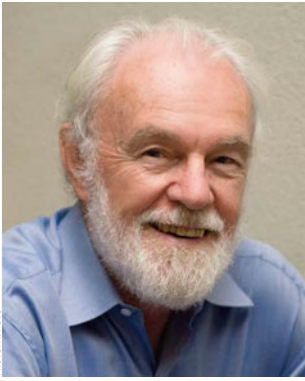


PHOTO: A. POTO

David Harvey



PHOTO: COURTESY OF GARY WILDER

Gary Wilder

At the Committee for the Study of Globalization and Social Change, cochaired by **David Harvey** (Dist. Prof., Anthropology, Earth and Environmental Sciences, History) and **Gary Wilder** (Assoc. Prof., GC, Anthropology), spring seminars will explore the open-ended theme of “Emergence: Globalization and Social Change,” and midcareer faculty fellows are **Desmond Arias** (Assoc. Prof., John Jay, Criminal Justice), completing a study tentatively titled “Model Democracies: Armed Actors and Governance in Latin America and the Caribbean”; **Omar Dahbour** (Assoc. Prof., Hunter, Philosophy), an associate of the Center for Place, Culture, and Politics, with research on “Ecosovereignty: On the Convergence of Environmental Security, Indigenous Rights, and Sustainable Development”; **Miki Makihara** (Assoc. Prof., Queens, Anthropology, Linguistics), working on “Globalization and the Politics of Language”; **Terry Rowden**, associate professor of English at the College of Staten Island, with current research on “Transplantations: Globalization and Politicorporeality in Modern European Cinema”; and **Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong**, associate professor of communications at the College of Staten Island, who chairs the Department of Media Culture and is researching “Chinatowns: Grassroots Globalization and Cultural Complexity.”

The launch conference for the Committee for the Study of Globalization and Social Change, scheduled for April 4 at 7 p.m., will feature the cultural critic and philosopher Slavoj Žižek, who is internationally known for his innovative interpretations of Jacques Lacan. He is author of *The Indivisible Remainder*; *The Sublime Object of Ideology*; *The Metastases of Enjoyment*; *Looking Awry: Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*; *The Plague of Fantasies*; *The Ticklish Subject*; and, most recently, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*. He maintains a tireless speaking schedule and over the last twenty years has participated in over 350 international philosophical, psychoanalytical, and cultural-criticism symposia throughout Europe, and in North and South America, Israel, and Japan. Those wishing to attend this free public program should visit the events listings on the GC home page and register online.

Five Doctoral Programs Undergo External Evaluation

In accordance with the New York State Regents Doctoral Evaluation Project, all doctoral programs in New York State are expected to undergo periodic evaluation. In May 1994, CUNY adopted university-wide guidelines for academic program review. Following those guidelines, the Graduate Center instituted a series of internal self-studies of all programs, patterned on the New York State reviews. During this academic year, five Graduate Center doctoral programs have been or are being externally evaluated: Anthropology, Chemistry, French, Physics, and Sociology. Each program undergoing evaluation prepares a detailed self-study document which is sent to two external reviewers prior to their site visit. This year’s evaluators are distinguished scholars from institutions including Brown University, Johns Hopkins University, New York University, Rutgers University, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the University of Oregon. During the two-day site visits, the reviewers meet with the provost, president, students, and faculty in the program under review. They then prepare a report for the provost and the program with recommendations, which inform future planning and decision-making.



PHOTO: PETER HARRIS

Nancy Graves, *Between Sign and Symbol* (1992)

Mina Rees Library Gets New Nancy Graves Sculpture

A graceful sculpture by the renowned American artist Nancy Graves (1939–95), *Between Sign and Symbol* (1992), on loan from the Nancy Graves Foundation, has been installed on the ground floor of the Mina Rees Library.

A prolific artist who worked as a painter, printmaker, and filmmaker, as well as a sculptor, Graves transposed concepts from one medium to another, informing each with new and innovative ideas. The bright colors and gestural linearity of her paintings, watercolors, and prints of the 1980s are reflected in the sculpture of that period. These sculptures were made up of direct casts of plants, food products, and man-made objects, colored with brilliant red, green, blue, and yellow patinas, and welded together in the Walla Walla foundry at Nancy Graves's instructions. The formal abstract methods for arranging the forms in these sculptures followed those that she had used to compose her two-dimensional works.

As Graves traveled extensively throughout the world her vocabulary expanded to include casts of forms drawn from the architecture and art history of foreign cultures. According to the artist: "The fragments, whether they be icons from Egyptian, Japanese, Korean, Indian, or Western art history, function formally as building elements in the composition of my two- and three-dimensional work, where they create a clash between cultural expectations and the new uses to which they are put. You might say that I am interested in making art out of what has been art, what in fact are the shards of art."

Between Sign and Symbol is made up of various elements drawn from a wide variety of sources among which are a Shaker rake, vertebrae, an Egyptian sculpture of a cat, a sunflower, a plow, the hand from Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* and the hand of God from his Sistine ceiling, a nautical rope, an architectural element, the head of Laocöon from the Hellenistic sculpture, and a wave from a Japanese print.

"This new sculpture is one of numerous works either on extended loan or in the GC collection," observed Ray Ring, director of building design and exhibitions, adding, "On view at the Graduate Center are two other pieces by Nancy Graves, a chevron painting by Kenneth Noland, a relief painting by Larry Poons, a large-scale etching by Richard Serra, and Frank Stella's stunning construction *Dove of Tanna* in the Dining Commons, which is on extended loan from the Whitney Museum, to name just a few. We are extremely happy to have these works in the building, where they can be appreciated by a wide audience."

Foreign Scholars Come to Work with Prof. Rohit Parikh

This spring, **Rohit Parikh** (Dist. Prof., Brooklyn, Computer Science, Mathematics, Philosophy) has three doctoral students and a professor visiting from China, Taiwan, and the Netherlands: Junli Jiang (Southwest University, China), Zhaoqing Xu (Peking University, China), Floor Sietsma (Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica, Netherlands), and Hsing-chien Tsai (Asst. Prof., National Chung-Cheng University, Taiwan). Professor Tsai and Zhaoqing Xu are visiting the GC's philosophy program while Junli Jiang and Floor Sietsma are studying in the computer science program. Each visitor will work closely with Parikh, and they are expected to partake in his seminar "Logic and Games," which convenes on Fridays. All were awarded grants from their home countries to visit the Graduate Center as a result of the university's growing renown around the world for its dynamic Ph.D. programs.

—Rachel Ramirez

Highlights of the Segal Center's Season

The Martin E. Segal Theatre Center's Executive Director, Dr. Frank Hentschker, sees it as his mission to create a marketplace of ideas. "The center serves as a bridge between the professional theatre and academia, and the international and American theatre worlds," he says. To meet his objectives, Hentschker invites members of the local and international theatre communities to the GC to both perform and speak about their theatrical endeavors. As cases in point, this article highlights just a few of the center's recent offerings, which range from programs celebrating the world's rich history to those featuring playwrights, directors, translators, set and costume designers, and performers.



PHOTO: PAUL KOLINK

John Guare

Playwright John Guare on *A Free Man of Color*

"My first reaction when I started writing *A Free Man of Color* was that this opening image must be really subversive—to first see a black man dressed in the style of an eighteenth-century fop—the last time any man would ever dress like that. That he would also appear with his own black slave was to me a shocking image. The fop would speak in iambic pentameter, in rhymed couplets, all the while writing his play which celebrated his being the richest man in New Orleans and chronicling the delicious spectacle of everyone groveling to him. How that changes became the play's dramatic action. Chronicling the way history causes him to lose control of his play was a thrilling prospect."

The playwright John Guare was talking at a Segal Center event on December 6. The evening provided a rare opportunity to hear one of America's most widely performed contemporary playwrights read from his play—a comedy with profound observations about American history, slavery, and racism—and have a wide-ranging discussion about the work's genesis and its production at Lincoln Center's Vivian Beaumont Theater from October 21 to January 9.

Jacques Cornet, the central character, lives in New Orleans at the turn of the nineteenth century. In this busy port "where race was celebrated," said Guare, "there were at least a hundred different names for racial mixtures," and Cornet, who bought his own freedom from his white father, was the richest man in one of the richest cities in the world.

The play was commissioned by director George C. Wolfe, who wanted a vehicle modeled on Restoration comedy for the black actor Jeffrey Wright. "I went back and started reading Restoration plays. . . . And I was thrilled . . . to imagine a black man playing the libertine, the rake, the Earl of Rochester . . . and I had to tie it to American history."

To the south, in Haiti and Santo Domingo, under the leadership of General Toussaint Louverture, slaves fought for their freedom from French colonial rule in the wake of the 1789 French Revolution. "I realized that this rebellion so close to the United States caused so much fear in America that the slave owners had to demonize their Negroes in the most terrifying terms. . . . It amazed me that the roots of racism in America were tied not just to economics, but to fear: the fact that there were so many more of them than there were of us."

The dramatist used the structure of a play within the play: Cornet is the author of *A Free Man of Color*, which unfolds before the audience, but the narrative escapes his control. "At the end, history kicks him out," said Guare. "The minute the United States owned New Orleans as part of the Louisiana territory purchased in 1803, all those racial divisions were gone and you were either only black or white."

In the final scene, Cornet finds himself sold as a slave to the highest bidder. He argues with Thomas Jefferson to save him, but the politician claims he's powerless, that his phrase "All men are created equal" is not in the U.S. Constitution. Nor, he says, is



PHOTO: T. CHARLES ERICSSON

Jeffrey Wright as Jacques Cornet



PHOTO: T. CHARLES ERICSSON

L. to r: Joseph Marcell, Jeffrey Wright, and Mos Def in a scene from the Lincoln Center production of *A Free Man of Color* at the Vivian Beaumont Theater.

slavery mentioned in the New Testament, and, he adds, “If the possible Messiah cannot bring up the subject, how can I?”

The playwright revealed that he wanted to depict Jefferson not as a hypocrite nor as a divinely inspired Founding Father, but rather as a pragmatist whose main drive as President in 1803 was holding the union of sixteen states together. “I wanted to show him as a domestic man, a human being. When you go to his home, Monticello, you are first impressed by its comfort. It’s not the home of a man who’s constantly showing off intellectual fireworks. It’s a man at home with himself.”

When questioned about Cornet’s attitude toward slavery, Guare responded, “He loves it! I mean he hated being a slave, and the minute he gets in power! Man! He loves having his own slave. . . . His slave Murmur becomes his Blackberry, his iPad. Instant gratification. As soon as he becomes a master, he forgets what it’s like to be a slave. And that, to me, is the evil of that kind of power.”

The discussant for the event was David Savran (Dist. Prof., GC, Theatre), author of *In Their Own Words: Contemporary American Playwrights*, among other books, whom Guare described as a man who “knows how to speak to playwrights.” John Guare serves as a member of the board of trustees of the Segal Theatre Center.

An Overflow Crowd for a Yiddish Theatre Program

The Yiddish language, which some consider to be a dying tongue, was very much alive and well on December 22, when the Segal Center hosted an entertaining 90-minute look at Yiddish theatre’s past, present, and future in a program titled “The Essence: A Yiddish Theatre Dim Sum.”

“The Yiddish stage provided some of the most poetic, stylish, and dynamic theatre of the last 150 years,” says Allen Lewis Rickman, who both wrote and directed the show. “Some of the greatest moments in world theatre history came from Yiddish theatre. As did some preposterous claptrap.” “The Essence” paid tribute to both the best and worst in the genre.

Through a shtick consisting largely of songs, skits, anecdotes, trivia, and other examples of Yiddishkeit, Yiddish theatre veterans Rickman, Steve Sterner, and Yelena Shmulenson-Rickman related the history of Jewish stage productions from the 1870s through the present, proving, as American theatrical producer and director Joseph Papp once said, that Yiddish is “the perfect language for theatre.” When needed, supertitles were projected onto a screen behind the actors.

A hybrid of Hebrew and medieval German, Yiddish was once the mother tongue of Jews from Central and Eastern Europe. In its heyday, not only were works by Jewish playwrights like Abraham Goldfaden, Jacob Gordin, and Shalom Aleichem performed in Yiddish; so too were Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and Wagner’s operas, as well as works by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, and Irishman George Bernard Shaw—some even before they reached Broadway. Virtually every type of theatrical style, from naturalism and expressionism to musical comedy, satire, and folk play, has been produced in Yiddish at one time or another.

For many years now, experts have speculated on how much longer the Yiddish language and its theatrical offspring will endure. “It is very doubtful,” wrote Harvard University professor Leo Wiener, “whether the Jewish theatre can subsist in America for another ten years.” As the first American professor of Slavic literature, and the author of *The History of Yiddish Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, Wiener’s opinion carries weight. Or at least it once did. As the cast of “The Essence” pointed out, he wrote those words back in 1899. Audience turnout reinforced how wrong he had been. The event was so well attended, it was relocated from the 70-seat Martin E. Segal Theatre to Elebash Recital Hall, which has more than twice the seating capacity.

—Jackie Glasthal



Actors Yelena Shmulenson-Rickman and Allen Lewis Rickman present songs, scenes, anecdotes, and trivia, in an evening of Yiddish theatre history.



Actor Steve Sterner (r.) and Shane Baker (l.), executive director of the Congress for Jewish Culture, a Yiddishist literary/cultural organization, join the Rickmans in a panel discussion.

Brecht Adapted as *Pansori*-Style Korean Musical



Award-winning Korean performer Jaram Lee performed excerpts from *Pansori Brecht: Sacheon-Ga* in the Segal Theatre on January 10. Acting as both scriptwriter and composer, Lee adapted this musical show from Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan* using the seventeenth-century Korean *pansori* form of storytelling, traditionally performed by a vocalist and a drummer. Lee used thirteen ancient Korean instruments and a corps of three dancers to help her tell the story in which she played all the characters. The performance was followed by a panel discussion, moderated by Dr. Frank Hentschker. The January 10 event was cosponsored by Korea Arts Management Service, and Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, Republic of Korea.

PHOTO: SIRIN SAMMAN



News from the Center for the Humanities

Now approaching its twentieth anniversary, the Center for the Humanities offers a wide array of free events, seminars, and conferences for people inside and outside the academy. In bringing together CUNY students and faculty with prominent journalists, artists, and civic leaders, the center seeks to promote the humanities and humanistic perspectives in the social sciences. Below are four examples of the center's many recent offerings.

Readings from Wallace Shawn by Shawn & Friends

In a stimulating theatrical event cosponsored by Haymarket Books and Theatre Communications Group, the Center for the Humanities presented the plays and essays of Wallace Shawn, read by the author and his friends on Monday, November 22. (Left, and below, l. to r.) Wallace Shawn, Obie Award-winning playwright, noted stage and screen actor, and essayist; authors Peter Carey, Fran Lebowitz, and Deborah Eisenberg; and actors Sakina Jaffrey and Frank Whaley. Also joining the ensemble were poet Mark Strand, and actors Bob Balaban, Josh Hamilton, Emily McDonnell, Julianne Moore, and Mary Louise Parker.



PHOTOS: SIRIN SAMMAN



PHOTOS: SIRIN SAMMAN



L to r: Glenn Burger, Tony Kushner, Alyson Cole

How Things Have Changed Since *Angels in America*

“There were seven million people with AIDS when I wrote *Angels in America*. That was a terrifying reality, but now we’re in a very different political time,” insisted playwright Tony Kushner at a public event, “A Political Theatre for the 21st Century: Restaging *Angels in America*,” on December 2.

Eighteen years after the Pulitzer Prize–winning play debuted on Broadway, *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* returned to New York last October. The revival Off-Broadway at the Signature Theatre reencounters the personal and public crises that have outlasted the ’90s.

Glenn Burger (Prof., Queens, English) and Alyson Cole (Assoc. Prof., Queens, Political Science), both of whom invited Kushner to the GC, developed the event out of “Undoing Marriage, Remaking the Social Contract,” one of the new cross-CUNY interdisciplinary seminars sponsored by the Center for the Humanities.

“We thought it would be interesting to have a public conversation about how *Angels* came out of the AIDS crisis and gay politics of the 1990s. Now, several presidents and administrations later, have things changed fundamentally and socially?” Burger wondered.

“Marriage, for example, has become the centerpiece of the LGBTQ agenda,” Cole said. Kushner’s play, while concerned with gay relationships, focused more on the AIDS epidemic—now a pandemic—during Reagan’s second term in the 1980s. AIDS is still prevalent, but it has “receded from the popular imagination, because gay activism is preoccupied with different concerns,” said Burger.

Still, the play’s return reminds us of gay discrimination, homophobic tropes, and a familiar four-word phrase that first appeared in 1993: “don’t ask, don’t tell” (DADT), a compromise reached between the Clinton administration and congressional leaders, which prevented gays and lesbians from serving openly in the military.

We should call attention to noteworthy happenstances dotted on the timeline of political history: former President Bill Clinton signed DADT on December 23, 1993, the same year *Angels* opened on Broadway; President Obama signed the repeal of DADT into law on December 22, 2010, just two months after the revival of *Angels* opened on October 28.

But progress may be fleeting. Duncan D. Hunter, a congressman from California, is already implementing a plan to stop the DADT repeal. The uncertain nature of progress is perhaps what Kushner’s work is about: “I think there’s darkness in my play. I think there’s a sense of being caught in a cycle.”

For more information on the seminar “Undoing Marriage, Remaking the Social Contract” or upcoming events offered by the Center for Humanities, visit <http://centerforthehumanitiesgc.org/>.

—Rachel Ramirez



Uday Mehta and Aaron Levy

Caesura: Evenings of Multidisciplinary Scholarship & Art

For sixteen evenings during the month of February, the James Gallery took a pause from the usual exhibition routine to present *Caesura*, a series of multidisciplinary events consisting of conversations, lectures, film screenings, and readings. The series formally marked the opening of the James Gallery under the auspices of the Center for the Humanities. Doctoral students from a variety of disciplines organized many of the programs.

Throughout the series, three beautiful textile scrimms made of printed cotton voile hung lightly from above, over the gallery windows: created specifically for *Caesura* by artist Dina Weiss with Laaleh Mizani and appropriately titled *Ascenseur* (French for “elevator” or “ascender”), these works were based on the decorative ironwork in the original B. Altman & Co. department store elevator cages. Because these elevators, now



Vitaly Komar



Marjorie Perloff

out of public view in the Mina Rees Library, were integral to the public function of this garment district building, the transposition of their ornamental design into the gallery was meant as a visual cue for intimate and contemplative spaces of simultaneous waiting, movement, and exchange.

Caesura's multidisciplinary events featured artists and scholars who were invited to reflect on a research question or methodology of mutual interest and concern, thus emphasizing the fact that they share a unique process of research and meditation that is ultimately creative.

For example, artist Vitaly Komar and Jesse Prinz (Dist. Prof., GC, Philosophy) had a conversation about “Mass Taste”; André Aciman (Dist. Prof., GC, Comparative Literature) reflected on “The Invention of Blue: Color, Rhythm, Desire” with artist Wendy Mark; and Uday Mehta (Dist. Prof., GC, Political Science) and Aaron Levy (Slought Foundation) conversed on the topic of “Perpetual Peace.” Keynote speeches by two renowned scholars, Fred Moten, professor of English at Duke University, on February 2 and Marjorie Perloff, Stanford University professor emerita and scholar-in-residence at University of Southern California, on February 23, addressed multidisciplinary topics before an audience of students, faculty, and interested public from all over the city.

A reading room provided background texts on the topics as well as the work of the participants. All of the events were videotaped and subsequently screened in the gallery between the live activities. To view footage or to see a list of related readings, see opencuny.org/caesurajames.

At the Annual Irving Howe Memorial Lecture a Ghanaian Philosopher Speaks of “The Life and Death of Honor”

On the surface, the link between American literary and social critic Irving Howe and Princeton University professor Kwame Anthony Appiah may be difficult to discern. A CUNY professor from 1963 to 1986, Howe was perhaps best known for *World of Our Fathers*, his 1977 National Book Award–winning history of Eastern European Jews in America. Appiah, in contrast, is a Ghanaian philosopher with an expertise in African intellectual history. And yet Appiah was selected to give the fifteenth annual memorial lecture endowed in Howe’s honor, which was sponsored by the Center for the Humanities. The talk was held on November 17 in Elebash Recital Hall.

The topic of Appiah’s talk, “The Life and Death of Honor,” easily clarifies the link between the two thinkers. As a cofounder of *Dissent* magazine, with its democratic socialist values, Howe was committed to social reform. So too is Appiah, whose most recent book, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen*, upon which his talk was based, examines how slavery, dueling, and foot binding were eventually repudiated by the societies that once embraced them.

“We philosophers are hopelessly abstract,” Appiah acknowledged when he took the stage. “Ethical life, however, is quite concrete.” He thus stuck to the concrete in his brief history of each egregious practice and its ultimate demise. Even at the peak of their acceptance, he noted, there were those within their respective cultures who denounced them openly. Francis Bacon railed against dueling, and Evangelicals took a stand against slavery. But it took an affront to the culture’s honor, he argued, before slavery, foot binding, and dueling ultimately disappeared for good. In the late nineteenth century, for example, the Chinese became increasingly aware of the scorn foreigners held for the painful procedure of foot binding, once considered a sign of beauty and wealth, reserved for women who did not need to work for a living.

“Collective shaming requires a coalition of insiders and outsiders,” Appiah contended. “The old social order caves under these pressures.”

Could similar tensions ultimately lead to the eradication of honor killings, which Appiah referred to as “a form of sexual terrorism,” and which have yet to go the way of

the dinosaur? Sounding cautiously optimistic, he tackled this question, noting the passage in 2006 of Pakistan's Women's Protection Bill, amending the controversial Hudood Ordinance of 1979. Under the new laws, he explained, charges of rape and adultery in Pakistan can now be tried under civil law, rather than Islamic law or Shari'ah. This leaves rape victims at least somewhat less vulnerable to criminal prosecution. To reformers, though far from ideal, this is still seen as a step in the right direction.

"Legal changes don't necessarily mean much," Appiah emphasized, offering up examples of laws that did not end slavery, foot binding, or dueling. "Honor killings will only perish when they are seen as dishonorable. But," he did ultimately concede, "the legal changes are a sign that the moral codes are changing."

—Jackie Glasthal



PHOTO: JANE HOUSE

Berna Zengin Arslan

Schools of Turkey's Muslim Sect Hold Science Sacred

Turkey is seeing the rise of a pious middle class, says Berna Zengin Arslan, the first Mellon postdoctoral fellow for the Committee for the Study of Religion, who gave a lecture at the Graduate Center in December on the schools of Turkey's Gülen community, the secular nation's largest Islamic community.

These schools, with their focus on science, have been successful. Students have won more than a hundred awards in national and international science Olympiads, a priority for the schools, especially for boys. Yet just as important a goal, according to founder Fethullah Gülen, is "strengthening the faith in the hearts of people," Zengin Arslan reported. A member of the sociology department at Bahcesehir University, Istanbul, she wrote her doctoral dissertation on the subject at the University of California–Santa Cruz.

The approach of the Gülen community schools is to convey the values of Islamic morality while teaching science. Science is sacred, Zengin Arslan said, "because you are learning more about God's creation"; in fact, all activities related to education are considered sacred. The community uses a brotherhood system (and to a lesser extent a sisterhood system), with older students and teachers serving as role models and taking an interest in students' lives, helping them to develop pious selves and abstain from drinking and dating.

In this way, the community uses everyday cultural practices to serve the political purpose of reintegrating a modernized but still orthodox Islamic morality into public life. What Zengin Arslan calls the "new pious self" can be seen in boys' behavior: avoidance of eye contact with the opposite sex and a respectful, not outspoken manner. Single-sex education was outlawed in Turkey in 2000, but by discouraging and regulating interactions between girls and boys, the schools minimize the effects of coeducation. This is important because it allows students to transfer to secular university settings while maintaining their pious practice.

The Gülen movement now extends into fifty-three countries, operates more than three hundred schools across the globe, and runs a media network. The community is practical, adopting a nonconfrontational stance and encouraging interfaith dialogue internationally against "weakening religiosity."

This was the fourth lecture of the fall semester presented by the Committee for the Study of Religion. The spring lecture series is held from 12:30 to 2 p.m. Wednesdays in the committee's new home at Room 5307; the focus this term is on violence, space, and religion. The committee is headed by Bryan S. Turner (Pres. Prof., GC, Sociology).

—Jennie Kaufman

Are Privately Subsidized Projects Like the High Line a Proper Model for Manhattan's Future?



PHOTO: BRIAN CHANG

Southern end of High Line Park at Gansevoort Street

Since its introduction to the cityscape in 1934 as a pathway for freight traffic, the High Line has been a symbol of functionality, economy, and more recently—in its transformation into a public park—creative design. However, as New York residents reimagine Manhattan in the years to come, should the City of New York undertake similar projects?

This question was addressed in a public forum moderated by John Mollenkopf (Dist. Prof., GC, Political Science), director of the Center for Urban Research at the Graduate Center. The panelists were Malcolm Gladwell, best-selling author and *New Yorker* contributor; Robert Hammond, cofounder and executive director of Friends of the High Line (FHL); and Jerilyn Perine, executive director of the Citizens Housing and Planning Council.

Often praised by architects around the world, the High Line is heralded as one of the most compelling arguments for preserving our industrial heritage. “The High Line is a promenade. It symbolizes and celebrates walking through the city and enjoying the vistas and enjoying the people you’re walking past,” said Mollenkopf. “It’s a demonstration of what can be accomplished,” declared Gladwell.

Certainly, the freight railway-turned-park is something to be proud of: the 1.5 miles of elevated steel, pockets of greenery, minimalist artwork, and concrete planks extend south from West 20th to the meatpacking district on Gansevoort Street.

While building it was costly—FHL generated \$44 million in private donations and accumulated \$130 million from the city to fund the project—city officials estimate that this pocket of innovation will yield \$4 billion in private investment and \$900 million in revenue to the city, according to a 2008 news item in the *New York Times*.

Maintenance is expensive, but private donations to FHL support these costs, Hammond noted, thereby freeing up “city money to go to other parks that can’t afford the conservancy.” The city’s budget for parks is less than one half of one percent.

Perine argued that, while the High Line is aesthetically beautiful and reclaims industrial property, the fact that private money supports it does affect the public and “leaves other communities behind. . . . Actually, it worries me that it’s a symbol, because if this is the symbol, then what are we saying to these other public spaces that can never join that model?”

In response, Gladwell remarked that though the wealth and success of the High Line cannot be enjoyed by all communities, the park keeps those residents who make six figures or more from leaving New York, and their taxes subsidize programs and amenities for the middle and lower classes.

“So is it fair at the end of the day that the wealthy people living in those lofts in Chelsea get this lovely High Line? No, it’s not fair. If we could start over, would we design a different city? Maybe. But we’re stuck with this,” said Gladwell, adding, “We’ve made this bargain.”

The Great Issues Forum took place on December 8.

—Rachel Ramirez



PHOTOS: A. FRYO
Mayor Edward I. Koch

How'd He Do? Mayor Koch's Impact on New York

When Edward I. Koch was sworn in as New York City's 105th mayor on January 1, 1978, the city's reputation as a mecca of arts, culture, tourism, and prosperity had been floundering. Faced with mounting debts and civil unrest, the city had come to be associated with potholes, homelessness, burned-out buildings, unsightly graffiti, and high crime rates.

How much of an impact did this gangly, bald, pear-shaped politician, with his familiar catchphrase "How'm I doing?" have on the city's revitalization? Such was the topic of discussion on December 7 in Elebash Recital Hall, when Joshua Freeman (Prof., Queens, History), Kim Phillips-Fein (Asst. Prof., NYU, History), and Ronay Menschel, deputy mayor of New York City under Mayor Koch from 1978 to 1982, joined Jonathan Soffer (Assoc. Prof., NYU Polytechnic Institute, History), author of *Ed Koch and the Rebuilding of New York City*.

"It's weird to do historical research about events in one's own lifetime," said Suzanne Wasserman, as she introduced the panel. "But the reality is that Koch began his term in office more than thirty years ago." Wasserman, who is director of the GC's Gotham Center for New York City History, which sponsored the event, was among many baby boomers in the room with vivid recollections of the outspoken three-term mayor, who left office in 1989 and went on to teach, write books, and even briefly host the TV program *The People's Court*.

In order to write what he hopes is an objective investigation into Koch's life and legacy, Soffer found that he had to set aside what he remembered of the Koch administration. "I attempted to detach myself from the reactions of the time, and to look at the historical lessons," he said.

Overall, the panel agreed that Soffer succeeded in his attempt, creating a book that is part biography and part history. The work, they also concurred, serves to underscore similarities between New York's financial woes in the 1970s and those confronting the city today. "The fiscal crisis that Koch emerged from became a mobilizing movement for conservatism and revealed the failings of New Deal liberalism," noted Phillips-Fein. Even those on the liberal left, she pointed out, became more sympathetic to the private sector and the view that "business had to be supported, not just tolerated."

"I was one of those who didn't appreciate Koch or have a positive opinion of him during his mayoralty," admitted Freeman when it was his turn to speak, "but I can see how he generally reestablished competent management and civil service in the city in its broadest sense."

Of those on the panel, Menschel was, not surprisingly, the most commendatory of the Koch administration, for which she worked. "We forget how dire the situation was," she reminded the audience. "The city's infrastructure was in a shambles, and its budget system was a total mess. Mayor Koch not only restored the city's credit. He made New Yorkers believe in themselves again."

Research on the book, said Soffer, took ten years, during which time he interviewed the former mayor and others in his administration. He also read Koch's many books and spent countless hours wading through the archives of Columbia University's Koch Oral History Project, which contains close to eighty interviews, some of which Soffer conducted when he worked on the project's staff in the early 1990s.

So how does the former mayor feel about the historian's depiction of his place in New York City history? "He disagrees with some things," said Soffer, "but since I argue that he was extremely effective, he doesn't feel treated unfairly."

—Jackie Glasthal

Revealing Mind-Body Relationships of the Afflicted Brain

“Brain memoirs can be understood as the most recent incarnation of biographical and autobiographical works that have chronicled mind-body relationships, such as those by Michel de Montaigne, Marcel Proust, and Virginia Woolf,” said Jason Tougaw, in a presentation titled “Autobiography of a Brain: Mind, Body, Memoir” on December 3.

The memoirs, which number at least thirty, “investigate how mind, brain, body, and culture interact to create or form selfhood,” said Tougaw, defining selfhood as “no single entity” but something that “emerges from a number of brain and body processes.” They encompass a wide scope of brain illnesses or injuries and can often involve depictions of violence. Written from either the perspective of the sufferer or from that of someone in contact with those coping with a brain disorder, the memoirs create a story that offers “much needed solace and information to readers who suffer in similar ways to the writer as well as loved ones and caretakers who support them.”

An alumnus of the Graduate Center (English, 2000) and the recipient of a Mellon Fellowship in Science Studies at the Graduate Center, Tougaw serves as an associate professor of English at Queens College. He is the author of *Strange Cases: The Medical Case History and the British Novel* (Routledge, 2006) and coeditor, with Nancy K. Miller (Dist. Prof., GC, Comparative Literature, English, French), of *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community* (University of Illinois, 2002). His own memoir *The One You Get* is currently under consideration at a number of trade publishers.

Inasmuch as he is a researcher with interdisciplinary interests, which include dream theory, consciousness studies, and cognitive approaches to literature and the arts, Tougaw highlighted how both neuroscience research and memoir writing contribute to the genre of brain memoir. While scientists are “developing methods for integrating the examinations of subjective experience into brain research and theory,” he noted, memoirists are creating a literary entryway into the mind by providing detailed accounts of neurological illness that have the “potential to inform and influence brain research and clinical practice.”

Among the examples Tougaw discussed were *To Love What Is: A Marriage Transformed* and *Epileptic*. In the former, Alix Kates Shulman recounts her shattering experience of living with a husband suffering from severe memory impairment after a brain injury. In the latter, a graphic brain memoir, David B. employs tools of both writing and art to document the violent seizures of his brother Jean Christophe and his own psychological retreat in the face of his brother’s mental deterioration.

The act of writing or painting and drawing to represent self and consciousness enables the brain memoirist to “gain a sense of agency or control in the face of the accidents that shape lives, including the accidents of genes, disease, brain illness, or physical injury,” observed Tougaw.

He also stressed the genre’s academic and social contributions. As brain memoirs create their own legacy of autobiographical writings, they will continue to “renew and invigorate philosophical debates about mind, body, memory, and the relationships between self and narrative.”

The event was organized by the Center for the Study of Women and Society. Distinguished Professor Nancy K. Miller served as discussant.

—Rachel Ramirez

FROM EPILEPTIC BY DAVID B., TRANSLATED BY KIM THOMPSON.
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Cover of *Epileptic*



Illustration from *Epileptic*, p. 72

Discovering a “Fairy Tale” Quasicrystal from Outer Space

L: This model of a quasicrystal with icosahedral symmetry has the same symmetry as both a soccer ball and the khatyrkite samples that Steinhardt and his team have been testing.

R: Paul Steinhardt

PHOTOS: PAUL STEINHARDT; P. PAPIER



The grains of a crystalline solid are made up of molecules, atoms, or ions, arranged in an orderly repeating pattern. But might “quasicrystals”—matter characterized by a rotational symmetry not found in crystals—also exist in nature? For years, Paul Steinhardt, Princeton University’s Albert Einstein Professor in Science and director of the school’s Center for Theoretical Science, made it his mission to find out.

“This is one of the greatest scientific adventures I’ve ever been involved in, or even heard of,” raved William Bialek, GC visiting presidential professor of physics, as he introduced Steinhardt to attendees at a November 29 talk titled “Once Upon a Time in Kamchatka: The Search for Natural Quasicrystals.” Held in Proshansky Auditorium, the event was sponsored by the GC’s Initiative for the Theoretical Sciences, which Bialek heads.

Acknowledging that his quest has become a bit of a “scientific fairy tale,” Steinhardt recounted how he and his team uncovered proof that such a natural solid does exist. Years after putting out a call to the international scientific community, Steinhardt was finally contacted by Luca Bindi, head of mineralogy at the University of Florence, Italy, who was “as stubborn about pursuing this project as we were.”

Among the substances that Bindi had access to was a sample of a mineral called khatyrkite that contained tiny grains of an alloy made of copper, aluminum, and iron. Believed to be from a clay bed in far eastern Russia, the khatyrkite turned out to be that veritable needle in a haystack. When tested, its diffraction patterns almost exactly matched those of synthetic quasicrystals made in a lab.

“But the story does not end there,” continued Steinhardt, prolonging the suspense of his scientific adventure. As he worked to confirm that the finding was indeed a natural substance, Steinhardt found himself embroiled in research that involved KGB agents, secret diaries, death threats, and smuggling. (The khatyrkite was found in Soviet Russia, after all!)

Though the sample is now confirmed to be legitimate, and is believed to have come from an ancient meteorite, Steinhardt’s quasicrystal-related quest is far from over. Currently he is preparing for an expedition to Russia’s remote Kamchatka peninsula, where the sample was found. Accompanying him will be Valery V. Kryachko, the Russian who actually uncovered the few known samples of khatyrkite now in Steinhardt’s possession. Without Kryachko’s help, said Steinhardt, there would be little chance of finding additional specimens of the ore.

In closing, Steinhardt pointed out that the finding of these quasicrystals has huge implications for future scientific study. With their uniquely hard, brittle properties, synthetic quasicrystals are already being looked at as a Teflon alternative in nonstick surface coatings for cookware and in ball bearings. But the substance’s existence in nature will inevitably lead to entirely new areas of analysis. “Not only may this be older than any other meteorite thus observed until now,” said Steinhardt, the finding “has also opened a new era of mineralogy research.”

—Jackie Glasthal



Film director Ken Burns



Ken Burns and film scholar Jerry Carlson

Ken Burns's "Place in America" Screenings Show How Film and TV Can Capture the Essence of Time and Place

What do the films *To Kill a Mockingbird* (dir. Robert Mulligan, 1962) and *The Searchers* (dir. John Ford, 1956) have in common with Episode I of HBO's television drama series *Treme* (dir. Agnieszka Holland, 2010)? At first glance, perhaps not much. But all three were selected by the notable documentary filmmaker Ken Burns for screening in the GC's "Place in America" film series, which occurred between September and December 2010.

As curator of the series, Burns made his selections not solely for their alluring locales, he told audience members in Elebash Recital Hall on December 9, in a discussion that followed the *Treme* screening, but also for the way they use language, music, and human interactions to capture the essence of their respective settings. "All three films also show how much place is inextricably tied to race in this country," he pointed out.

To Kill a Mockingbird, a film adaptation of Harper Lee's famous novel of the same name, deals with issues of prejudice in the Depression-era south, while *The Searchers* explores the struggles between Native Americans and settlers on the American frontier in the years following the Civil War. *Treme* (pronounced tre-MAY), in comparison, tells the story of locals in a New Orleans neighborhood as they attempt to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. "I can't think of any other work that nails a city so well in just seventy minutes," said Burns of *Treme*. "It is, in every breath, New Orleans coming out through its pores."

Joining Burns onstage for the discussion was film scholar Jerry Carlson, coordinator of critical studies in the film and video program at City College and a GC faculty member, who questioned Burns about his film selections and his interest in racial issues. In response, Burns recalled growing up in an era when civil rights issues were at the forefront of news coverage. Those memories, he noted, intersect with ones he has of his mother, who died when he was just eleven years old. "I remember associating the cancer killing my country with the cancer killing my family," he admitted point-blank.

Acknowledging that he has always been struck by the way American culture glosses over the reality of those who live "un-free in a free land," Burns pointed out that even Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, famous for its focus on issues of racial inequality, "is centered on the white people who save the day." In the story, a white lawyer, Atticus Finch, staunchly yet unsuccessfully defends a black man, Tom Robinson, who has been falsely accused of raping a white woman. Other classic American films that, to Burns, embody this same "vagueness of 'All men are created equal,'" as he called it, include *Gone with the Wind* and *Birth of a Nation*. Though Americans like to project a monolithic image, said Burns, "so many human beings have been owned by other human beings here."

When asked what he is currently working on, Burns said that, in addition to a documentary about Prohibition, due out in 2011, he is in the middle of editing a series about those who survived the Dust Bowl. Also in the works are a biography of Jackie Robinson, the ballplayer who broke Major League Baseball's color barrier; a series on the history of the Roosevelts; a documentary on the Vietnam War; and another on the five young men wrongly accused of rape in the famous 1989 Central Park jogger case.

As a filmmaker, Burns went on to say, he has always been aware of the place where events occur. "Place for me," he said, "is inseparable from communication and history, which at some point, and when you least expect it, intersect with race."

—Jackie Glasthal



Jonathan Galassi



André Aciman



PHOTOS: JOSELYN JURICH

Humera Afridi

Writers' Institute Authors Read Works-in-Progress at KGB Bar

At KGB Bar, New York's foremost downtown literary venue, on February 4, a large and appreciative audience heard selections from works-in-progress by professional writers enrolled in the fiction class, inaugurated in Fall 2010, of the GC's Writers' Institute (WI). Faculty member Jonathan Galassi, president/publisher of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, served as curator of the event, and André Aciman, WI's director, introduced the three authors—Humera Afridi, Debora Kuan, and Martin Quinn—who read from works that offered a wide variety in style, plot, and setting: from homosexual seduction in Iraq, to post-earthquake confusion in Pakistan, to malaise in America.

Launched in 2006 with nonfiction workshops, the WI offers a one-year intensive program whose stated mission is “to enable thirty talented, highly motivated and exceptionally qualified writers of fiction and nonfiction to hone their craft under the auspices of some of today's most accomplished magazine, newspaper, and book editors,” including top editors from the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Harper's*, Knopf, and Barnes & Noble. Aciman is himself a well-known nonfiction author and novelist, and serves as executive officer of the Graduate Center's doctoral program in comparative literature.

Students in both fiction and nonfiction classes take weekly workshops during the fall and spring semesters, where they read and discuss their work. The emphasis on faculty who are prominent working editors offers students an opportunity to understand how their work is evaluated at the most competitive levels.

Participants also benefit from a public hearing of their writing. As Jonathan Galassi said of the event at KGB, “I had a wonderful experience working with these exciting emerging writers and I am pleased to be able to introduce a few outstanding new voices to a wider audience.”

Besides Galassi, the fiction staff includes Deborah Treisman, fiction editor, *The New Yorker*; Nathaniel Rich, a novelist and formerly a senior editor at *The Paris Review*; and John Freeman, editor, *Granta*. For further information and to apply, see: <http://writersinstitute.gc.cuny.edu/>.

New Appointments to the Doctoral Faculty

The following is a list of appointments to the doctoral faculty from November 11, 2010, through February 2, 2011. Listed after each name are the faculty member's home college or home institution and fields of specialization.

ANTHROPOLOGY, PH.D. PROGRAM

Alexander A. Bauer, Queens: Old World prehistory, archaeological methods and theory, cultural heritage law and policy, semiotics of material culture. **Arthur Leigh Binford**, CSI: Hegemony and rural class formation, political economy of international migration, anthropology of violence, Mexico and Central America. **Douglas Martin Boyer**, Brooklyn: Evolutionary morphology, functional morphology, paleoanthropology, primate paleontology. **Christopher C. Gilbert**, Hunter: Primate evolution, primate morphology, paleontology, systematics.

BIOLOGY, PH.D. PROGRAM

Kamilah Ali, City: Lipid metabolism, molecular biology, atherosclerosis/cardiovascular diseases, cell signaling.

CHEMISTRY, PH.D. PROGRAM

Gustavo E. López, Lehman: Physical chemistry, nanotechnology and materials. **Yolanda A. Small**, York: Physical chemistry.

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, PH.D. PROGRAM

Jerry W. Carlson, City: Narrative theory, film history and theory, comparative studies of the arts of the Americas, film and literature. **Jean Graham-Jones**, GC: Argentine and Buenos Aires theatre.

COMPUTER SCIENCE, PH.D. PROGRAM

Yedidiah Langsam, Brooklyn: Computer science and STEM education. **Lie Xie**, Hunter: Bioinformatics, computational biology, machine learning, database and structure-based drug design.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE, PH.D. PROGRAM

Vicki Lens, Adjunct. Columbia University: Administrative justice in public welfare bureaucracies, welfare reform, socio-legal studies, qualitative research. **Michael G. Maxfield**, John Jay: Victimization, policing, homicide, community corrections, auto theft, long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect. **Jon M. Shane**, John Jay: Criminology, police ethics, police and corrections, problem-oriented policing.

MATHEMATICS, PH.D. PROGRAM

Sudeb Mitra, Queens: Complex analysis, geometric function theory, quasiconformal mappings, Riemann surfaces and Teichmüller spaces.

PHYSICS, PH. D. PROGRAM

Oleg Berman, NYCC Tech: Condensed matter theory, theoretical solid state physics. **Larry S. Liebovitch**, Queens: Modeling complex physical systems, biophysics, modeling complex social systems. **Ariyeh Maller**, NYCC Tech: Cosmology, galaxy formation, gravitational lensing, quasar absorption systems. **Giovanni Ossola**, NYCC Tech: Theoretical particle physics, computational physics. **Luat T. Vuong**, Queens: Photonics, materials science, self-organization/nonlinear dynamics, energy.

PSYCHOLOGY, PH.D. PROGRAM (CLINICAL)

Yvette Caro, Queens: Neuropsychology. **Eric A. Fertuck**, City: Social cognitive neuroscience, psychopathology. **Diana Puñales Morejon**, City: Multicultural/Latino psychology, women's issues, immigration and acculturation, severe psychopathology and medical illness.

PSYCHOLOGY, PH.D. PROGRAM (COGNITIVE NEUROSCIENCE)

Jon C. Horvitz, City: Neurobiology of learning and motivation, dopamine systems and behavior.

PSYCHOLOGY, PH.D. PROGRAM (DEVELOPMENTAL)

Joan M. Lucariello, City: Cognitive development, evidence-based instructional (teaching) practices, learning processes and development, cultural psychology.

PSYCHOLOGY, PH.D. PROGRAM (NEUROPSYCHOLOGY)

Jin Fan, Queens: Neuroscience. **Yoko Nomura**, Queens: Developmental psychopathology, epigenetics, cognitive neuroscience.

SOCIOLOGY, PH.D. PROGRAM

Lior Gideon, John Jay: Criminology, penology, victimization, methods. **Leslie Paik**, City: Criminology/juvenile justice, law and society, sociology of sciences, ethnographic methods. **Janet E. Poppendieck**, Hunter: Sociology of food and nutrition, public policy/social welfare, social inequality, voluntary associations.

News from Graduate Center Students

All students are invited to send news of their activities to pubaff@gc.cuny.edu. News of student honors, awards, publications, and other activities is also posted at http://www.gc.cuny.edu/current_students/student_honors.htm.

Marc Balcells (Criminal Justice) won a full scholarship to attend the International Art Crime Studies master's program of the Association for Research into Crimes against Art, during summer 2011 in Umbria, Italy.

Sultana Banulescu (History) won the Randolph Braham Dissertation Fellowship for 2010–11.

Kevin Barnes-Ceeney (Criminal Justice) was selected for the 2011 International Summer School of the European Association for Research on Adolescence and the Society for Research on Adolescence, funded by the Jacobs Foundation.

Raffaele Bedarida (Art History), as curator of the Harlem Studio Fellowship residency program, initiated an artist-exchange collaboration with Mongin Art Space in Seoul (Korea) and presented the show *On the Block* at the New York Photo Festival in Dumbo, New York. With Ruggero Montrasio, he coedited *Susanna Pozzoli. On the Block: Harlem Private View* (Turin: Allemandi, 2010).

Mary (Helen) Burnham (Art History) won a CUNY Writing Fellowship for the 2010–11 academic year.

Táina Caragol (Art History), in August 2010, became the curator of education at the Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico.

Ananda Cohen (Art History) won a GC-sponsored dissertation fellowship for her research on “Mural Painting and Social Change in the Colonial Andes, 1626–1830,” and was also selected to participate in the Emerging Scholars of Latin American Art session at the 2011 College Art Association conference.

Daniel Colson, Whitney George, Casey Hale, Ramin Heydarbeygi, Jessica Rudman, Ines Thiebaut, and Cynthia Lee Wong (Music) are composers whose original works were performed by TRANSIT, a New York–based ensemble. The concert was held in the Elebash Recital Hall on December 8, 2010.

Elizabeth Cronin (Art History) received a CUNY Writing Fellowship for the 2010–11 academic year.

Rick DesRochers (Theatre) has been promoted to associate artist at, and cocurator of, PlayPenn New Play Development Conference, where he shepherded J. T. Rogers' *Blood and Gifts* through the development process; the play received its world premiere at the National Theatre in London in 2010 and will have its U.S. premiere at Lincoln Center in the fall of 2011.

Christine Folch (Anthropology) gave a lecture titled “Stakes of a Triple Frontier City: The Untold History of Ciudad del Este” at the New York Public Library in January.

J. Brian Freeman (History) had three articles or chapters accepted for publication, including “Driving Pan-Americanism: Imagining a Gulf of Mexico Highway” in *Journal of Latino–Latin American Studies* (Fall/Winter 2010).

Evan Friss (History) received the E. P. Thompson Dissertation Fellowship for 2010–11.

David Gary (History) received the 2010–11 Leon Levy Center for Biography Dissertation Fellowship.

Kate Hallgren (History) will publish “Maternalism Goes to War: Class, Nativism and Mothers' Fight for Conscription in America's First World War” in *Women of the Right: Comparisons and Exchanges Across National Borders*.

Jameel Haque (History) won a Critical Language Scholarship from the U.S. Department of State to study Urdu in India.

Thomas Harbison (History) won the National Society of Colonial Dames of New York 2010–11 Dissertation Fellowship.

Desmond Hosford (French) published “Uneasy Anthropocentrism: Cartesianism and the Ethics of Species Differentiation in Seventeenth-Century France” in *JAC: Rhetoric, Writing, Culture, Politics* 30.3–4 (2010).

Desmond Hosford and **Chong J. Wojtkowski** (French) edited *French Orientalism: Culture, Politics, and the Imagined Other* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010).

David Houpt (History) published “Securing a Legacy: The Publication of James Madison’s Notes from the Constitutional Convention” in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*.

Miriam Intrator (History) received the History Program Sponsored Dissertation Fellowship for 2010–11.

Lynn Karam (French) published her essay “One Woman Writes An(Other): A Western Gaze on the Oriental Other in Mme de Villedieu’s *Mémoires du Sérail sous Amurat II*” in *French Orientalism: Culture, Politics, and the Imagined Other*, eds. Desmond Hosford and Chong J. Wojtkowski (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010).

Marisa Lerer (Art History) won a 2010–11 CUNY Writing Fellowship.

Christian Maile (Forensic Psychology) won an award from the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers Research Committee for his research on “Prevalence of Deviant Sexual Fantasy and Behavior in a Non-Offending Community Sample.”

Laura Mauldin (Sociology), who is researching her dissertation topic “The Bionic Ear: Disability, the Body, and Cochlear Implants,” was a Fall 2010 visiting scholar in a joint program for bioethics; she split her time between the Hastings Center and Yale University’s Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics.

Patricia Mazzullo (Audiology) was selected to participate in the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s Minority Student Leadership Program (MSLP). At the annual convention in Philadelphia, she joined in a set of leadership-focused educational programs and activities.

Anna McGehee (History) received the Colonial Dames of America Award for 2010–11.

Stanley Mirvis (History) won a Center for Jewish History 2010–11 Dissertation Fellowship. He will publish “Sexuality and Sentiment: Concubinage between Jewish Men and Their Female Slaves in Late Eighteenth-Century Jamaica” in *The Jewish Diaspora of the Caribbean*.

Pieranna Pieroni (Urban Education), at the annual conference of the National Network for Educational Renewal, presented “Democracy from the Ground Up.” Her talk highlighted a summer program that she initiated, which encourages high-school students to participate in community gardening, thus building their civic engagement.

Paul Polgar (History) had several articles accepted for publication, including “‘To Raise Them to an Equal Participation’: Early National Abolitionism, Gradual Emancipation, and the Promise of African American Citizenship” in *Journal of the Early Republic*.

Lucia Pozzan (Linguistics) and **Erin Quirk** (Linguistics) and Virginia Valian (Dist. Prof., Hunter, Linguistics, Psychology) presented a paper titled “The Acquisition of English Main and Embedded Questions in Child and Adult SLA: An Elicited Production Study” at the 35th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development in November 2010.

Lucia Pozzan (Linguistics) presented a paper titled “I Don’t Know Why Do I Say That: Competence and Performance in L2 Acquisition of Subject-Auxiliary Inversion” at the Second Language Research Forum in October 2010.

Nelly Saint Maurice (French) presented a paper titled “Quatre mots pour définir le théâtre d’Antonin Artaud: Sensibilité, force, surprenants alliages et précision” at the 2010 Colloque de la Société des Professeurs Français et Francophones d’Amérique, held at Fordham University in October 2010.

Ji-Young Shim (Linguistics) presented two conference papers coauthored with Marcel den Dikken (Prof., GC, Linguistics): “Feature Inheritance, EPP, and the

Lexical/Functional Distinction” at the 2011 Winter International Conference on Linguistics in Seoul in January and “Feature Inheritance and the EPP” at the Seventh Workshop on Altaic Formal Linguistics (WAFL) in October 2010.

Lidiya Torniyova (Linguistics) and Prof. Virginia Valian presented a talk titled “Hypothesis Testing for Auxiliary Use in Interrogatives” at the 86th annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America in January 2011.

Dan Venning (Theatre) wrote an essay on Kurt Weill’s unpublished “Pencil Notes on the Minstrel Show” that was accepted for publication in *Performing Arts Resources 28: The Tyranny of Documents*.

Ellen Zitani (History) published “Sibilla Aleramo, Lina Poletti and Giovanni Cena: Understanding Links between Lesbian Desire, Feminism and Free Love in Early-Twentieth-Century Italy” in the *Graduate Journal of Social Sciences* special issue on Queer Studies: Methodological Approaches.



Top and above: Virginia Heffernan, the *New York Times* columnist, TV critic, and author of *The Pleasures of the Internet*, delivers the keynote speech.



One of the many sessions that addressed developments in Internet technology.

IT Conference at GC Explores How Technology Creates a Digital Culture for Teaching, Research, and Social Connection

Rather than blog, text message, instant message, email, or Skype, faculty, technology staff, and administrators enjoyed a rare opportunity to communicate face-to-face at CUNY’s ninth annual IT conference. Held at the GC on December 14, the event was devised to explore ways in which technology is changing instruction, research, and administration throughout the CUNY system. Themed “The Tried and the New,” sessions focused on emerging technologies and applications, new uses for already-available technologies, and technology-based projects and initiatives currently taking place on CUNY campuses.

“Americans now spend as much time on the Internet as they do watching television,” pointed out George Otte, University Director of Academic Technology for CUNY. “What this means to educators is why we are here today.”

Keynote speaker Virginia Heffernan, the *New York Times* columnist, TV critic, and author of *The Pleasures of the Internet*, emphasized the ubiquity of digital technologies. “Analog culture is over,” she contended, offering up a litany of virtually obsolete items from library card catalogs and vinyl albums, to long handwritten letters and the Filofax. Remnants may remain, she acknowledged, just as “we still have trains and other technologies of the nineteenth century; they’re just not as big.”

Heffernan did concede that there are many who still struggle to embrace our digital culture. “It’s a very anxious medium,” she allowed, leaving many feeling adrift. Yet even for those who find its security and privacy issues and its vastness off-putting, she noted, there are options, such as “apps” and other pay walls, which she sees as the suburbs and gated communities of the online world. “They are for those who want to commute in, without having to mix,” she said.

To Heffernan’s mind, the Internet remains a wonderful venue for those pursuing academic interests. “Reading and writing on the web,” she asserted, “is much closer to thought than books.”

To make the best use of emerging technologies, sessions at the conference addressed ways in which social networking, eReaders, wikis, digital and nondigital games, iOS devices such as the iPod Touch and iPad, and cloud-enabling technologies in which data and applications are stored remotely and accessed via the Internet, can be used to “work with a generation keen on building things and connecting with each other, if not with us,” as Otte put it.

In this vein, Heffernan’s analogy of the digital world as an entire realm, rather than simply a mapped-out “information superhighway,” seemed an appropriate metaphor for the conference as a whole. “Analog culture created digital culture,

which has now superseded it,” she argued. Using digital media, “you can get a break from the physical world and enter the cerebral.”

The no-cost IT conference, which was closed to registrants after reaching maximum seating capacity, was part of a two-day event hosted by CUNY and the Center for Digital Education. The first day of the conference, at which an overview of CUNY’s key IT initiatives was presented, took place at John Jay College of Criminal Justice earlier in the month, on December 3.

—Jackie Glasthal



PHOTO: CHRIS SUIA

CUNY BA recipients process into the Great Hall of Cooper Union.

CUNY’s Baccalaureate at 40

In the late 1960s, a group of faculty and students suggested that a CUNY-wide bachelor’s degree be offered. They believed that the university’s educational program should provide for greater flexibility, allowing individual faculty and students to define programs of study, as well as permitting horizontal movement of students among the CUNY campuses.

On February 22, 1971, the N.Y.S. Board of Higher Education authorized CUNY to award the Bachelor of Arts degree, which was to be based at the Graduate Center; soon after, the Bachelor of Science degree was approved. Thus the CUNY Baccalaureate Program was born, to be renamed, in 2008, the CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies. The degree is commonly known as the “CUNY B.A.”

Faculty mentoring is the degree’s cornerstone and many CUNY B.A. mentors provide service beyond expectations. They are drawn from the CUNY colleges and some are members of the doctoral faculty. They serve enthusiastically, without compensation, valuing their work with creative motivated students, many of whom are charting cutting-edge academic territories such as engineering psychology, marketing anthropology, development sociology, and information visualization. In recent years, more than thirty CUNY B.A.s have graduated with courses of study that focus on sustainability; another ten are currently enrolled. In March 2011, the University Design Consortium, founded to challenge public universities to develop innovative strategies to address this complex issue of the twenty-first century, will recognize CUNY B.A.’s efforts in this area.

External and internal support for the CUNY B.A. remains strong. The program has received grants from the Diamond, Ford, and International Study Abroad Foundations, the CUNY Consortium for the Study of Disabilities, and the CUNY Workforce Development Initiative; most recently, CUNY B.A. received an in-kind Google Grant Award. CUNY B.A. has its own academic fellowship program, established by the Thomas W. Smith Foundation, and offers several other scholarships; CUNY B.A. has, since 1994, helped fund—in full or in part—800 students. Students have also been recipients of major CUNY awards, such as Pipeline Fellowships, and major national awards, such as Fulbright Fellowships; this semester, five students received the highly competitive national Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship.

Today, forty years after the CUNY B.A. was approved, the name may have changed, but the vital goal of helping students and faculty explore intellectual and educational innovation remains in place. There are close to 7,000 CUNY B.A. graduates; the majority report that they have received raises and promotions and/or have successfully changed professions; have gone on to graduate education; and are following career paths related to their self-designed studies.



PHOTO: JASON FLEIFORD

Photo Contest: Seeing the Mina Rees Library

Our library is the most visible feature of the Graduate Center. The Friends of the Graduate Center Library is offering prizes for the best photos or multimedia presentations that capture the many aspects of life in and around our library, and also highlight its physical features. Entrants may be students, faculty, staff, or friends of the Graduate Center. Photos may be taken on cell phones or digital cameras or any format that can be viewed through digital media. The deadline for the entries is May 1, 2011. You may enter more than once, and group entries are welcome. Friends of the Library and the DSC will form a selection committee to choose winners and will host an exhibition in the Library in late May. For more information write to wkornblum@gc.cuny.edu.

In Memoriam

Edouard Glissant, Distinguished Professor of French and an esteemed colleague, died on February 3 at the age of 82. He was widely recognized for the rare grace and skill of his writing and criticism and was twice a finalist for the Nobel Prize in Literature. Among the generation of French Caribbean poets who came to prominence in the 1950s, he made manifest his rebellion against racism of all sorts and had an important influence throughout the Francophone world and beyond. One of his central themes was what he called “creolization,” the process by which “cultures mix and produce something not only new but unpredictable.” Unbounded by genre, he published over twenty books: poetry, novels, essays, and plays. Many of these works have been translated into English, among them, *Poetic Intention* (2010), *Collected Poems of Edouard Glissant* (2005), *Monsieur Toussaint: A Play* (2005), *The Fourth Century* (2001), *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (1999), *Poetics of Relations* (1997), and *The Ripening Caribbean* (1986). He will be remembered as a beloved teacher and mentor, a colleague, and a friend.

David Christopher Leonard, a 2000 alumnus of the doctoral program in anthropology, died on October 2 at the age of 60, after a long struggle with cancer. At the time of his death, he was researching the issue of “informed consent,” addressing how physicians communicate with patients who are confronted with a life-threatening illness.

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