

*E L · E · M*

*E N*

*T*

*EL·E·MENT: (noun)*

- 1 *a part or aspect of something abstract, especially one that is essential or characteristic.*
  - *a small but significant presence of a feeling or abstract quality.*
  - *a group of people of a particular kind within a larger group.*
  - *the rudiments of a branch of knowledge.*
- 2 *each of more than one hundred substances that cannot be chemically interconverted or broken down into simpler substances (see periodic table).*
  - *any of the four substances (earth, water, air, and fire) regarded as the fundamental constituents of the world in ancient and medieval philosophy.*
  - *a person's or animal's natural or preferred environment.*
- 3 *[plural] strong winds, heavy rain, or other kinds of bad weather.*
- 4 *a part in an electric kettle, heater, or cooker which contains a wire through which an electric current is passed to provide heat.*

*THE POWER  
OF THINKING  
TOGETHER*

*GABRIELA BASTERRA*

Congratulations on a new year of shared creation. I would like to celebrate your wonderful accomplishments – collective projects, dissertations, musical scores, choreographies, images, essays, performances, artworks, poems, films – by reflecting on the embodiment of authorship in the humanities and arts we call a book. It is extraordinary to see how your unique vision and voice have become a free-standing being in the world, a being that speaks – your book.

With whose voice does your book speak? With your own voice, of course. You are its author, the one who was moved to respond to a calling, to an injustice, to what had been silenced, ignored, not yet explored. You spent nights and days penning thousands of notes, then distilling them down to a meaningful sentence that blends with others into an orchestrated whole, your book. You conceived it as an innovation that expands the way your field thinks. You researched it with vigor, shaped it as a sustained argument, wrote it in your own inimitable style. Your voice resounds in every single word.

And yet, have you ever felt as though something else were speaking through you? Have you ever had the impression that this book you wrote word by word, this book you authored, is larger than you are? It is as if your book were the meeting place of all the others you are thinking with: voices you conjured up through quotation; those who said it before you in subtly different ways; the criticism you anticipated all along; your ideal or most challenging readers; even the other

in you and your own body, which lets ideas flow from mind to eye to pen to paper aching when you've been sitting still too long. Your book is the meeting place even of those whose live presence pulled you away from writing.

With all those others your voice gained texture, and you found yourself coming up with such a brilliant argument that even today, months later, it still resonates in unsuspected ways you, its author, welcome as a challenge. The power of thinking together finding its best expression through your mind, your voice, your heart – this is your book. You were indeed inspired.

What is it, being inspired? It is finding in yourself something that was not in you before. Because you find it in yourself, you believe you are its origin. Inspiration is believing oneself to be the author of something one has received, becoming responsible for it and saying it in one's own voice.

Gabriela Basterra

NYU Center for the Humanities  
Acting Director 2018-2019

*SEP·TEM·BER 11, 2018*

# *LOOK AGAIN*

*James Baldwin's Story of Childhood: A Symposium.*  
*Presentation of a new edition of James Baldwin's book*  
*Little Man, Little Man, with eds. Nicholas Boggs (English,*  
*NYU) and Jennifer DeVere Brody, and with Baldwin's*  
*nephew and niece, Tejan Karefa-Smart and Aisha Karefa-*  
*Smart, among others.*

Tejan Karefa-Smart (photographer and digital media artist) recalled how one day he jokingly asked his Uncle Jimmy, “When are you going to write a book about me?” *Little Man, Little Man* was James Baldwin’s response. Tejan graces the pages as TJ, his sister Aisha as Blinky.

Baldwin tells a famous anecdote of when he was a teenager standing on Broadway and [American painter Beauford] Delaney told him to look down at the gutter. When Baldwin told him that he saw nothing, Delaney told him to “look again.” Then Baldwin saw something spectacular: the reflection of the buildings in the “oil moving like mercury in the black water of the gutter,” distorted and radiant. “The reality of his seeing caused me to begin to see,” Baldwin explained.

(Introduction by Nicholas Boggs and Jennifer DeVere Brody, xviii)

TJ’s dawning realization of the problem of defining the color “black” echoes Baldwin’s description of the lesson he learned from Delaney on Broadway: that day he learned that “to stare at a leaf long enough, to try to apprehend the leaf, was to discover the many colors in it; and though black had been

described to me as the absence of light, it became very clear to me that if this were true, we would never have been able to see the colour; black.”

(Introduction, XIX)

But Blinky, she just looking from across the street. Them eye-glasses blinking just like the sun was hitting you in the eye. TJ don't know why she all the time got them glasses on. She say she can't see without them. Maybe that true, if she say so. But TJ put them on one time and he couldn't see nothing with them on. He couldn't see across the street. Everything looked like it was rained on. So TJ ain't too sure about Blinky. It was some white folks at school bought her them glasses. If he can't see out them, how she going to see out them? And she older than he is. She eight years old. She ought know better. But she a girl.

(Baldwin, *Little Man, Little Man*, 8)

Blinky, she a funny color. Her color changing all the time. She always make TJ think of the color of sun-light when your eyes closed and the sun inside your eyes. When your eyes is open, she the color of real black coffee, early in the morning.

(Baldwin, *Little Man, Little Man*, 10-11)

OC·TO·BER 23, 2018

*NARROWCAST:  
MAKING AND  
UNMAKING  
SOUND*

*Book event for Narrowcast: Poetry and Audio Research, with author Lytle Shaw (English, NYU).*

Because background noise creates an acoustic microclimate, the narrowcast transports the listener to the specific space where the recording was made, whereas the broadcast's studio environment is free of unwanted sound.

Mid-century American poets associated with the New Left mobilized tape recording as a new form of sonic field research even as they themselves were being subjected to tape-based surveillance.

Allen Ginsberg, Charles Olson, Larry Eigner, and Amiri Baraka all used recording to contest models of time being put forward by dominant media and the state, exploring non-monumental time and subverting media schedules of work, consumption, leisure, and national crises.

Surprisingly, their methods at once dovetailed with those of the state collecting evidence against them and ran up against the same technological limits. Arguing that CIA and FBI "researchers" shared unexpected terrain not only with poets, but with famous theorists such as Fredric Jameson and Hayden White, Lytle Shaw reframes the status of tape recordings in postwar poetics and challenges notions of how tape might be understood as a mode of evidence.

DE·CEM·BER 4, 2018

# SONIC SEA

*(Michelle Dougherty and  
Daniel Hinerfeld, dirs)*

*(2016) Michelle Dougherty and Daniel Hinerfeld,  
directors. Film screening and panel discussion,  
Environmental Humanities Series.*

The oceans are not a silent world, but dynamic, living symphonies of sound. In water, sound travels five times faster, and many times farther than it does in air. Whales, dolphins, porpoises, and other marine mammals have evolved to take advantage of this perfect sonic medium. Just as we rely on sight to survive, they depend on sound to hunt for food, find mates, and detect predators.

Over the last fifty years, our increasing ocean presence has drastically transformed the acoustic environment of these majestic creatures. Undersea noise pollution is invisible but it is damaging the web of ocean life. The leading contributors to ocean noise come from commercial, industrial, and military sources: shipping, seismic, and sonar.

## SHIPPING

At any given time, there are up to sixty thousand commercial ships traversing our seas worldwide. Cavitation from propellers and the rumble of engines reverberate through every corner of the ocean. The incessant and increasing cacophony masks whales' ability to hear and be heard, hindering their ability to prosper and ultimately to survive.

## SEISMIC

To detect oil and gas deposits beneath the ocean floor, the

petrochemical industry uses seismic airguns, the modern form of exploratory dynamite. Ships tow arrays of these guns, discharging extremely intense pulses of sound toward the sea floor.

During seismic surveys, acoustic explosions continue for days or weeks on end. The blasts disrupt critical behavior and communication among whales and can have massive impacts on fish populations.

## SONAR

Sonar is the principal submarine detection system used by the U.S. Navy and other navies of the world. To detect targets, naval warships generate extremely loud waves of sound that sweep the ocean. Military sonar acts as an enormous predator. When exposed, some whales go silent, stop foraging, and abandon their habitat. Repeated exposure can harm entire populations of animals, and has led to mass whale strandings from the Canary Islands and the Caribbean to Japan.

*Sonic Sea* is about understanding and protecting the vast symphony of life in our waters.

We can reduce the impacts of ocean noise if we take action now.

([www.sonicsea.org](http://www.sonicsea.org))

JAN·U·ARY 29, 2019

*ELEMENTS OF A  
PHILOSOPHY OF  
TECHNOLOGY*

*Book event on Elements of a Philosophy of Technology: On the Evolutionary History of Culture by Ernst Kapp, first English translation by Lauren Wolfe (NYU Comparative Literature graduate student), eds. Leif Weatherby (German, NYU) and Jeffrey Kirkwood.*

For Ernst Kapp, technologies are projections of human organs, so that the finger would be projected into the stylus, the eye into the camera obscura, the ear into a piano, or the nervous system into the telegraphic network. Beyond simply reproducing the body's functions, these inventions—tools, machines, networks, instruments—actually teach us how the body works. The technology we create provides the framework that allows us to understand our own organs after the fact.

The term “lens” is an example of the lesson we can take from anatomical and physiological nomenclature generally: the names we give to organic bodies are largely derived from objects external to them, and especially from objects associated with the projection. How else should we understand it, when the construction of the eye is found to be entirely analogous with that of a camera obscura, when it is shown that an image of an object in front of the eye is formed inverted on the retina “in exactly the same way as the image forms on the back panel of a camera obscura,” and when the eye is alleged to be an organ that “carries out with extraordinary precision the daguerreotype process”?<sup>1</sup>

From the standpoint of organ projection, one need only reverse these claims and explain that the camera obscura's construction is entirely analogous with that of the eye, that it is in effect the unconsciously projected mechanical after-image of the same, by means of which science is belatedly aided in comprehending visual processes. This is exactly the claim that Carus is making when he writes: "In actual fact, one could hardly suspect that the eye required an image to form on the retina before the daguerreotype was known; for this discovery first allowed us to conceive how rapidly and with what extraordinary variation and freedom the action of light can permeate a substance."

(Ernst Kapp, *Elements of a Philosophy of Technology*, 63)

FEB·RU·ARY 8, 2019

# LET ME DIE

*Book event on A Death of One's Own: Literature, Law, and the Right to Die by Jared Stark, with Cathy Caruth.*

Imagine someone, someone in a vulnerable situation, someone who addresses you and asks, "Let me die." Like all ethical demands, this is a challenging one, because it enjoins you to respond to the best of your ability. But what does it mean to respond to this appeal? How are we to act on it ethically?

The question is far from simple, especially if we bear in mind that other injunction which is present and unspoken in every appeal from an other: do not kill me ("thou shalt not kill," Emmanuel Levinas). What is the difference between killing and responding to the demand "let me die"?

The premise of this book is that literary encounters with modern death can both deepen and reframe the questions that animate discussions of the right to die in law, medicine, and political and social thought. What can we understand, for instance, about living wills by thinking about them not only as legal instruments but also as autobiographical acts? What do we learn about the frequently occurring metaphor of death as a last act or chapter in a life when it is seen through the lens of modernist models of (and challenges to) authorship and authority?

*(A Death of One's Own, 4)*

What does it mean to live in a space and time that, on the one hand, is characterized by startling and even unprecedented forms of vulnerability, and that, on the other, seems to deprive me of my death, a world where the very meaning of death—and the meaning that is said to derive from death—seem to be vanishing or to have vanished? What does it mean to have “the conversation” not according to any recommended script or packaged formula, without the support of a downloaded pamphlet or checklist, but instead in a way that openly and without predetermined answers ponders the experience of living and dying in a world in which this conversation has become increasingly compulsory?

*(A Death of One's Own, 8)*

For it may always be the case that what the appeal to “let me die” calls upon us to hear and bear witness to are the ways that a death of one's own is never, in the end, simply one's own.

*(A Death of One's Own, 143)*

FEB·RU·ARY 19, 2019

*THE HUMAN  
BODY IN THE AGE  
OF CATASTROPHE*

*Book event on Stefanos Geroulanos and Todd Meyers,  
The Human Body in the Age of Catastrophe: Brittleness,  
Integration, Medicine and the Great War (Chicago, 2018).*

Technologies and theories developed by medical experimenters, clinicians, and other thinkers were not responses to the scale of human destruction visited on soldiers and civilians; nor can researchers' efforts be reduced to simple theories of triage. Rather, those researchers' aim was to reconcile novel findings on human physiology with a flood of patient-soldiers who would challenge their presumptions and claims. So much was uncertain.

*(The Human Body in the Age of Catastrophe, Prologue, XII)*

...the integrated, disintegrating human body became a new site of meaning and care, the subject for new analogies of body biological and body politic, as well as the object of direct experimentation: its disintegration was the order of the day.

*(The Human Body in the Age of Catastrophe, Prologue, XII)*

We have traced the rise of a new conceptual architecture that offered a new epistemology of the body, a new ontology, notably of patienthood, and a new medical art... Equilibrium, homeostasis, integration, autopharmacology, and holistic neurology – but also shock, collapse, fear, pathology, and disintegration. The body made itself, kept itself working, then, given some demand or other, it burned itself away and worked its own demise.

*(The Human Body in the Age of Catastrophe, 318)*

*A·PRIL 24, 2019*

# *OUT OF FRAME*

*For a Logic of Poetic Space I: The Off-Screen, a scholar workshop with Eyal Peretz, author of The Off-Screen: An Investigation of the Cinematic Frame.*

The fictional realm of a painting, a play, or a film, what Eyal Peretz calls the poetic space, is larger than what we actually see: what a painting, or a cinematic image makes visible is the inside of a framing operation, an inside that organizes itself in relation to what we don't see, the out of frame. This out of frame, off-stage or off-screen is an invisible outside that Eyal calls the dimension of the off. It is the very invisibility that allows a painting, a stage or a cinematic image to appear in the first place. Invisibility, we may say, is a part of the fictional realm that these works create. We could understand this fictional realm or poetic space as the co-presence of a visible inside and an invisible outside. The off-screen manifests itself by interrupting, disturbing, or questioning what is visible on-screen.

The stage, Shakespeare discovered, arises or emerges jointly with an invisible and enigmatic dimension—an offstage, an outside, to which what is onstage seems to relate or with which it seems to communicate. What and where is this offstage? It is nowhere specific and therefore has no actual presence. It is not the actual physical and historical world “surrounding” the stage, since the stage opens as a completely decontextualized zone and, as such, severs its ties to the actual space-time

of the world in which it emerges.

*(The Off-Screen, 21)*

More than any other art, perhaps, film is dedicated to this complex fusion between continuity and discontinuity. We assume that what we see on-screen is continuous with and part of an actual world (even if it is a fantastic one). Yet, owing to the discontinuous nature of the screen as a surface cut out of its contextual surroundings, we are constantly deprived of what is supposedly “right there,” which should, in principle, be available to us and within our reach. It does not matter if the camera turns and shows us the continuous part we were missing, since this simply opens another sphere of invisibility beyond the new segment of the world that is shown. Thus, the screen always seems to be haunted by a deprivation, and a loss.

*(The Off-Screen, 37)*

*MAY 2, 2019*

*IMAGINING  
COLOR*

*A public lecture by Elaine Scarry, May 2, 2019.*

*Elaine Scarry is the Walter M. Cabot Professor of Aesthetics and the General Theory of Value at Harvard University. She is the author of The Body in Pain, Resisting Representation, Dreaming by the Book, On Beauty and Being Just, Who Defended the Country?, Rule of Law, Misrule of Men, Thinking in an Emergency, Thermonuclear Monarchy, and Naming Thy Name.*

What happens when writers get us to imagine color? The response is more baffling than we might think. For example, the philosopher Wittgenstein, in his book *Remarks on Color*, describes himself as at a loss. He says, “that which I am writing about so tediously may be obvious to someone whose mind is less decrepit than mine.” He also speaks of his “inability to bring the concepts into some kind of order. We stand here like an ox in front of the newly painted door.”

There is a variety in how much people make mental images (some claim they don't make any mental images at all). But when you hear this debate on whether or not we have images within literature, within philosophy, psychology, it is always treated as a neutral fact. This is not a neutral matter: one ought to develop the ability to make incredible images if one doesn't already have them. This is not crucial just for reading literature, it is crucial for thinking altogether.

While it takes an aesthete to have the perceptual acuity to see tiny patches of color, it is easy to make them in one's mind.

Stephen Kosslyn says that in making specific images the mind can much more vividly produce them but it takes much more compositional energy. But a tiny patch of color has both the virtues of vivacity and brevity or speed of production.

Thinking does consist of the factual and the counterfactual. Perceptual acuity is factual. We also need to develop counterfactual acuity, best in two ways: one dreaming, the other verbal literature. All fiction or all artworks involve us in the counterfactual, and each has its own way of doing it. To mention just verbal arts, take a film of *Emma* and Jane Austen's book. There is a lot in common... But here is the difference: a whole realm of the novel in the film is being presented to us perceptually (what the abbey looks like, or who is sitting around the table), whereas in the novel we have to construct every one of these images, so there is a huge counterfactual labor going on. It is a kind of athletic achievement that we learn by reading and reading. Authors enlist us to it and they will often help us by giving us increasingly hard tasks.

It is crucial to exercise the mind's capacity for the counterfactual, because the factual and the counterfactual are always blended together. We don't talk enough about the necessity of exercising the counterfactual as we do for the factual and developing perceptual acuity. Imagining color is just a tiny piece of being able to carry out counterfactual acts.

(Elaine Scarry, "Imagining Color")

MAY 8, 2019

# IMAGINING EXPERIENCE



*What role do experience and imagination play in writing poetry, fiction, & criticism? A conversation with Margo Jefferson, Gregory Pardlo, Francine Prose and A.O. Scott, fellows of the New York Institute for the Humanities.*

Q You've all written in different genres, so it would be good to talk about how imagination works in various contexts: writing criticism vs. writing fiction; writing memoir or writing poetry vs. writing criticism/essays. What sorts of differences do you sense (or is the difference negligible?)

Q How does imagination refigure experience—memory, history, personal experience—in your work as writers? I'm thinking very much here about the family histories and memories behind Greg's *Air Traffic* and Margo's *Negroland*, but also about Francine's blend of fact and fiction in *Lovers at the Chameleon Club*. Alix Kate Shulman remarked recently that once she'd created a fictional scene based on personal experience, she could no longer tell what really happened and what she'd made up—which I found especially interesting. Imagination can go from a private realm to something shared and public, almost like a language, and be transformed and even possibly alienated from its creator at once.

Eric Banks, Director, New York Institute for the Humanities

The Humanities allow us to imagine other people.

Francine Prose

The importance of living with ambivalence, which we are not usually allowed to do.

Francine Prose

What kills my imagination is shame. I read what I wrote as a critic, confronting my former self even when it is embarrassing, fighting the impulse to revise even the poem I think was weak: it is an exercise in self-acceptance. Who is the “me” who can write my poem or book of essays (*Air Traffic*) as a movie?

Gregory Pardlo

We need to make ourselves vulnerable to our own imagination. Playing to expectations (for instance, conforming to what it is like to write as an African-American author) is soul-killing. Imagination has the power to push away any larger cultural assumptions.

Gregory Pardlo

The capacity for surprise, astonishment.

A.O. Scott

# *APPENDIX*

# EVENTS 2018-19

- ☐ JAMES BALDWIN'S STORY OF CHILDHOOD:  
A SYMPOSIUM, September 11, 2018  
Book event: James Baldwin, *Little Man, Little Man* (Duke, 2018)  
Co-sponsored with the NYU Department of English

## Participants

- Nicholas Boggs (Department of English, NYU)
- Jennifer DeVere Brody (Department of Theater and Performance Studies, Stanford)
- Aisha Karefa-Smart (Author and Educator)
- Tejan Karefa-Smart (Photographer and Digital Media Artist)
- Steven Fullwood (Independent Archivist and Curator)
- Dagmawi Woubshet (Ahuja Family Presidential Associate Professor of English, University of Pennsylvania)
- moderated by Sybil Cooksey (Clinical Assistant Professor, Gallatin, NYU)

- ☐ BRIGHT SIGNALS: A HISTORY OF COLOR  
TELEVISION, September 27, 2018  
Book event: Susan Murray (MCC, Steinhardt), *Bright Signals:  
A History of Color Television* (Duke, 2018)  
Co-sponsored with the Department of Media, Culture and Communication

## Participants

- Susan Murray (Associate Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication, NYU)
- Anna McCarthy (Professor and Chair, Department of Cinema Studies, NYU)

- ☐ REMOTE CARE: FROM THE 'ELECTRONIC PATIENT'  
TO SELF-TRACKING, October 9, 2018  
Panel Discussion

## Participants

- Jeremy Greene (Professor of Medicine and the History of Medicine, Elizabeth Treide and A. McGehee Harvey Chair in the History of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University)
- Natasha Schull (Associate Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication, NYU)
- Kelli Moore (Assistant Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication, NYU)
- Hannah Zeavin (Lecturer, Department of English, UC Berkeley)
- moderated by Lisa Gitelman (Professor of Media and English, NYU)

- ☐ ENVIRONMENTAL ART: RE-IMAGINING ART, SCIENCE,  
AND THE HUMANITIES, October 16, 2018  
Panel Discussion  
Co-sponsored with the Environmental Humanities Initiative and the  
Center for Experimental Humanities

## Participants

- Marina Zurkow (Professor of Art, Tisch, NYU)
- Elaine Gan (Center for Experimental Humanities Faculty Fellow, NYU)
- Una Chaudhuri (Professor of English & Animal Studies, NYU)
- Yanoula Athanassakis (Director of Environmental Humanities Initiative, NYU)

- α NARROWCAST: POETRY AND AUDIO RESEARCH, October 23, 2018  
Book event: Lytle Shaw, *Narrowcast: Poetry and Audio Research* (Stanford, 2018)

## Participants

- Julie Beth Napolin (Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities, The New School)
- David Grubbs (Professor of Music, Brooklyn College)
- J. Martin Daughtry (Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology & Sound Studies, NYU)
- Lytle Shaw (Professor of English, NYU)

- α THE POSTCOLONIAL CONTEMPORARY: POLITICAL IMAGINARIES FOR THE GLOBAL PRESENT, October 30, 2018  
Book event: Jini Kim Watson and Gary Wilder, eds. *The Postcolonial Contemporary*, (Fordham, 2018)  
Co-sponsored with the NYU Postcolonial, Race and Diaspora Studies Colloquium

## Participants

- Jini Kim Watson (Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature, NYU)
- Gary Wilder (Professor of Anthropology and History, CUNY Graduate Center)
- Anthony Alessandrini (Professor of English and Middle Eastern Studies, Kingsborough Community College & CUNY Graduate Center)
- Laurie Lambert (Assistant Professor of African and African American Studies, Fordham University)
- Sadia Abbas (Associate Professor of English, Rutgers)
- moderated by Crystal Parikh (Professor of English and Social & Cultural Analysis, NYU)

- α JULIUS ROSENWALD: REPAIRING THE WORLD, November 13, 2018  
Discussion

## Participants

- Hasia Diner (Paul & Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History and Director of the Goldstein-Goren Center for American Jewish History, NYU)
- Robert Cohen (Professor of Social Studies Education and History, NYU)

- α SUSTAINABLE PROTEIN, November 26, 2018  
Panel Discussion  
Environmental Humanities Initiative, Co-sponsored by the Department of Environmental Studies and the NYU Stern School of Business

## Participants

- Rosie Wardle (Investor Engagement, FAIRR)
- Jody Rasch (Managing Trustee, VegInvest and NYU Stern alum)
- Chris Kerr (co-CEO and chair, Good Catch)
- Euripides Pelekanos (CEO and Founder, Bareburger)

☐ SONIC SEA, December 4, 2018

Film screening and discussion

Co-sponsored by NYU Animal Studies and the Environmental Humanities Initiative

## Participants

- Howard Rosenbaum (Ocean Giants Director, Wildlife Conservation Society)
- Jennifer Jacquet (Assistant Professor, Environmental Studies, NYU)
- Yanoula Athanassakis (Director of the Environmental Humanities Initiative, NYU)

☐ ELEMENTS OF A PHILOSOPHY OF TECHNOLOGY, January 29, 2019

Book event: Ernst Kapp, *Elements of a Philosophy of Technology*, trans. Lauren Wolfe, Jeffrey West Kirkwood and Leif Weatherby, eds. (1877; Minnesota, 2018)

## Participants

- Leif Weatherby (Associate Professor of German, NYU)
- Jeffrey Kirkwood (Assistant Professor of Art History, Binghamton University)
- Lisa Gitelman (Professor of English and Media, Culture, and Communications, NYU)
- John Durham Peters (María Rosa Menocal Professor of English and of Film & Media Studies, Yale University)

☐ PUBLISHING THE AVANT-GARDE: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON ART AND MAGAZINES, February 5, 2019

Panel Discussion

Co-sponsored by XE: Experimental Humanities & Social Engagement, the Department of Comparative Literature, the Department of Media, Culture, and Communication, and the Institute for Public Knowledge

## Participants

- Amin Alsaden (Independent curator)
- Olubukola Gbadegesin (Associate Professor of Art History, St. Louis University)
- Naomi Kuromiya (doctoral students, Department of Art History, Columbia)
- moderated by Lori Cole (Clinical Associate Professor & Associate Director of XE: Experimental Humanities & Social Engagement, NYU) and Meghan Forbes (Contemporary and Modern Art Perspectives Fellow for Central and Eastern Europe at MoMA and Visiting Scholar at the Institute for Public Knowledge, NYU)

☐ A DEATH OF ONE'S OWN, February 8, 2019

Book event: Jared Stark, *A Death of One's Own: Literature, Law, and the Right to Die*, (Northwestern, 2018)

## Participants

- Jared Stark (Professor of Comparative Literature, Eckerd College)
- Cathy Caruth (Frank H. T. Rhodes Professor of Humane Letters, Cornell University)

- ☐ THE HUMAN BODY IN THE AGE OF CATASTROPHE:  
BRITTLINESS, INTEGRATION, MEDICINE AND THE GREAT WAR  
February 19, 2019  
Book event: Stefanos Geroulanos and Todd Meyers, *The Human Body in the Age of Catastrophe: Brittleness, Integration, Medicine and the Great War* (Chicago, 2018)

## Participants

- Stefanos Geroulanos (Professor of History, NYU)
- Todd Meyers (Associate Professor of Anthropology, NYU Shanghai)
- Emily Martin (Professor Emerita, Department of Anthropology, NYU)
- Samuel Moyn (Professor of Law and History, Yale University)
- with an introduction by Katherine E. Fleming (NYU Provost)

- ☐ BROADWAY TO MAIN STREET: HOW SHOW TUNES  
ENCHANTED AMERICA, March 26, 2019  
Book event: Laurence Maslon, *Broadway to Main Street: How Showtunes Enchanted America* (Oxford, 2018)

## Participants

- Laurence Maslon (Arts Professor, Associate Chair, Grad Acting Program, Tisch, NYU)
- Amanda Vaill (Biographer, Journalist, and Screenwriter)

- ☐ AUTHORS IN THE HUMANITIES: WHOSE VOICE? April 3, 2019  
Annual NYU Authors' Event
- ☐ FOR A LOGIC OF POETIC SPACE I: THE OFF-SCREEN, April 24, 2019  
Workshop on Eyal Peretz, *The Off-Screen: An Investigation of the Cinematic Frame*, (Stanford, 2017) with Eyal Peretz

## Two Events on Visual and Poetic Imagination

- ☐ IMAGINING COLOR, May 2, 2019  
Lecture: Elaine Scarry (Harvard University)  
Co-sponsored by the New York Institute for the Humanities, and the Literary Reportage Program, Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute
- ☐ IMAGINING EXPERIENCE, May 8, 2019  
Panel discussion  
Co-sponsored by the New York Institute for the Humanities, and the Literary Reportage Program, Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute

## Participants

- Margo Jefferson (Writer)
- Gregory Pardlo (Writer)
- Francine Prose (Writer)
- A.O. Scott (Film Critic)

☒ INTERNATIONAL WHITMAN WEEK, May 28-30, 2019

Conference

<https://waltwhitmaninitiative.org/international-whitman-week-2019/>

# HUMANITIES LABS

The Office of the Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs and the Humanities, and the Center for the Humanities have launched the Bennett-Polonsky Humanities Labs (H-Labs), a collaborative, interdisciplinary research and curricular initiative. Drawing on the lab model from the sciences and the studio model from the arts, H-Labs offer new opportunities for humanities-centered inquiry with an ethos of experimentation, creativity and cross-disciplinary knowledge production. The goal is to create shared spaces, both real and virtual, where faculty, students and humanities practitioners from different fields come together to tackle big questions or explore timely ideas of import.

H-Labs are year-long, intensive collaborations involving both faculty and students from different disciplines across the university. Two H-Labs are active each year, one launching in September, the other in January. Lab concepts are proposed by self-assembled groups typically consisting of four or five faculty members from several disciplines and schools, and possibly also one or two humanities or arts practitioners. Concepts are broad-based, touching upon the complex experience of being human in today's world and demanding investigation from a multitude of directions and approaches.

## Digital Theory H-Lab (2018-19)

The digital and the humanities have always been in dialogue, a point which is all too obvious today, when social media platforms as large as any nation in human history struggle to cope with the political consequences of their own scale, and when economics increasingly acknowledges a new type of capital in curated digital data. We see the humanities everywhere in the digital; and, yet, even in the Digital Humanities, we have yet to see the broad-based, interdisciplinary conceptual framework necessary for understanding and transforming the way we live in and with the digital.

Digital tools and digital politics, we propose, need a critical framework, one that explores the concept of the digital itself. The Digital Theory Lab is a platform to develop this deep and much-needed understanding.

Working with case studies from the history of the digital and highlighting the intertwined histories of the digital and the humanities, we aim to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the nature of the digital. Theory and code will be united in order to better understand the conceptual structures of

the digital era; to work towards creating a theory of the digital itself; and to make proposals of how our existing theories and concepts as applied outside the realm of the digital need to be modified in light of the above.

#### Lab Team

- Leif Weatherby, FAS, Associate Professor of German
- Marion Thain, FAS, Professor of Liberal Studies
- Alexander Galloway, Steinhardt, Professor of Media, Culture and Communication
- Cliff Siskin, FAS, Professor of English and American Literature
- Lisa Gitelman, Steinhardt, Professor of Media and English

## FELLOWS

### *Kimberly Adams*

Doctoral Student Fellow; PhD Candidate, Department of English,  
Graduate School of Arts & Science

### *Edward Berenson*

Faculty Fellow; Professor, Department of History, Faculty of Arts & Science

### *Meghna Chaudhuri*

Doctoral Student Fellow; PhD Candidate, Department of History,  
Graduate School of Arts & Science

### *Amarilys Estrella*

Public Humanities Fellow; PhD Candidate, Department of Anthropology,  
Graduate School of Arts & Science

### *Adele Fournet*

Public Humanities Fellow; PhD Candidate, Ethnomusicology, Department of Music,  
Graduate School of Arts & Science

### *Jane Friedman*

Faculty Fellow; Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts & Science

### *Jon Gordon*

Doctoral Student Fellow; PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology,  
Graduate School of Arts & Science

### *Alani Hicks-Bartlett*

Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellow; Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow,  
Department of Comparative Literature, Faculty of Arts & Science

*Arang Keshavarzian*

Faculty Fellow; Associate Professor, Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies,  
Faculty of Arts & Science

*Cecilia Márquez*

Faculty Fellow; Assistant Professor of Latino/a Studies,  
Department of Social and Cultural Analysis, Faculty of Arts & Science

*Kelli Moore*

Faculty Fellow; Assistant Professor, Department of Media, Culture, and Communication,  
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development

*Sonya Posmentier*

Faculty Fellow; Associate Professor, Department of English, Faculty of Arts & Science

*Helga Tawil-Souri*

Faculty Fellow; Associate Professor, Department of Media, Culture, and Communication,  
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development

*Irina Troconis*

Doctoral Student Fellow; PhD Candidate, Department of Spanish and Portuguese,  
Graduate School of Arts & Science

*Hentyle Yapp*

Faculty Fellow; Assistant Professor, Department of Art and Public Policy,  
Tisch School of the Arts

# COL·O·PHON

*ELEMENT: 2018-2019 in review*

NYU Center for the Humanities

*Acting Director 2018-2019*

Gabriela Basterra

*Director*

Ulrich Baer

*Editors*

Gabriela Basterra

Molly Rogers

*Photography*

Jeff Day

Funding for the NYU Center for the Humanities is provided by the NYU Office of the Provost and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

[nyuhumanities.org](http://nyuhumanities.org)

212-998-2190

20 Cooper Square, Fifth Floor

New York, NY 10003

© 2020 Jeff Day

All Rights Reserved

EL·E·MENT