

**Atlantic World Research Network
Graduate Student Research Prizes—2012-2013**

The Atlantic World Research Network Graduate Student Research Prize winners are:

FIRST PRIZE

Andrew Pisano, “Reforming the Black Atlantic: The First Great Awakening, South Carolina Print Culture, and Slavery”

Department: English

Nominator: Professor Karen Weyler

Project Description:

In this profoundly informative, original, and remarkably well-articulated paper, Pisano illustrates a crucial pre-history to the traditional view of black authorship. Well before blacks could be accepted and understood as authors, they had first to be understood as participants in literacy: that is, before they could be authors they had to be recognized as readers and interpreters of texts. The First Great Awakening created such conditions in the colonies. Pisano traces the participation of enslaved blacks in this movement. He argues that the recognition of slaves as literate participants in transatlantic religious culture would enable blacks to become individual, published authors in their own right in succeeding decades.

This dissertation chapter examines South Carolina slaves’ shift from passive entities in white-dominated transatlantic evangelical writing to readers, respondents, and active participants. Pisano argues that slaves’ fearless public worship alongside pious, benevolent slave-owners Jonathan and Hugh Bryan, garnered the attention of the Rev. George Whitefield. In turn, Whitefield encouraged his British correspondent Anne Dutton to address the slaves as readers and recipients in her widely read transatlantic epistolary publications. Dutton’s letter to Jonathan Bryan’s slaves made its way throughout England, Scotland, Ireland, Boston, and South Carolina, thus modifying the socio-political boundaries of a white-dominated evangelical readership to include blacks as spiritual agents, readers, and participants.

Derrick Vanmeter, “The Fifth of November: Masquerade and Social Tensions”

Department: Theatre

Nominator: Professor Deborah Bell

Project Description:

This passionate, exciting, and convincing essay is intended for a book of articles about masquerade that is due for publication in 2014. Vanmeeter explores the intersection of 18th century English masquerade with the 20th century graphic novel *V for Vendetta* and their influences on the 21st century’s Occupy Wall Street movement. The paper addresses the commonalities and differences between what originated as an English phenomenon in the forms

of 18th century social masquerades and Guy Fawkes Day festivities and how this English phenomenon morphed into a symbol for social activism/change in the United States.

According to Vanmeter, “By using the Guy Fawkes mask, which in its original context symbolized violent rebellion against corrupt authority, The 99% Movement became an anonymous army of masqueraders united against a common enemy.”

SECOND PRIZE

Laura Malloy, “The Two Faces of Maria Van Rensselaer: The Duality of Women’s Lives in Dutch-Anglo Seventeenth Century Colonial America”

Department: History

Nominator: Professor Phyllis Hunter

Project Description:

This compelling essay brings a biographical approach to a fascinating individual figure to illustrate a less-known aspect of women’s history in the Atlantic World and Colonial America. Such histories primarily have presented women, through an English-based attitude, as sitting within the women’s sphere tending hearth and home. Yet in the early colonies women’s roles were not always so narrowly defined. Dutch women in Seventeenth century Colonial America and Europe led bifurcated lives in which they presented two faces in the seemingly contradictory world in which they lived. They were first defined as wives and mothers, and secondly as merchant women within the transatlantic network. By focusing on a woman who was raised in Old World Amsterdam but came of age in the New World near Albany, New York, Laura Malloy has been able to explore the cultural differences between the English and the Dutch in America. She highlights the legal differences and the varying concepts of gender that permit Van Rensselaer to participate fully in commercial and leadership roles unavailable to Anglo-American women. In her study of Van Rensselaer she uncovers extensive transatlantic commercial, familial, and cultural links just now becoming familiar to scholars of colonial America.

Lauren Shook, “Re-Viewing John Milton and Aphra Behn: Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy*, Early Modern British Literature, and the United States Origin Myths”

Department: English

Nominator: Professor Christian Moraru

Project Description:

This well-articulated seminar paper places Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy* (2008), a novel set in 1690s Virginia, in conversation with two late-seventeenth century texts, John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667/1674) and Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* (1688), to propose that Morrison revisits not only

American origin myths but also American literary history. Closely analyzing the multiple narratives and their “I’s” along with the trope of eyes in *A Mercy*, this paper argues that a re-examination of America’s diverse origin narratives also requires a critique of American literary history, which must not be seen as self-contained but intimately connected to England, South America, and Africa.

Shook asks questions such as these: How do U. S. novelists picture nationhood and Americanness inside and outside the nation’s traditional space? How do they locate America in the world and the world in America? Does location always imply territoriality? What is the dynamic of place and discourse? How are the U. S. and its various spaces and identities produced narratively? Shook’s paper raises all these questions emphatically by paying special attention to the tensions between the traditional mapping of the nation and national identity, on one side, and their literary cartography in Morrison’s novel, on the other.

Lilit Berberyan, “O, My America, My Newfoundland’: The Sexualizing of Colonial Discourse”

Department: English

Nominator: Professor Christopher Hodgkins

Project Description:

In this excellent paper, Berberyan cogently argues that the trope of gendered representations of landscape is adapted into a literary consciousness, yielding works that use the discourse of exploration and conquest as a means of seducing a woman. She notes the prevalence of literary works that adhere to the tropes used by English explorers offering insight into a mind captivated by opportunities for colonial conquest and allowing for a better understanding of the Early Modern imperial imagination.

Berberyan blends new historicist, feminist, and speech act theories that explore—no pun intended—the interpenetration of colonial and sexual language in imagining the transatlantic European possession of the Americas. In a gradual, incremental way, Berberyan builds her case for the powerful deployment of colonial imagery in the Tudor-Stuart imagination, and in the process makes a very useful distinction between the sexualizing of the colonial landscape and the “colonializing” of the sexual landscape. She describes the powerful way in which North and South American places and peoples are regularly cast by early exploration narratives as alluringly and vulnerably female and also reverses the polarity on the comparison to discuss how this expansionist Atlantic World language “comes home” to infuse the poetry of courtship and sexual desire with the exoticism of “the virgin land”—literally, associations with places called “Newfoundland” and “Virginia.”