



From Root to Branch



Animatta Forna

The Kansas African Studies Center is hosting a lecture and book signing by acclaimed novelist and memoirist **Animatta Forna** on Thursday, 10 November, at 7:00 pm, at the Hall Center for the Humanities. The event is co-sponsored by English. Forna is touring in support of her latest book, *From Root to Branch: Travels in the Footsteps of the Enslaved*. The work is described as “a ‘reverse *Roots*’ project that traces the cultural heritage of Sierra Leone through the enslaved in America.” Her previous work

includes three novels, *The Hired Man*, *The Memory of Love*, and *Ancestor Stones*. She also has written a memoir, *The Devil that Danced on the Water*. Forna is currently Lannan Visiting Chair of Poetics at Georgetown University and Professor of Creative Writing at Bath Spa University in England. In 2011 and 2013 she held the post of Sterling Brown Visiting Professor at Williams College Massachusetts. Her talk is part of a project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities to promote the sharing of migration stories about Africans in local communities through public discussions, community programming, and the creation of educational resources. **Byron Santangelo** is a co-director of the NEH grant.

The Last Time They Pulled the Phones



The English Department’s telephone system is changing. On or soon after November 9th, it is probable that IT reps will remove all remaining desktop telephone units from the offices of those who still have an assigned 864 telephone number. Alternatively,

occupants of those offices may be asked to disconnect their own unit and take it to a central disposal location, very likely in or near the main English office. At that point, all calls to these numbers will route through Skype for Business Phone Service. Department IT technician **Don Allmon** assures everyone that this is no big deal. The adjustments are not arduous. He is in the process of updating any computers that require new software to accommodate the latest Skype for Business Phone Service program. Brief formal training or self-training should make the transition painless (other units have found this to be the case) and, as part of the new system, any calls that are missed, including any voicemail messages, will be noted and show up in text form in Outlook. Of course, office telephone calls have become less frequent in general as other forms of communication have proliferated. The imminent physical removal of the phone units, however, has sparked memories of a parallel action some thirty-five years ago when there were no new programs or back-up options in place. In a time of drastic budget cuts – some things

never change – University administration determined that money could be saved by cracking down on paper and photocopying costs in the departments. Pushback from English ensued. Strong Hall craftily dangled a Hobson’s choice: keep the paper and photocopying funds but sacrifice all office telephone service. Intrepid Chair of English **Gerhard Zuther** (one assumes with the assent of the Star Chamber – er – Advisory Committee) promptly replied: “Take away the phones!” One Professor Emeritus of English, who shall remain nameless (and who frequently uses that phrase), has called this decision a “stroke of genius.” It saved the paper and copying funds. Moreover, it simultaneously frustrated the suits – and prevented them from venting to English about it on the phone. Incommunicado, every English professor could create a serene office/castle just by closing the door. No phone, no cell, no texts, no e-mail, no Internet, no computer. Perhaps not everyone remembers these times fondly. Apparently, for up to a year, there were lines of faculty members waiting to use the main office phone when circumstances required it. Restoration of phone service in the aftermath of the budget crisis was slow and grudging. New faculty members who started in KU English as late as the turn of the twenty-first century will recall being surprised to find that some offices still had party lines (knock on the appropriate wall if you picked up and it wasn’t for you). This week’s phone removal process lacks color by comparison. We hope any succeeding inconvenience it causes will prove comparably minimal.

Calendar

- R 10 Kansas African Studies Center Lecture**, “From Root to Branch: Travels in the Footsteps of the Enslaved,” **Animatta Forna**, Poetics/Creative Writing, Georgetown and Bath Spa Universities, 7:00 pm, Hall Center Conference Hall. Book signing will follow. Co-sponsored by English.
- F 11 Nature & Culture Seminar**, “Natural Law, English Degeneracy, and Pastoralism in Charles Kingsley’s *The Water Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land Baby*,” **Clare Echterling**, English, 3:30-5:00 pm, Hall Center Seminar Room.
- M 14 Resident Fellows Seminar**, “Christine de Pizan’s ‘Epistre Othea’ in England: Two Middle English Translations,” **Misty Schieberle**, English, 12:00 pm, Hall Center Conference Hall.
- Department of English Undergraduate Reading Series**, 7:30 pm, Malott Room, Kansas Union.
- T 15 Voting Department Meeting**, 4:00 pm, 4051 Wescoe.
- W 16 2Cs**, 4:15-5:45 pm, 1047 Wescoe.
- R 17 Humanities Lecture Series**, “An Evening with Poet Terrence Hayes,” **Terrence Hayes**, English, University of Pittsburgh, 7:30 pm, Lied Center Pavilion.
- F 18 SAGE Meeting**, 4:00 pm, 4001 Wescoe.

Publications

Bensel, Alyse

Review of Nicole Rollender's *Louder Than Everything You Love. Literary Mama*, 21 October. Online.

Cipri, Nino

"She Hides Sometimes" (short story). *Interfictions: the Journal of the Interstitial Arts Foundation*. Online. <http://interfictions.com/she-hides-sometimesnino-cipri/>

Ellis, Iain

"Nutty Professors? The Case For Scientist-Humorists in the Culture Wars." Essay. *PopMatters* (located at popmatters.com). 31 October.

Fowler, Doreen

Review of *Writing in the Kitchen: Essays on Southern Literature and Foodways*. David A. Davis and Tara Powell. *Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South* 23.2 (Fall/Winter 2016): 105-107.

Presentations

Bensel, Alyse

"*Rare, Wondrous Things: A Poetic Biography of Maria Sibylla Merian*," John R. Milton Creative Writers' Conference, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD, 29 October.

Johnson, Kij

Panel participant: "Bottomless Wells? Rendering Folklore and Myths in Fantasy," "Inclusive Futures: Diversity in Speculative Fiction and Publishing." IceCon, Reykjavik, Iceland. 28-30 October.

Youngdahl, Meagen

"Toward a Poetics of Biosemiotics." John R. Milton Writers' Conference, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD, 28 October.

Accepted for Publication

Lamb, Jonathan

"Renaissance Big Books and Few Readers," *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts*. Forthcoming.

KU and Regional Events

• **Red Hot Research**, "New Applications of Network Science," panelists from Psychology, Linguistics, and Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, 4 November, 4:00 pm, The Commons, Spooner Hall.

• **2016 Lindley Lecture**, "Moral Learning and Artificial Intelligence," Peter Railton, Philosophy, University of Michigan, 4 November, 8:00 pm, Alderson Auditorium, Kansas Union.

• **Conflict & International Change Seminar**, "Feeding Cities of the Global South: The State of Food Insecurity in Harare, Zimbabwe," Abel Chikanda, Geography, AAAS, 7 November, 3:30-5:00 pm, Hall Center Seminar Room.

• **Simons Public Humanities Fellow Presentation**, "Beneath Our Feet," Karole Armitage, Dancer and Artistic Director, Armitage Gone! Dance Company, 9 November, 12:00-1:30 pm, Hall Center Conference Hall.

• **Poetry Reading**, "Sanctity, Mysticism, and Everyday Poetry," Alan Toltzis, 9 November, 7:00 pm, Lawrence Jewish Community Congregation, 917 Highland Drive.

• **The Urban Experience Seminar**, "Foreclosure Risk and Community Health: Does Social Capital Have a Protective Effect?" Holly Goerdel, Dort Daley, John Pierce, and Renee Dinsmoor, School of Public Affairs & Administration, 10 November, 3:30-5:00 pm, Hall Center Seminar Room.

• **Place, Race & Space Seminar**, "Native Tactical Cartography in Settler Cyberspace," Joshua David Minor, Film & Media Studies, 14 November, 3:30-5:00 pm, Hall Center Seminar Room.

• **Disability Studies Seminar**, "Recent Developments and Interpretations of ADA Employment Discrimination Case Law," Ivery Goldstein, American Studies, 17 November, 3:30-5:00 pm, Hall Center Seminar Room.

• **TGIT**, 17 November, 4:00-6:00 pm, Adams Alumni Center.

• **KU Center for Online & Distance Learning**, "Writing Learning Objectives for Online & Hybrid Courses," 18 November, 2:00-3:00 pm, Budig 6.

Calls for Papers, Conferences, Symposia, Etc. (Posted)

• **Critical Insights Series: Edith Wharton**, call for essays. Deadline: 20 November.