On July 23, Class of 1916 Professor Emeritus M. H. “Mike” Abrams turned 100. By any reckoning the most distinguished scholar ever to teach in the Cornell English department, Professor Abrams is the author of The Mirror and the Lamp, named one of the 100 most important works of non-fiction of the twentieth century by the Modern Library, and is the founding editor of The Norton Anthology of English Literature. This fall, W. W. Norton published his newest book, The Fourth Dimension of a Poem and Other Essays.

On the weekend of July 21–22 the English department hosted a series of events in honor of this extraordinary scholar and teacher. Friends and admirers traveled from near and far to take part in the celebration (and at least one crossed an ocean to attend).

In the first event, A Conversation with M. H. Abrams, several colleagues paid tribute to Professor Abrams and then joined him in conversation as he reflected on his long and storied career. The second event, Open Mike for Mike, featured talks, poems, songs, and even a juggling performance in Professor Abrams’s honor. The weekend concluded with Professor Abrams giving the lecture “The Fourth Dimension of a Poem” (the title of his new book). Three distinguished colleagues, Sandra Gilbert, Lawrence Lipking, and Jon Stallworthy, gave short talks in the spirit of the lecture. Three other celebrated admirers, Harold Bloom, Stephen Greenblatt, and Robert Pinsky, sent video greetings.

Videos of these events can be viewed online at as.cornell.edu/abrams, where you will also find a chronology of Professor Abrams’s career and a guestbook containing dozens of birthday messages from colleagues, students, and fans. (Especially recommended is a warm paean to Professor Abrams’s superb undergraduate teaching from his colleague Paul Sawyer, who co-taught English 202 The British Literary Tradition with Mike for many years.) The following are excerpts from some of the tributes heard over the course of the weekend.

David Skorton, President of Cornell University

Generations of Cornell students have been fortunate enough to learn from Mike Abrams. Having earned his PhD at Harvard in 1940, he arrived at Cornell in 1945 as an assistant professor. In 1960 he became the first to hold the Frederic J. Whiton Professorship of English Literature, and in 1973 he succeeded to the Class of 1916 Professorship, which he now holds as emeritus professor.

His presence here attracted many accomplished faculty, especially those interested in Romanticism, and countless talented students as well. Many of those students have gone on to significant academic and literary careers—including Harold Bloom, Thomas Pynchon, and Sandra Gilbert. Eminent literary scholars visit Cornell each year through the M. H. Abrams Distinguished Visiting Professorship, a gift from the late Stephen H. Weiss ’57, former chair of the Cornell Board of Trustees and a longtime friend of Mike’s.

We also appreciate Mike for his devotion to the broader life of the university, especially Cornell athletics. He is a fan of basketball, hockey, wrestling, and lacrosse, but it’s his dedication to Cornell football that has become truly legendary. So much so that in 2007 the team named him an honorary co-captain. And in 2010 he was presented with a plaque, now hanging in Bartels Hall, declaring him The Big Red’s No. 1 Fan.

Jonathan Culler, Class of 1916 Professor of English at Cornell University

Now, as we celebrate the publication of Fourth Dimension of a Poem, I note that this is an entirely new line of critical analysis for him (most of us would be happy to have a new idea in our sixties, much less our nineties). We know his work in intellectual history, history of criticism; he has described five types of “Lycidae” and the “Structure and...
Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric.” He has always been a skilled analyst of language and the implications of figures, as witness *The Mirror and the Lamp* and his essay “The Correspondent Breeze,” but he had not published detailed close readings of poems, much less of their phonological patterning. Here he turns not just to the language of the poem but to the physical act of articulating its sounds as well as the sounds themselves. During the Second World War he worked in a “supposedly secret Psycho-Acoustic Laboratory in the basement of Memorial Hall at Harvard,” and I wonder if working on the problem of voice communication and coding in a noisy military environment sowed a seed that took 50 years to germinate. At any rate, striking out in new directions in one’s nineties is really remarkable.

**Geoffrey Harpham, Director of the National Humanities Center**

Except for a brief meeting at a conference, I had not met Mike until nine years ago. I had just become director of the National Humanities Center and came up to Ithaca to meet Mike, who is revered in North Carolina and wherever the humanities flourish, as one of the center’s three founders. (He does not just think—he also acts.) Shortly after that visit, Mike asked me to collaborate with him on the eighth edition of *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. I was uncertain. I didn’t know if I had the time, or if it would be that interesting; the *Glossary* seemed the least of his books, the one which, if you knew Mike’s work well, you still might not know at all. It was undoubtedly a service to the profession, but I couldn’t get out of my mind Dr. Johnson’s definition of the lexicographer as a harmless drudge. As I was dithering with my decision, however, I noticed that I owned four editions of the book. Once a decade, it had seemed like a good idea to buy the new edition. Maybe, I thought, others had felt and would continue to feel the same way. In the end, I agreed.

Three editions later, I now think of this as one of the smartest decisions I ever made; more to the point, I now think of *A Glossary of Literary Terms* as Mike’s best book. It is his longest book, and, having been over a half century in the making, it was the one that took him longest to write. But the real reason I think this, is that the *Glossary* contains the most abundant display of Mike’s characteristic virtues: a commitment to comprehensive knowledge, absolute clarity of exposition, and a quality I can only call largeness of soul or generosity of spirit. Maybe it is most characteristic of Mike, most deeply personal, in its utter selflessness.

[...] The one that gives me the most pleasure is the entry on *rap*. Mike had allocated this one to me, thinking perhaps that I must, at my age, be closer to hip hop culture than he. So I labored over an entry and sent it to him. Mike returned it with many questions: “Is it composed solely to be performed in public, or can it be written? What musical instruments produce the beat—drums, guitar, piano, plucked bass? (I’m guessing). To what extent is it extemporized? Is the rap you describe as ‘misogynist’ also known as ‘gangsta rap’?” I applied myself to some more earnest research and submitted a revised version, which seemed to meet Mike’s approval. But when the *Glossary* appeared, I was surprised to see two passages I hadn’t written. The first is not to be found in any of the standard accounts of rap: “There is an interesting parallel between rap and the strong-stress meter and the performance of Old English poetry; see under meter.” And—most astonishing—a new quotation that illustrated non-misogynistic, non-homophobic, non-sociopathic rap from Queen Latifah’s song “Evil That Men Do.”

**Donald Lamm, Chairman Emeritus of W. W. Norton**

As general editor and editor general of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Mike took command, yet from the start he inspired collegiality among the period editors, circulating proposed contents for each period to all the editors. Many decisions had to be made: versions of the texts needed to be selected and “no less scrupulously edited than texts for the scholars;” the period introductions had to be comprehensive but not exhaustive—a properly executed anthology would not overwhelm the works themselves with editorial matter. Mike summed up the editorial design: “to make each volume self-sufficient and independent of works of reference, so that it can not only be carried everywhere but read anywhere—in one’s private room, in the classroom, or under a tree.” That sentence on the physical book would reveal something about Mike Abrams that we had suspected but never fully realized until a sales conference in the fall of 1961, preceding publication: he was a master pitchman. Before the assembled multitude of college travelers—there were actually only about 10 at the time—Mike hefted a volume of the *College Survey of English Literature*. His grasp was firm but his arm drooped under the weight of that massive volume. Then he put the *College Survey* aside and lofted a dummy volume of the Norton anthology. “You see,” he pointed out, “you can hold it with one hand,” and then and there he launched the phrase about reading it under a tree, but with a corollary that was not printed in the preface, suggesting that such encounters with the anthology might lead to romantic encounters on a university’s greensward.

**Sandra Gilbert, Professor Emeritus of English at the University of California, Davis**

Student or teacher, scholar or poet, one is always at the edge of knowledge, but perhaps no one’s more likely to teeter and totter, more likely to need the sure grip of a wise counselor, than a bewildered undergraduate. How well I remember clinging dizzyly to the ledge beyond which loomed a critical cosmos! And how well I remember the way the author of *The Mirror and the Lamp* held up a mirror to the nature of my confusion and turned the beam of a lamp on the various darknesses that puzzled me! I hadn’t read that famous book yet, to be sure (we juniors hadn’t heard of it when it was first published), but I basically understood that he knew almost everything to do with the rhythms of literary history. For instance, he knew how, as he taught us in his magisterial surveys, the eighteenth century didn’t just turn into the nineteenth century as if Wordsworth and Shelley had waved magic wands but consisted of a series of, yes, edges and ledges and looping
pathways. And he knew how, as he explained to me one day in his office when I was bemused by the idea of “dying and rising gods” as tropes in “Lycidas” (which we were studying in the greatest seminar I ever took), there was a whole history of such myths of resurrection beyond what I, as a dutiful Catholic child, had been taught in released time at the local parochial school. And, too, he knew how to re-read literary history, so that I, and a whole cohort of feminist critics, were shaped as revisionists by his canny and uncanny insights. (I’m thinking, among others, of Nina Baym, Joanna Russ, Joanna Lipking, Eve Sedgwick, Margie Ferguson—and on and on.)

**Daniel Mark Fogel, President Emeritus of the University of Vermont**

I remember what a treat it was to TA for you. It was the second half of the Norton Anthology survey for sophomores, team-taught in a large lecture format by you and Rob Hume with the assistance of three graduate students (the other two, I think, were Jerry Christensen and Steve Fix). How enchanting it was to see you radiant with joy in front of that very large class as you intoned “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” or “Behold her single in the field, / Yon solitary Highland Lass!” To hear you then was to be transported on a thrilling current that seems now, with the benefit of a backward glance, to have led to your new work on the physical articulation of poetry, a current of inquiry responsive to the Wordsworthian injunction you delivered so gloriously to that class: “O listen! for the Vale profound / Is overflowing with the sound.”

When I took my orals, you asked for the first and last lines of poem after poem. Later I learned you did that with other students, too. Some might think you were trying to trip up the examinees, but I think you wanted to know that your students had at least begun to own those works as you think you were trying to trip up the examinees, but I think you wanted to know that your students had at least begun to own those works as you have owned them, not just with recall and clear understanding, but also with a quiet, deep, passionate love. That love shines through *The Mirror and the Lamp* and *Natural Supernaturalism* as you draw on the details of literary history to open out a very big picture, and thus elucidate in astonishing, compelling, and profoundly humanistic ways the reigning and changing paradigms for understanding the complexities of human experience, thought, and feeling in literary texts. Many of us here have no doubt have chuckled at your modest comment to the Cornell Chronicle after the Modern Library placed *The Mirror and the Lamp* high on its list of the top 100 non-fiction books of the twentieth century: “Shucks,” you said, “it’s only a century. Now, if it had been a millennium!” Well, we can’t and won’t say that this birthday weekend. It’s a century, a breathtaking, wonderful, invaluable century. How much richer we are for it, for you, for your gifts, and for the gifts of illumination you continue to give us. Thank you, Mike, and happy, happy birthday!

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**From M. H. Abrams’s**

**The Fourth Dimension of a Poem:**

To explain that enigmatic title, I’ll begin by quoting the opening paragraph of a novel written while its author was teaching at Cornell: Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lea-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.

Humbert Humbert’s obsession with Lolita has sensitized him to a fact to which we are ordinarily oblivious; that is, that the use of language involves a physical component, the oral actions of producing the words we utter, and that by attending to them, we can become aware of the mobile and tactile sensations of performing these actions. The point I want to stress is that poets, whether deliberately or unconsciously, exploit the physical aspect of language. It is this component—the act of its utterance—that I call the fourth dimension of a poem.

There are, one can say, four dimensions that come into play, to produce the full effect of reading a poem. One dimension is its visible aspect, which signals that you are to read the printed text as a poem, not as prose, and also offers visual cues as to the pace, pauses, stops, and intonation of your reading. A second dimension is the sounds of the words when they are read aloud; or if they are read silently, the sounds as they are imagined by the reader. A third, and by far the most important dimension, is the meaning of the words that you read or hear. The fourth dimension—one that is almost totally neglected in discussions of poetry—is the activity of enunciating the great variety of speech-sounds that constitute the words of a poem.

It is easy to overlook the fact that a poem, like all art forms, has a physical medium, a material body, which conveys its nonmaterial meanings. That medium is not a written or printed text. The physical medium is the act of utterance by the human voice, as it produces the speech-sounds that convey a poem. We produce those sounds by varying the pressure on the lungs, vibrating or stilling the vocal cords, changing the shape of the throat and mouth, and making wonderfully precise movements of the tongue and lips. It can be said, then, that the physical production of a poem begins next to the heart and ends near the brain. That is one reason that poetry is felt to be the most intimate of the arts, in addition to being the most inclusive and nuanced in expressing what it is to be human. I want to emphasize how important it is to become aware of this fourth, material dimension of a poem.

Life long and constant habituation in using language has made us largely oblivious to the oral activities that bring a poem into being—the sensations of motion, shape, and touch that we feel, and the oral gestures that we make, in performing such activities; but to be oblivious to these physical sensations and gestures, and simply to look through them to the meanings of the words that they convey, is to disembody a poem. An important advantage of reading a poem aloud is that to do so helps to reembody it, by emphasizing the palpability of its material medium. And that is important, because the oral actions that body forth the words of a poem, even when they remain below the level of awareness, may serve, in intricate and diverse ways, to interact with, confirm, and enhance the meanings and feelings that the words convey.
More Tales of English Majors

In our last issue we invited readers to send us their reflections on how the Cornell English major has helped them in their careers. Among the contributions we received were the following, which have been edited for length.

High Above the Legal Fray
By Frank D. Wagner ’67

In 1972, I was practicing law in eastern Pennsylvania and hating every minute of it. I spent most of my time scrabbling testimony in uncontested divorce cases and defending indefensible drunk drivers in justice of the peace hearings. The only bright spot was the occasional satisfaction derived from writing briefs in the more important cases handled by my bosses. That I enjoyed the writing is not surprising, I guess, since I had been an English major at Cornell. I finally decided to look around for a way to combine the two halves of my education in a job that would pay a living wage for writing about the law.

What I found was the Lawyers Co-operative Publishing Company (LCP) in Rochester, New York. At the time, LCP was the second largest legal publisher in the country, employing more than 100 lawyer-editors to write and edit a large number of well-known commercial legal publications. Soon after I arrived in Rochester the managing editor of the United States Supreme Court Reports Lawyers’ Edition, a very distinguished gentleman named Henry Curtis Lind, left the company to become the chief assistant to the reporter of decisions at the Supreme Court.

Oddly, Henry’s departure was a pivotal moment for me: it clued me in to the fact that the position of reporter, originally held by Alexander Dallas and William Cranch in the last decades of the eighteenth century, still existed. That realization signaled the way for much of my publishing career. When Henry Lind retired as the court’s reporter in 1987, I was managing editor of the Washington office of the Research Institute of America, an LCP subsidiary. When the reporter’s position became available, I was only nine or 10 blocks from the court, apparently qualified, and eager to take on this historic job. Fortunately, I was hired.

As the reporter of decisions, my primary duty was to edit the court’s opinions and prepare them for publication in the United States Reports, the only official publication of the court’s decisions. To do that, my staff and I carefully examined each draft of each opinion to assure the accuracy of its quotations and citations, and, to the extent we could, its facts. We also checked for any typographical errors, misspellings, grammatical mistakes, and deviations from the court’s complicated style rules. We performed these functions for each case before it was released and then repeated the work, in full, when the case was republished in a paper-backed preliminary print and, finally, in a bound volume of the United States Reports. The deputy reporter, the assistant reporter, and I also wrote the summaries, called “syllabuses,” that precede every case published.

When I retired from the court in September 2010 after 23 years on the job, I was the second longest serving reporter in the court’s history, with more volumes of the United States Reports to my credit than any of the 14 previous reporters. What a ride it was! If you’re going to be a legal editor, I doubt there’s a better job in the world. But I eagerly acknowledge that it would have been impossible for me to do the work without lessons learned from Meyer Abrams, Robert Kaske, and Archie Ammons. They taught me not just to write, but also to think. Indeed, I am still using the skills I learned at their knees. Among the things I do to keep the bats from my belfry in retirement are editing newsletters for the Supreme Court Historical Society and the Association of Reporters of Judicial Decisions and mentoring law students writing case summaries for the Cornell Legal Information Institute.

Onward English Teachers
By Jane Smiley Hart ’42

Dad had no intention of supporting spinster daughters. We would nurse or teach English because I majored in English at Cornell. I became an English teacher in rural Alfred-Almond, New York for a year, surviving by setting up a table full of hunting and fishing bulletins and beating a couple of the tough boys at ping-pong in the gym.

When World War II lured me to Washington, I learned to cipher and decipher for the Office of Strategic Services. [Editor’s note: Elsewhere in this issue you’ll find accounts of similar wartime activities engaged in by Cornell English professors Mike Abrams and Steve Parrish.] I would “receive” between 12 a.m. and 2 a.m., record and summarize info from six agents in the field, reword, and take the whole thing to my research and analysis chief by 7 a.m. He would check the edit and shred the original. A good English major can do a snap précis. I continued the job in the cellar of our legation in Cairo. I was then free to dance with King Farouk and start a major collection of English books (second hand) on the Middle East, which is now at Georgetown University.

When the Office of Strategic Services broke up, I temporarily edited Dean Acheson’s correspondence in the State Department. War over, I became book review editor of the Middle East Journal until I married and moved to Saudi Arabia, where I encouraged my husband to write two books on the area.

Jane Smiley Hart passed away on July 30, 2012.

We’d like to know how your Cornell English major has helped you in your career. Please email your reflections to english_dept@cornell.edu.
Spring 2012 saw the retirements of two mainstays of the English department’s creative writing program: the poet and essayist Ken McClane and the fiction writer and essayist Maureen McCoy. The occasion was marked by a gala reading and reception, at which the two writers were introduced by Robert Fogarty, editor of *The Antioch Review*, where many of their pieces have appeared. While Ken and Maureen will be missed in the classroom, their fans can console themselves with the knowledge that they now have more time to write their wonderful stories, essays, and books.

At the reception several colleagues paid tribute to Ken and Maureen, including Alice Fulton, who delivered this affectionate “toast.”

**Alice Fulton**

**Exsultate, Jubilate—Maureen and Ken 4/19/12**

**A Toast (after Christopher Smart)**

I will consider my friends Ken and Maureen
For they are of the tribe of the writer
For they rise early with the sun and birds yet befriend others who sleep late
For Ken says “you’re a star” to those whose light is guttering
For he finds the brightness in every trial and his optimism is not misty-eyed
For Ken is a star
For when I was his student, he jumped upon the table to teach us
For he has given me a pen with which to write
For he is a brave runner who rises up to run again after being mowed down by a car
For we bless the gods that Ken was spared
For we are seriously glad to see him in the hallways
For seeing him I have known electricity’s best form
For nothing’s more alive than Ken in motion
For he is cool as he is hot
For his graciousness has gravitas
For he gives a portion of his wages to the world’s betterment
For he is generous as the way is long
For he arrives with spirits to raise our spirits
For he has common and uncommon sense
For he loves Rochelle with all his soul
For he humors the whims of his colleagues
For he is passionate and walks the talk
For he tells it like it is for others who cannot
For his goodness is such that he has no enemies
For his goodness is an argument for hope
I will consider my friend Maureen
For she signs her emails “Faith!” with a single exclamation
And others she signs “Sheesh!” with a single exclamation
For she has written “in the midst of these petty things there is real life and love going on and they must be tended to.”
For she is wise as she is kind
For she brought us soothing amulets from Taos such as chocolates, bath salts, t-shirts, mugs—
For her face often expresses merriment as though secretly inebriated by the world’s surprises
For she sends me messages titled “CW business please read with hot tea”
For she is deeply funny
For she has typed miles of comments on student manuscripts and her help is beyond all estimate
For she is a gardener whose flowers praise her
For she is a critic both winsome and profound
For she suffers fools

For rather than be cheeky she has turned the other cheek
For she is an athlete of the imagination
For she is an acoustic biker chick
For she bikes marathon miles to inspire us with her fortitude which causes us to wonder and extend our reach
For her upper arms are like Madonnas—or should I say Michelle Obama’s
For Maureen means Little Mary and she is small but mighty
For she visits our emeritus friends and brings them baked goods and good gossip
For she is a friend of human and nonhuman animals
For she is mindful and refrains from feasting on the fallen flesh of either kind
For she is deeply serious
For she is modest and underestimates her dearness
For Maureen is our exemplary soul and Ken our buoyant conscience
For they live what our precepts advertise
For today we tuck a token laurel behind their ears
For we are thankful for their presence in our lives these many years
For by knowing them we have been sustained and comforted
For they made us laugh
For they gave us the time of day
For they are of the tribe of the writer and say the world for others who can not
For they do not fail us when words fail us
For they have compassion for fellow sufferers
For they accept all gifts with grace, including clumsy praise
For we will take them with us everywhere in our hearts and minds
For we are incomplete without them
For we love them
For they gave us joy.

Jubilate, Exsultate—Ken and Maureen!
Laura Brown is the John Wendell Anderson Professor of English and specializes in eighteenth-century literature. Since 2009 she has served as Cornell’s vice provost for undergraduate education, overseeing a variety of initiatives and projects to enhance the academic experience of the university’s 14,000 undergraduate students. Much of her focus has been on creating and strengthening opportunities for study that bring together students and faculty from colleges and departments across the university, which ultimately forms a single learning community: One Cornell. For this issue of the English department newsletter we asked Laura to describe some of the ways in which undergraduate education at Cornell extends beyond the confines of individual colleges, departments, and majors.

The English department contributes to the mission of One Cornell by offering courses and programs of study aimed not just at English majors but also at students throughout the university. The most obvious way in which we do so is through our vast and varied array of First-Year Writing Seminars (the English department teaches about 40 percent of these required courses). Recently we’ve taken concrete steps to enhance the availability of our upper-level courses to non-majors and students outside the College of Arts and Sciences. These include the establishment of three minors that are open to undergraduates throughout the university: English, creative writing, and minority, indigenous, and third world studies. We’ve also embraced Laura’s new initiative to create special team-taught, interdisciplinary University Courses; our first contribution in this venture is a course on hip hop, co-taught by poet Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon.

“One Cornell”
A view from Laura Brown, vice provost for undergraduate education

A Cornell undergraduate’s academic experience will take place primarily within their major department and their college, where they will take classes that enable them to master a field of study, engage with their peers in course work and informal study activities, receive advice from faculty members and professional advisors, and perhaps complete a capstone project or thesis that makes an original contribution to their discipline. Our departments and programs are committed to making our students’ academic experience as a specialist in a particular field as intellectually exciting and educationally rewarding as possible by supplying a curriculum that prepares them at each stage of their course work for increasing depth of inquiry, as well as by providing personal and institutional guidance at every turn.

Students also find academic opportunities that extend beyond their major. And for many of them, these experiences will be the most meaningful, memorable, and important of their college years. We know that a majority of students choose Cornell for the chance to take part in research with leading scientists and scholars, the opportunity to travel abroad for study or service, the ability to serve the local or global community, the prospect of a residential experience guided by involved faculty who live and dine with students and who integrate learning and living on campus, or the possibility of taking courses that cross the broad expanse of Cornell’s academic offerings and link fundamental discovery with practical application. All of these opportunities draw together the multiple strengths of the university into One Cornell.

While we work to help students master the fundamentals of their chosen major, in the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education we also work to make that mastery more meaningful and relevant by placing it in broader contexts. We believe that these academic avenues enable students to make the most of their Cornell education, and we strongly urge our students to pursue them. Undergraduate research, for instance, has become a key component of undergraduate education, especially at universities like Cornell where cutting-edge science or scholarship is fundamental to our institutional mission. Students who participate in research see knowledge actually being created—their learning extends beyond the outcomes that are presented in the classroom into the realm of creativity itself. And a research experience builds students’ connections with faculty beyond the interactions of the classroom or the context of academic advising. The faculty-student research partnership results in mentoring often based on a connection that supports close and sustained academic and career guidance.

Three New Minors
English, creative writing, and minority, indigenous, and third world studies

Beginning in 2012, the English department now offers three minor concentrations, which are open to non-majors in the College of Arts and Sciences and in other Cornell colleges and schools. Because the English department curriculum is so varied, faculty felt that a single minor in English would not meet the needs and interests of all Cornell students. While the basic English minor can be fulfilled using any of our courses, the two other minors are more specialized and are meant to highlight important areas of our curriculum. The creative writing minor allows non-majors to do intensive course work in the writing of fiction and/or poetry and receive transcript recognition for it. Similarly, the minority, indigenous, and third world studies minor lets non-majors take courses in the growing part of our curriculum that deals with the broad array of literary and cultural works produced by African Americans, Latino/as, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Anglophone writers in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world.

Each minor is intended to provide sustained learning in literary methods and techniques through a combination of reading and writing. We hope they will be of special appeal to students whose primary field of study is far removed from the realm of literature and those who wish to broaden their intellectual development by engaging with the powers and pleasures of language and imagination.
Cornell’s Office of Undergraduate Research, an academic initiative of the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, encourages undergraduate research by connecting students with faculty across the colleges and schools, inspiring new partnerships in all fields including the arts and humanities, and promoting the work of campus-wide student research organizations.

International education has never been more immediately applicable to our students’ research, learning, and future careers. Cornell students are now preparing to be global citizens, and we support a range of opportunities for international education, from the semester abroad model managed by Cornell Abroad and various exchange programs operated by the schools and colleges, to global service learning and research trips designed by individual faculty members and programs. International education has become priority at Cornell. With President Skorton’s encouragement, we are redesigning our study abroad programs to help more students take advantage of opportunities for global engagement. The Center for Engaged Learning + Research, supported by the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, provides grants to students for global service learning and international research and advises faculty who design these programs.

More broadly, Engaged Learning + Research reaches nearly all undergraduate students across Cornell’s colleges and schools. Since the university’s founding, Cornell has held to the fundamental tenet that education and social needs intersect. Today, the transformative connection between education and society is an integral dimension of the university’s mission. For many students, participation in community engagement—locally or globally—m motivates their learning and prepares them for future employment. The Center for Engaged Learning + Research serves as an interdisciplinary, university-wide resource for students and faculty seeking to apply their studies to help support communities in Ithaca, New York State, the United States, and the world.

Student ambassadors at the center are eager to help their peers find experiences, programs, and courses that match their interests and fields of study.

The opportunity to interact with faculty outside the classroom, in the residence halls and elsewhere on campus, allows students to share in the intellectual community that makes them true learners. The Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education supports faculty programs in the residence halls on North and West Campus that enable our best teachers to contribute to Cornell’s educational mission by living in the residence halls or by dining regularly in the student dining facilities. Our faculty-in-residence develop personal connections with students, helping them feel comfortable with their professors and creating mentoring networks.

We are eager to make our students’ education cross disciplinary. We want students’ learning experiences to reflect Cornell’s unique range of academic opportunities—in areas of study as well as in basic and applied approaches to knowledge. Cornell students may take courses in any undergraduate college and may minor in any field of study at the university. But we build further on these options by offering a curriculum of cross-disciplinary courses, called University Courses, that highlights the distinctive character of Cornell and provides a shared educational experience for our undergraduates. These courses are team-taught and emphasize open dialogue on topics of current concern. They give students a wider context for their specialized studies, involve them with peers from across the university, create a broad community of learners that joins our distinct colleges and schools, provide occasions for innovative teaching, and shape an environment in which students and faculty experience Cornell as “one university.”

We know that undergraduate research, international education, public service, living-learning programs, and cross-disciplinary study contribute to student success, satisfaction, and engagement. We plan to make these opportunities visible to all our undergraduates. Cornell offers the best of higher education in placing students’ specialized studies in the broader context of our wide-ranging intellectual community and our encompassing academic mission on campus and in the world—the context of One Cornell.

Hip Hop: Beats, Rhymes, and Life

In fall 2012 the English department collaborated with the departments of music and Africana studies to offer a new course, ENGL 2390 Hip Hop: Beats, Rhymes, and Life. Co-taught by English professor Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon, music professor Steven Pond, and Africana studies professor Travis Gosa, it was designated one of the year’s 13 University Courses, which are “designed to teach students to think from the perspectives of multiple disciplines, across departments, and among diverse fields of study.”

In the course, students investigate hip hop history from several points of entry: chronological, political, aesthetic, industrial, and others. The historical focus of the course locates hip hop both as a personal/interactive expression and as an expression of culture: how hip hop affects and is affected by notions of ethnicity, class, nationalism, art, gender, and genre. Students learn about hip hop by listening to historical recordings, reading first person and critical narratives, viewing a variety of media, and writing creatively and reflectively. They also develop research, writing, performance, and production skills associated with hip hop’s major elements—breakdancing, graffiti writing, MC-ing, DJ-ing, and knowledge—while drawing on Cornell’s Kugelberg Hip Hop Archive (the largest such archive in the United States) to query hip hop as material culture. In its first semester the course welcomed several guest speakers, including pioneer DJ Afrika Bambaataa.
“Outlaw Rhetoric is concerned with the nexus of language and English national, cultural, and linguistic identity in the period from 1530 to 1679. Jenny C. Mann argues for a distinctively vernacular poetics of figurative language, making the claim that English authors used classical figures of speech to enact the displacement and relocation of these figures to England.” –Paula Blank, Margaret L. Hamilton Professor of English, the College of William & Mary

Jeremy Braddock
Collecting as Modernist Practice
(Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012)

In his new book, Assistant Professor Jeremy Braddock focuses on collective forms of modernist expression—the art collection, the anthology, and the archive—and their importance in the development of institutional and artistic culture in the United States.

Using extensive archival research, Braddock’s study synthetically examines the overlooked practices of major American art collectors and literary editors Albert Barnes, Alain Locke, Duncan Phillips, Alfred Kreymborg, Amy Lowell, Ezra Pound, Katherine Dreier, and Carl Van Vechten. He reveals the way collections were devised as both models for modernism’s future institutionalization and culturally productive objects and aesthetic forms in themselves. Rather than anchoring his study in the familiar figures of the individual poet, artist, and work, Braddock gives us an entirely new account of how modernism was made, one centered on the figure of the collector and the practice of collecting.

Shirley Samuels
Reading the American Novel 1780–1865
(Wiley-Blackwell, 2012)

Professor Shirley Samuels explores the diverse fiction produced in the United States from the late eighteenth century until the onset of the Civil War. The book, which is Volume 8 in the Reading the Novel Series, provides an overview of early fiction along with in-depth examinations of specific novels, asking how they establish and develop grounds of inquiry. Major authors featured include Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Harriet Beecher Stowe alongside lesser-known writers such as Fanny Fern, Caroline Kirkland, George Lippard, and Catharine Sedgwick. A chapter dedicated solely to popular women’s fiction explores works by Louisa May Alcott, Maria Cummins, E. D. E. N. Southworth, Susan B. Warner, and Harriet Wilson.

“In her openness to surprise and discovery, Samuels demonstrates that the pleasures of reading are forever new and changing, as historical conditions and media formations change. This wonderful book will both confirm a rich tradition of scholarship and challenge its findings at every turn.” –Wyn Kelley, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Dan Schwarz
(SUNY Press, 2012)

In this groundbreaking study of the recent life and times of America’s most important newspaper, Daniel R. Schwarz describes the transformation of the New York Times as it has confronted not only its various scandals and embarrassments but also the rapid rise of the Internet and blogosphere, the ensuing decline in circulation and print advertising, and the change in what readers want and how they want to get it.

“Dan Schwarz writes with terrific energy about an important subject: the threat posed by today’s flood of information to the integrity and even the existence of what is arguably the world’s most influential newspaper. Not every reader will agree with his criticisms of the paper’s leadership or his prescriptions for its survival. But every reader will be deeply informed and sharply challenged by his well-documented narrative and his provocative argument.” –Steven Knapp, The George Washington University

Stephanie Vaughn
Sweet Talk
(Other Press, 2012)

Stephanie Vaughn’s acclaimed 1990 short story collection has been reissued with a new introduction written by Tobias Wolff.

“Powerful … The writing in Sweet Talk is pure and elegiac, as though it were piped in directly from the soul.” –New York Times Book Review

“Wonderful … These stories, bred on familiar minimal ground, expand into a generosity chivied by imagination and a nervy voice.” –Los Angeles Times Book Review
In fall 2011, Cathy Caruth assumed the Frank H. T. Rhodes Professorship of Humane Letters in the departments of English and comparative literature. A scholar of Romantic literature and a pioneer in the field of trauma studies, she is the author of *Empirical Truths and Critical Fictions: Locke, Wordsworth, Kant, Freud (1990), Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History (1996)*, and the forthcoming *Literature in the Ashes of History*. Ranging through literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and poststructuralist theory, her work provides a compelling account of how language addresses trauma, annihilation, and survival. Cathy comes to Cornell after having held appointments at Yale University and Emory University. In 2010 she was the M. H. Abrams Distinguished Visiting Professor of English at Cornell and in spring 2013 she will hold the Northrop Frye Chair in Literary Theory at the University of Toronto. You can expect to see an interview with Cathy in a future issue of the newsletter.

Elisha Cohn joined the English department in 2011 as an assistant professor. After earning her PhD at Johns Hopkins University in 2010, Elisha spent a year as a postdoctoral fellow at the UCLA Center for Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Studies. Her research focuses on Victorian literature with an emphasis on the novel and theories of the aesthetic. Her book in progress, *Unconscious Victorians: The Physiology and Poetics of Reverie in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, considers the role of reverie and trance in Victorian novels and poems, arguing that these states suspend the ethical imperatives of Victorian aesthetics. Her other research interests include Victorian poetry, the history of science, theories of gender and sexuality, postcolonial literature, and animal studies.

We asked Professor Cohn to choose a favorite literary sentence and comment on it; here’s her response:

“My favorite is already very famous. It asks how writing might change our bodies, as well our emotions, as we read. In *Middlemarch*, George Eliot writes, ‘That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel’s heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence.’ Not yet wrought: Eliot, reading Darwin, implies that someday our physiology will change—our hearing grow keener, our frames harder. Fiction, she says, attunes us to the limits of our sensorium, and yet, as this narrator zooms us inside the darkness of the squirrel’s cavity, and plunges us, suddenly microscopic, into the earth to listen to the grass, performs that very function we’re waiting on nature to provide.”
On October 20, friends and family gathered in Anabel Taylor Chapel to remember Dan McCall, who died on June 17 at the age of 72. A celebrated novelist, accomplished scholar of American literature, beloved teacher and mentor, and notorious raconteur, Dan published five novels, including *Jack the Bear* (1974) and *Triphammer* (1990), as well as critical studies of Richard Wright, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry James. Raised in Oregon and California, Dan was something of a prodigy in his youth, competing on quiz shows and winning dozens of awards for drama and public speaking. After earning degrees at Stanford University and Columbia University, he joined the Cornell English department in 1966, where he taught creative writing and American literature until his retirement in 2005. His lecture courses on the American novel were among the most popular ever offered in the department. Dan was a staunch defender of canonical authors like Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, James, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Faulkner at a time when that role was not always fashionable. He was also a great connoisseur of vernacular humor, collecting jokes from his students and sharing them with friends and colleagues, interspersed with anecdotes about his favorite writers.

Among those speaking at the memorial were Dan’s son Steve, who called a hotel room pillow fight with his father the happiest memory of his childhood, and his ex-wife Dorothy Kaufmann, who recounted how, as a student in her French class, Dan asked her for advice on a poem he’d written in French; it turned out to be a love sonnet to his teacher. In their last phone conversation, days before he died, Dan recited the poem’s opening line to her.

Also paying tribute to Dan was another former teacher and longtime friend and colleague, Edgar Rosenberg. The two men met at Stanford, where Edgar was completing his PhD and Dan was a sophomore. Their friendship began with an epic cross-country drive from Palo Alto to Cambridge, enlivened by endless rounds of the guessing game Botticelli. Once in Cambridge, Dan took a summer writing workshop with Edgar:

> From the first, weeks before he read from his fiction, Dan stood out from among his mates as class pet, class mascot, a wonderfully friendly, funny, counterfeit naive Sunday child. During our two final class meetings, he read hilarious half-hour extracts from a work in progress about a teenage public speaking contestant and quiz kid, i.e., about Dan, more or less. The auditions had the class in stitches; the second one provoked an ovation—in my 50 odd years in the trade the only such happening.

Like others, Edgar affectionately recalled Dan’s “penchant for the epigrammatic, for the gnomic, for famous quotations.”

> This could easily be combined with his quiz mania, “Who said what?” Dan was especially fond of quoting the sentence by Jonathan Edwards: “The arrows of death fly unseen at noon.” The sentence could hardly apply to Dan himself, who lingered in his armchair in 108 The Midway a long, long time. It’s where so many of us said goodbye to him.

Another close friend and colleague, Lamar Herrin, elaborated further on Dan’s propensity for pop quizzes:

> He was a loyal friend, a very loyal friend. He interrogated you as a loyal and well-intentioned friend should, he must have reasoned. He’d been a quiz kid. Name the five state capitals with French names. Lack of objective fact never seemed to bother him. The best president. The best first lady. The best chair the English department ever had. There was always a best. Novel, story, president, chair. And more often than not you’d get it wrong. “Noooo!” “Wooong!” he’d groan his deep disapproval. You’d want to hit him. Or belly laugh in his face.

> The last quiz question he asked me was: “The greatest line in English poetry. Quick!” I wasn’t quick enough. “They also serve who only stand and wait,” he informed me. I would have chosen something more sensuous, but this was two days before his death and Dan lay there with all he could muster of that one-upman’s grin.

Lamar also recalled Dan’s insatiable appetite for jokes:

> He loved to laugh and hated, absolutely hated, the humorlessness that had begun to prevail in universities—in his university, the only one in which he taught—since political correctness had taken hold. It brought out his provocative nature. Jokes at everybody’s expense. “Learn to laugh at yourself or choke on your own virtue” might have been his motto. For 30 years we had an English department poker game, in which his son Steve occasionally played, at the beginning of each semester, Dan came with the best jokes among those he always asked his undergraduate writers to submit. I have a terrible memory for jokes (in spite of having been subjected to them each time Dan and I sat down), but I do remember he broke us up and usually took home that night’s winnings.

Yet for all his playfulness, Dan was deeply serious about his vocation as a teacher, and it’s therefore fitting that two of the most eloquent tributes came from former students. One of these was Reuben Munday, assigned to Dan as a faculty advisor during the young professor’s first year at Cornell.

> “Dan and I were from two different worlds,” Munday recalled. “He was a whiz kid fraternity boy from California, and I was a displaced colored kid from Alabama. We had nothing in common other than our desire to be friends and the shared experience of the tumultuous ’60s.” Dan began helping Reuben improve his short fiction, and their friendship quickly blossomed:

> To my surprise and delight, Dan invited me to his little blue house on Cayuga Heights Road where he and his wife, Dorothy, were the perfect hosts. As we discussed literature, Dorothy quietly served a cheese called La Vache qui rit and sliced apples. Dan handled the beverages, beer for me and too much brandy for him. There was always music in the background, usually jazz. John Coltrane’s “Welcome” was a favorite of ours.

Throughout the memorial service Dan’s love of music was represented by some of his favorite recordings, ranging from Johnny Hartman singing “Lush Life” to Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman performing traditional spirituals.

While none of the speakers failed to mention Dan’s frailties and excesses, the keynote of the morning was love and gratitude for a man who inspired countless students with his passionate devotion to the art of writing.
Stephen Parrish, 1922–2012
Scholar, Editor, Code-Breaker

By Reeve Parker

Stephen Maxfield Parrish’s death on January 11, 2012 at age 90 ended the life that, since his arrival as an assistant professor in the Department of English in 1954, brought abundant prosperities and humanity to Cornell and the Ithaca community. After earning his BA at the University of Illinois in 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and worked for more than three years in the Office of Naval Intelligence as a code-breaker in World War II. Graduate study at Harvard University followed and, though interrupted by three more years of code-breaking during the Korean War, culminated with his PhD in 1954. Almost immediately during his first years at Cornell, teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in British Romanticism and drawing imaginatively on his extensive wartime experience with computers, he launched publication of a series of concordances to the works of various writers in English and German (including Wordsworth, Yeats, and Freud), ultimately amounting to 18 volumes.

During the Cold War, film copies of the entire Wordsworth family archive at Dove Cottage in Grasmere were sent to the Cornell Library from England for safekeeping. The arrival of the archives led Steve to plan what he called “a wholly new edition of a major poet, featuring not the final lifetime versions of his poems but the earlier manuscript versions that underlay those printed versions.” For him, “the aging Wordsworth rewrote endlessly, burying some of his best work beneath masses of revision, and even leaving a lot of it in manuscript, including The Prelude … which we now recognize as his greatest achievement.”

He argued instead: “The Editor as a Man of Letters,” questioning the work of those scholars to edit each of what ultimately became a series of 21 volumes. Steve’s energies and his canny sense of how to work congenially and effectively with others are amply recalled in such tributes as Stephen Gill’s, editor of the first volume published: “He was never, not once, patronizing or condescending to me or to others making an entry into the world of Wordsworthian scholarship. His good humor leavened all that we did.” The excellence of the Wordsworth series inspired the even more extensive Cornell Yeats edition, reaching 32 volumes. Though he never aligned himself with literary deconstruction, an important critical and theoretical movement in the last three decades of his teaching career at Cornell, it seems useful now to probe the significance of remarks he made in 2004 in the English department newsletter about “The Editor as a Man of Letters,” questioning the work of those scholars who put preeminent value on the final editions of a poet’s career. He argued instead:

"language is prior to thought, not the other way around, so that early versions have great value as revealing the poet’s shifting intentions; revealing, that is, the poet’s struggle to define and perhaps even to comprehend his own purpose. … With a writer like Freud, our interest shifts a little; from the metaphor that reveals a particular predilection, to the metaphor that gives meaning to an abstract concept or an experience. In particular, to grasp and assess his abstract ideas you have to examine his metaphors, for metaphors are what bridge the gap that separates one thinking mind from another. Reading back, you start with the metaphor and draw inferences about the abstractions behind it. An analogy presents itself, once again, from cryptography—you start with enciphered text and endeavor to recover the plaintext meaning behind it."

Alluding then to extensive code-breaking he had done as a lieutenant commander with Fredson Bowers during the latter years of World War II, stationed near a former girls’ school called Mount Vernon Seminary, Steve recalled: “For four years Bowers and I were locked up together, with a number of other interesting and eccentric characters, most now dead, breaking the Japanese naval code.” Looking back in 2004, Steve saw himself and Bowers as “the earliest deconstructionists—proto-deconstructionists, crypto-deconstructionists!”

It seems worth suggesting that Steve’s remarkable professorial career as the editor of more than a dozen concordances of British and American poets and, even more so, as general editor of both the Cornell Wordsworth and Cornell Yeats, had its inspiration in those intense code-breaking years. He was, as many of the editors of individual volumes of those works proclaim, a remarkable collaborator. Jim Mays saw Steve’s Cornell editions of Wordsworth and Yeats as:

the wonder of the western world; they are changing the way texts are read at a sub-foundational level that is only now becoming understood; that happened because of his vision and attention to detail. The ability to hold the respect of grant administrators, to mastermind and manage elaborate intellectual projects through to completion, and, not least, to adapt to the particular needs of members of his different teams are some of the qualities he brings to the job.

As Jon Stallworthy put it: “I thought the phrase ‘captain of industry’ was confined to chief executives of multinational corporations—until I saw Steve Parrish at work on the Cornell Yeats edition. No captain was ever more industrious, and industrious also as navigator, engineer, helmsman, and deckhand.”

Mark Reed, “describ[ing] the indescribable,” seeing Steve was “like having sight of Proteus rising from the sea.” Few in the English department knew how much Steve cherished the memories of that secret code-breaking livelihood and its achievements. At a celebration of Steve’s life at the Ithaca Friends Meeting this past June, colleague Robert Morgan (nephew of a downed World War II aviator) spoke of an endless number of casual Goldwin Smith hallway conversations when Steve shared anecdotes and incidents of those early years, sometimes even after saying “I shouldn’t reveal this—it’s still prohibited to—but I will anyway …” For Morgan, the current of cryptography ran deep in Steve’s mind.

When Steve retired in 1991, department chair Winthrop Wetherbee offered this tribute:

"He is so extraordinarily active on so many fronts, and so clearly in the vanguard of current thinking about textual criticism and the application of computers to literary studies, not to mention the study of the Romantic poets, that we naturally think of him as a much younger man. An exemplary citizen of the English department, a stable and civilizing presence in our deliberations, generous in taking on administrative duties, and remarkable in his ability to launch his many students and student assistants on profitable scholarly work. In his late sixties he continues to be one of the most productive members of the department, publishing widely, gaining fellowships and awards, designing new courses, while willingly carrying his share of the burden for service teaching, advising, and other duties that scholars of eminence all too often tend to disdain. There is a kind of noblesse in his quiet devotion to teaching and scholarship."
An Honor for Dan Schwarz

Dan Schwarz, the Frederic J. Whiton Professor of English and a Stephen H. Weiss Presidential Fellow at Cornell, is the focus of a new collection of essays, *Reading Texts, Reading Lives: Essays in the Tradition of Humanistic Cultural Criticism in Honor of Daniel R. Schwarz* (University of Delaware Press, 2012). Co-edited by two of his former students, Daniel Morris and Helen Maxson, the festschrift acknowledges Schwarz’s roles as an influential voice in modern critical studies of literature as well as an exemplary teacher and mentor. The book includes an interview with Schwarz by co-editor Daniel Morris of Purdue University and an extensive bibliography of Schwarz’s work.

“Working on the festschrift was a true labor of love for me and an appreciation for all Dan Schwarz has done for countless people through his teaching, mentoring, and teaching-oriented scholarship,” Morris said. “It is mind-blowing to me when I think about all the students Dan has influenced through his teaching and writing. Dan has taught thousands of Cornell students; many who have gone on to teach and mentor.”

“I consider [Reading Texts, Reading Lives], along with the Weiss and Whiton, among the greatest honors I have received,” Schwarz said. “I am simply touched and overwhelmed by the volume.”