

REQUIRED FORMAT FOR TITLE PAGE OF PROPOSAL

University Proposal #

FOR PASSHE OFFICE USE ONLY: FPDC proposal #

Project Title: Research for Critical Edition of Frank Yerby's *The Foxes of Harrow*

RFP Category¹: 1B

Total Grant Amount Requested from FPDC: \$10,000

Discipline: English

Sub-Discipline: African American and American literature

Project Director (name, position, department, university, telephone number, and e-mail address):

Dr. Veronica Watson

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Professor of English

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IUP

Faculty Status (see definitions below):

X Tenured

Probationary

Non-Tenure Track

Other Participants (names, departments, e-mail addresses):

IUP Faculty Interpreter

Department of Spanish

IRB/IACUC Status: Approved (IRB #)

Pending

N/A

ABSTRACT (one paragraph of approximately 150 words in **non-technical** language):

Frank Yerby (1916-1991) was one of the most prolific and popular African American writers of his generation. In his forty year writing career he published thirty-three novels, a number of short stories and essays, and several interviews. However, his name and work have not enjoyed the same level of recognition and regard as his contemporaries. I am developing a critical edition of his first novel, *The Foxes of Harrow*, to make the writings, life, and contexts in which this path-breaking writer worked available again. For this grant I will be conducting original and archival research in Boston, France and Spain, to enable me to write a significant literary biographical introduction of Yerby. This project provides considerable professional development for me that has long-range implications for my continued scholarship and teaching.

Endorsement:

Chair, University Faculty Professional Development Committee

Date

Endorsement:

University President

Date

Background and Significance

Frank Yerby (1916-1991) was one of the most prolific and popular African American writers of his generation. He was a contemporary of some of the most renowned novelists and intellectuals of the African American literary tradition—Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston, and Ralph Ellison, to name but a few—artists who helped to shape and define an era. However, despite the fact that Yerby published a novel every one to two years for forty years, his name and work have not enjoyed the same level of recognition and regard as his contemporaries. To date there has been no full-length critical study of his work and fewer than two dozen articles have been published on his extensive corpus. Of the few who have studied him, the most consistent rationale offered for this lack of scholarly engagement is that Yerby was a popular fiction writer who seemed to eschew the political and social debates of his time. His work was also an “outlier” in that he chose to focus on white characters rather than black lives at the beginning and during the height of the civil rights era. Yet, during his lifetime his writing met with impressive success, “[T]hree were translated into film, one for television, twelve were bestsellers; almost all were selections of the Book of the Month Club; they have been translated into over thirty languages; and, to date, over sixty million copies of them have been sold around the world” (Jarrett 197). James L. Hill, who has arguably done the most to gain a critical audience for this author, writes that Yerby has been marginalized because his popular fiction “pitted him squarely between two literary worlds, one whose overt racial ideology he flatly rejected and the other which generally ignored him because of the genre of fiction he had chosen to write” (144). With thirty-three novels to his credit, however, and as a writer who “has debunked historical myths relentlessly” in his long literary career, Frank Yerby is an author who deserves closer examination (Turner 572).

For a number of reasons the time seems prime for a reintroduction of Yerby through the republication of his first novel, *The Foxes of Harrow*, which was originally released in 1946. Paine College held a Frank Yerby Symposium in February 2013 bringing scholars, researchers and students together to consider Yerby’s significance, and in 2006 another Yerby symposium was held at the Oakland Museum, unconnected to any university and aimed toward a popular audience and readership. Events such as this do much to raise Yerby’s profile, cultivating a contemporary readership both in and outside of the academy. Additionally, as an author who wrote primarily white life novels (African American-authored texts that focus on white characters), his work is potentially of interest to the interdisciplinary field of critical whiteness studies. In 2013 two critical works—John C. Charles’ *Abandoning the Black Hero* and my own *The Souls of White Folk*—included substantial analysis of *Foxes* as part of their discussion of white life literature. A portion of my Yerby chapter was also published as an article in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Ethnic American Literature*. In my scholarship I argue that Yerby’s work participates in the intellectual and literary tradition I term the “literature of white estrangement,” the substantial body of *African American* writing and theorizing that critiques whiteness as social construction and racial identity.

These events, publications, and critical/theoretical trends seem to portend that the academic community will soon be seeking to engage Yerby in classrooms as well. Currently, however, there is limited access to *Foxes* as it has been out of print for over fifty years. One’s ability to read or teach this book is determined by its availability on the used book market, and many of the editions one finds there are abridged or poorly reproduced, making academic study difficult.

Goals and Objectives

My goal is to create an accessible and well researched critical edition of Yerby’s first novel, *The Foxes of Harrow*, that begins to position Yerby’s writing as intellectual work that intervened in the debates and issues of his day. The specific goals the project are:

1. To extend my knowledge and understanding of Frank Yerby as an African American author of the post-war period, especially as it relates to the politics of his writing.
2. To conduct original archival research of Yerby’s papers held at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.

3. To conduct original research to identify other Yerby writing (editorials, essays, interviews, etc) published in France and/or Spain, the countries Yerby adopted after leaving the U.S.
4. To produce a well-researched critical edition of Yerby's first novel, *The Foxes of Harrow*, which will make the novel, which has been out of print for over 50 years, available to a new generation of scholars and students.
5. To write a cutting edged introduction for the critical edition, which will be the first to attend to Yerby's geographical location as a basis for understanding his writing. This introduction will rest at the intersection of cultural geography and critical race theory, which is an extension of a theoretical vein I developed in my first book *The Ways of White Folk*.

This research agenda has the potential to position me as one of only a few experts on this neglected author and to enhance my teaching of Yerby at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Description of Project

I am developing a critical edition of *The Foxes of Harrow*. My goal is to make the writings, life, and contexts in which this path-breaking writer worked available again. This edition will include the 500+ page novel as first published by Sun Dial Press and will be preceded by a substantial literary biographical introduction (described below). The edition also will include a section of essays that provide historical and social context to *Foxes*; a selection of other Yerby writings to provide a broader introduction to the author as a writer and intellectual; a section of Yerby's letters and interviews; reviews and criticism of *Foxes*; and a chronology of Yerby's life and publications. This apparatus will provide authoritative background information on the author and contextual and critical frameworks for engaging *Foxes*. Thus, this edition will not only recover the first novel of a largely ignored and forgotten African American writer, but also will support a new generation of scholars in examining Yerby's work and considering more deeply the received traditions and narratives of African American literature.

As an authoritative biography of the author is not available, my introduction will expand the limited work that has been done on Yerby's life by supplementing it with the original archival research that I will be conducting at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University. According to archivists at the Gotlieb Center, all of Yerby's manuscripts are held there as are some of his early poetry and short stories, several letters, and approximately 150 pages of inserts and miscellaneous material associated with *Foxes*. During my time at the Gotlieb I will be reviewing their holdings with an eye toward which materials I will want to reproduce in the critical edition. Additionally I will be analyzing and synthesizing the materials to present an accurate picture of Yerby as a writer and intellectual.

Additionally, literary biographical sketches of this author have generally recounted his early publication record with little regard for the fact that he left the U.S. for France in 1952. He finally settled in Spain in 1954 and spent the remainder of his life there. Thus, Yerby wrote all but seven of his novels from countries other than the U.S. I am interested in the ways that his personal and professional sojourns, both in and outside of the U.S., can help us to understand the politics of his writing. I will be tracing his publication career by mapping it to his geographical movements and pauses and the political and social milieu of the places in which he lived and worked. This is a new approach to Yerby's work, one that I anticipate will provide new insights into his oeuvre. For this facet of my research I will be traveling to France to conduct research on Yerby's movements in that country. From there I will travel to Spain to continue my efforts to understand the geographical, social, and political spaces from which he produced the majority of his novels.

Research Plan

To create an authoritative critical edition of *Foxes*, I will be conducting primary research at the Gotlieb Research Center. I have planned two 4-day research trips to the Gotlieb Center, one in March 2014 and the other in May 2014, to examine and work with the Yerby collection as described above.

In June 2014 I will be traveling to France for four days to continue research I have begun in the U.S. From there I will travel to Spain for an additional four days. In both countries I will be tracing the movements and pauses of Yerby after he left U.S. as well as seeking additional writings of Yerby in the places where he lived, worked, and ultimately made his home. I will be spending time in local libraries and universities, consulting magazine and newspaper archives to determine if he published in those venues in France and/or Spain. In particular, I am seeking any short essays or editorials that he may have published about the social and political scene in the U.S., and commentary or interviews he may have given about his writing. I also plan to visit his former home(s) and neighborhood(s) in Spain (and/or consult plans, pictures, and other historical documents about those communities) to understand more about the spaces that fueled and supported his creativity and writing process. These types of study are becoming more popular in the field of literary study, as is evidenced by the recent award-winning scholarly book, *One Writer's Garden: Eudora Welty's Home Place* by Susan Haltom. To assist me in my work, a colleague from the Spanish Department at IUP, who plans to be in Spain doing research around the same time, will act as my interpreter and translator. For the research that I will be doing in France, I will employ the services of a translator as needed.

These activities will constitute the basis for preparing the edition and writing my introduction to it.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes for this project are as follows:

- a. I will submit the manuscript for a critical edition of *the Foxes of Harrow* to Broadview Editions by December 2014.
- b. The project will reintroduce Frank Yerby as an intellectual and author to African American and American literary scholarly communities.
- c. Through my research I will broaden the approaches that have been used to analyze and interpret the literature of African American expatriate authors. In the process I will learn more about the African American expatriate movement of the 1940s and 1950s.

As this is my first time conducting research on expatriated African American writers, this work provides considerable professional development for me that has long-range implications for my continued scholarship and teaching. First, it will allow me to continue to connect my work on African American writers who write about whiteness to an international scholarly community, thereby broadening the scope and reach of my work. In the long term I see this project as the first in a series of steps that will help me to consider how African American writers of the literature of white estrangement have critiqued whiteness in the global context, focusing on American colonialism, imperialism, and global capitalism. Second, this project is an outgrowth of my book, *The Souls of White Folk*, thereby continuing to establish me as a leading scholar in the field who is thinking in multifaceted ways about her subject matter. Finally, I have every confidence that this work will help me to be a better teacher of both Yerby and other authors who lived and wrote from locations outside of the U.S.

Evaluation of my research will occur through the blind peer review process that the manuscript will undergo once it is submitted to a publisher. I am in communication with an academic publisher, Broadview Press, which is very interested in this project. My goal is to have the manuscript of this edition submitted to Broadview by December 2014 for their review. Once published I believe the book will make a significant contribution to my field, African American literary studies. Results of my research will be disseminated in this critical edition.

A FPDC grant would provide the support needed to bring my vision to completion, without which it is unlikely that I would be able to do the research needed in France and Spain.

REQUIRED FORMAT FOR BUDGET SUMMARY

<u>Project Budget</u>	<u>Proposed Grant</u>	<u>University Contribution</u>	<u>Other Revenue Sources</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Salaries/Stipends				
Student Wages				
Benefits	XXXXXX			
Honoraria (for consultants)			1000	
Supplies				
Equipment				
Operating Expenses				
Travel	8301	2000	2376	12677
Other -Subsistence	1699		497	2196
TOTALS	10000*	2000	3873	15873

Budget Notes

Travel

Travel for Watson: Flight from Pittsburgh Intl to Boston Logan: \$275 round trip x 2 = \$550

Baggage fee: \$50 x 2 = \$100

Mileage to Pittsburgh Intl from Indiana, PA, roundtrip: 144 mi x .56 GSA mileage rate x 2 = \$161

Parking at Pittsburg Intl: \$15/day x 9 days = \$135

Hotel lodging while in Boston: \$250/night x 8 evenings = \$2000

Local transportation while in Boston: \$25/day x 9 days = \$225

Only \$797 of the costs of these research trips to Boston are being covered by the grant. The remaining \$2376 will be covered from my Advancing Grantsmanship award.

Flight from Pittsburgh Intl to Montpellier, France \$2015

Baggage fee: \$50 x 2 = \$100

Hotel lodging in Montpellier, France \$200/night x 4 evenings = \$800

Flight from Montpellier to Madrid, Spain \$500

Hotel lodging in Madrid: \$406/night x 4 evenings = \$1624

Local transportation while in Montpellier: \$6.75/day for 6 days = \$ 40.50
 Local transportation while in Madrid: \$4.50/day for 4 days - \$18.00
 Mileage to Pittsburgh Intl from Indiana, PA, roundtrip: 144 mi x .56 GSA mileage rate = \$80.64
 Parking at Pittsburgh Intl: \$15/day x 9 days = \$135

Travel for Interpreter (IUP faculty): Flight from Pittsburgh Intl to Madrid, Spain \$265
 Baggage fee: \$50 x 2 = \$100
 Hotel lodging in Madrid: \$406/night x 4 evenings =\$1624
 Local transportation while in Madrid: \$4.50/day for 4 days - \$18
 Mileage to Pittsburgh Intl from Indiana, PA, roundtrip: 144 mi x .56 GSA mileage rate = \$80.64
 Parking at Pittsburgh Intl: \$15/day x 7 days = \$105

My IUP faculty interpreter will be seeking support for her own research in Madrid, which will be coordinated with the dates of my research trip to Spain. Anticipated \$2000 match from other IUP sources to support her travel.

TOTAL TRAVEL (rounded to the nearest dollar): \$10677

Other: Subsistence

- Boston Per Diem for Watson: There will be two trips of 4 days each. Meals and incidentals for Boston, per GSA, is \$71 for full days and 75% of \$71, or \$53.25 for each travel day. Total: \$497.
- Montpellier Per Diem for Watson: \$191 per day x 4 days, but the first and last travel day is charged 75% of meals and incidentals. Total \$669
- Madrid Per Diem for Watson: \$147 per day x 4 days, but the first and last travel day is charged 75% of meals and incidentals. Total \$515
- Madrid Per Diem for Interpreter: \$147 per day x 4 days, but the first and last travel day is charged 75% of meals and incidentals. Total \$515

I will be covering the per diem for the research trips to Boston from my Advancing Grantsmanship award, for a total of a \$497 match.

TOTAL SUBSISTENCE (rounded to the nearest dollar): \$2195

FPDC Grant to cover:

All travel to France and Spain	\$5313
Travel to Spain for interpreter	\$2193
All France subsistence (PI)	\$ 669
All Spain subsistence (PI)	\$ 515
All Spain subsistence for interpreter	\$ 515
Boston research trips (2)	\$ 795

Matching

Boston research trips (2) – travel + per diem	\$2873
Interpreter fee	\$1000

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EDUCATION

- Ph.D. **Rice University**, Houston, Texas, Conferred May 1997
Department of English
Dissertation: *Cultures of Violence: Racism, Sexism and Female Agency in
Twentieth-Century American Fiction*
University of California - Berkeley, 1990-1991
- M.A. **Rice University**, Houston, Texas, Conferred May 1992
Department of English
- B.A. **Trinity University**, San Antonio, Texas, Conferred May 1990
Department of English

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2013 Professor, IUP
- 2002-2013 Associate Professor, IUP
- 2002-2006 Assistant Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, IUP
- 1997-2001 Assistant Professor, IUP
- 1996-1997 Dissertation Fellowship, Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH
- 1995 Adjunct Faculty, Houston Community College, Houston, TX

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Unveiling Whiteness in the 21st Century: Global Manifestations, Transdisciplinary Interventions.
Co-Editor. Lexington Books (a division of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.). UNDER
CONTRACT.

BOOKS

The Souls of White Folks: African American Writers Theorize Whiteness. University Press of
Mississippi, 2013.

JOURNAL ARTICLES, BOOK CHAPTERS (SELECTED)

“Book Review: John C. Charles, *Abandoning the Black Hero: Sympathy and Privacy in the
Postwar African American White-Life Novel.*” *African American Review.*
FORTHCOMING 2014.

- “Lillian B. Horace and the Literature of White Estrangement: Rediscovering an African American Intellectual of the Jim Crow Era.” *Mississippi Quarterly* (Winter 2011): 3-23. (Republished in *Recovering Five Generations Hence: The Life and Writing of Lillian Jones Horace*. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2013.)
- “Demythologizing Whiteness in Frank Yerby’s *The Foxes of Harrow*.” *Journal of Ethnic American Literature* 1 (2011): 92-110.
- “The Next Step: Teach(ing) an African American Counter-Narrative to Whiteness.” *Teaching Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: Perspectives from North America*. Emily Horowitz, ed. Birmingham, UK: Sociology, University of Birmingham Center for Anthropology, Politics, 2008. 166-182.
- "A Teacher’s View of Virtual Harlem." *Configuring History: Teaching the Harlem Renaissance through Virtual Reality Cityscapes*. James Sosnoski, Patricia Harkin and Bryan Carter, eds. New York: Peter Lang, 2006. 85-92. (article revised for inclusion in this volume)
- "Incorporating Metaphors: Victimization and Empowerment in Gayl Jones' *Eva's Man*." *Black Liberation in the Americas*. Fritz Gysin and Christopher Mulvey, eds. Munster, Germany: LIT Verlag of Hamburg, 2001. 143-153.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

- “African American Protest Literature: Reflections on Nurturing Social Change through Literature.” Invited Guest Speaker in Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange in Nepal’s “Seminars for Faculty and Graduate Students.” Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur-Kathmandu, Nepal (December 2012).
- . Paper presented at Kathmandu Model College, Kathmandu, Nepal (December 2012).

CONFERENCES/PRESENTATIONS (SELECTED)

- “‘Occupied Territory’: Mapping the Spatial Geographies of White Identity and Violence.” *Inter-Disciplinary.Net Global Conference: Images of Whiteness*, Oxford, UK (July 2011).
- “Challenging the ‘Anglo-Saxon monstrosity’: Race, Rape and the Construction of the White Home in Zora Neale Hurston's *Seraph on the Suwanee*.” *The Black Women’s Intellectual and Cultural History Collective-Toward An Intellectual History of Black Women*, New York City (April 2011).

INTERNAL RESEARCH AND PROJECT GRANTS

- University Senate Research Committee Grant, International Travel. “Fulbright Invited Guest Speaker-Kathmandu, Nepal.” December 2012. \$2000.
- Dean’s Excellence Fund, College of Humanities and Social Sciences. “Fulbright Invited Guest Speaker-Kathmandu, Nepal.” December 2012. \$800.

Appendix 2

SELECTED PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Fikes, Robert Jr. "Escaping the Literary Ghetto: African American Authors of White Life Novels, 1946-1994." *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 19.2 (1995): 105-112. Print.
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- Yerby, Frank. *The Foxes of Harrow*. Garden City, NY: Sun Dial Press, 1946.
- . "How and Why I Write the Costume Novel." *Harper's Magazine* (October 1959): 145-150.
- Zaborowska, Magdalena. *James Baldwin's Turkish Decade: Erotics of Exile*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.