

University of Southern California, Fall 2021

**CORE 200: Reading Salon**  
**Telling Untold Tales**

Professor: Amy K. Cannon  
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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Location: WPH 200  
Course Time: M 4-5.50 pm  
Course Section: 63575  
Grading: CR/NC

**Telling Untold Tales**

How do we address what scholars have called “archival silence,” the gaps both purposeful and unintentional in our history, our literature, our art? How can untold and undervalued stories be unearthed, honored, imagined? From a translation of one of the most influential poets in Western history—from whom we have only a single extant poem—to a film that fleshes out the relationship between cousins—one white, one black—depicted in an 18<sup>th</sup> century portrait, this class will consider the various approaches that artists, writers, filmmakers, and others have taken to reconstruct narratives we no longer have.

How does an individual uncover an unknown family history? What does it do for us to turn our attention to the life story of Shakespeare’s sister or wife or son who died in childhood? Even for historical figures we think we know, what do we *really* know based on who have been the keepers of their legacy? What about when a writer’s muse or a painter’s subject start to talk back? What if we offer interiority to the “madwoman in the attic”? Or turn the camera lens onto an actress obscured by film history? What happens when we center someone erased from the record? Given the nature of who has had access to formal histories, we’ll consider together the various ways we might reimagine and reanimate the silences of the archive.

Suggested Texts (final list to be determined by the class):

Asante, Amma. *Belle*. 2014.  
Bui, Thi. *The Best We Could Do*. [9781419718786]  
Trans. Anne Carson. *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*. [9780676976083]  
DiMeo, Nate. *The Memory Palace*.  
Dunye, Cheryl. *The Watermelon Woman*. 1996.  
Fanonne Jeffers, Honorée. *The Age of Phillis*. [9780819579492]  
Guest, Christopher. *Family Tree*. 2013.  
O’Farrell, Maggie. *Hamnet*. 2020. [9781472223791]  
Oyeyemi, Helen. *Mr. Fox*. [9781594486180]  
Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. [9780393308808]  
Smith, Alena. *Dickinson*. 2019-. [selected episodes]  
Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One’s Own*. [9780156787338]