

Stony Brook

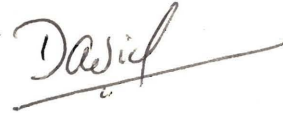
MEMORANDUM

To David Woods, Director, University News Services

From David Sheehan, Chair, Department of English

Subject

Date November 20, 1985



The authors of four recently published books of literary criticism, poetry, and political essays will participate in a booksigning at the Corner Book Shop in Setauket (corner 25A and Nicolls Road) on December 5th from 5-7 p.m.

The writers and their books are:

June Jordan, On Call: Political Essays (Boston: South End Press, 1985).

Ron Overton, Love on the Alexander Hamilton (Brooklyn, New York: Hanging Loose Press, 1985).

Joseph Pequigney, Such Is My Love: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

Susan Merrill Squier, Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

Attached are brief descriptions of the books and their authors, all of whom are on the faculty of the Department of English at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

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Attachment

June Jordan, On Call: Political Essays (Boston: South
End Press, 1985).

This collection of political essays by June Jordan - poet, activist, and Professor of English at SUNY - Stony Brook - covers a wide range of issues and controversies ranging from U. S. foreign policy toward South Africa to the use of Black English at home; from Nicaragua to the Middle East; from the poetry of Walt Whitman to that of Phillis Wheatley, the second female and the first black person to be published in America. To all her essays, Jordan brings deeply felt experience and insight: "Because my politics devolve from my entire real life, and real phone calls and meetings about real horror or triumph happening to other real people, none of it respects or reflects any orthodox anything, any artifice of position or concern."

June Jordan has published many books of poetry and an earlier collection of political essays, Civil Wars, which was the first such work to be published by a black woman in the United States. She has been a professor in the Department of English at Stony Brook since 1978.

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Ron Overton, Love on the Alexander Hamilton (Brooklyn, New York: Hanging Loose Press, 1985).

Poems in this collection evoke the world of Americana: the Hudson River cruise liner "Alexander Hamilton," the Collyer Brothers, the sinking of the Andrea Doria, Jimmy Piersall of the Boston Red Sox and the light of an Edward Hopper painting. Yet many of the poems are in a very personal mode: "Formal Picture of My Grandfather (1973-1943)," "Letter to a Friend" and the title-poem itself. Born and raised on Long Island, Ron Overton's poetry and prose have appeared in many magazines throughout the United States. This is his second volume of poetry. The first - Dead Reckoning - was published in 1979.

Ron Overton currently teaches in the writing program at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Joseph Pequigney, Such Is My Love: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

Beginning with the disorganized and pirated 1640 edition of his poetry, Shakespeare's commentators and publishers have, as if joined in a conspiracy, masked the patent implications of the sonnet sequence Shakespeare addressed to a beloved friend. Critical eyes have traditionally turned to the "dark lady" of the last Sonnets as the sole object of the poet's sexual attentions. With rigorous scholarship and critical daring, Joseph Pequigney's new reading shows instead that the sonneteer's central focus is his passionate relationship with a male lover. As such, the Sonnets not only are among the greatest of all love poems but are the grand masterpiece of homoerotic poetry.

Seeing the Sonnets as a realistic and psychologically penetrating account of the varieties of amorous experience, Pequigney argues that here, in describing his love for both a male friend and a woman, Shakespeare writes about himself. The first edition, the 1609 Quarto, is shown to be the intended sequence of the poems, a sequence that treats in recognizable terms the phases of love and the compulsions of lust.

Pequigney's critical sensitivity and command of Shakespearean scholarship enable him to expose the ways in which critics have avoided the central issues in the Sonnets and to arrive at striking new conclusions about the interactions of the poet, his "master Mistress," his other mistress, and the rival poet; about the beloved's personality and commonly misapprehended social status; and about the character and beliefs of Shakespeare himself. The result is a convincing reinterpretation of the whole of the Sonnets, one that refutes a long tradition of distorting criticism and makes a classic work new again.

Joseph Pequigney is Professor of English at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He has also written critical articles on Dante, Milton, and Andrew Marvell.

Susan Merrill Squier, Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

To Virginia Woolf, London was a source of creative inspiration, a setting for many of her works, and a symbol of the culture in which she lived and wrote. In a 1928 diary entry, she observed, "London itself perpetually attracts, stimulates, gives me a play & a story & a poem, without any trouble, save that of moving my legs through the streets." The city fascinated Woolf, yet her relationship with it was problematic. In her attempts to resolve her developmental struggles as a woman writer in a patriarchal society, Woolf shaped and reshaped the image and meaning of London.

Using psychoanalytic, feminist, and social theories, Susan Squier explores the transformed meaning of the city in Woolf's essays, memoirs, and novels as it functions in the creation of a mature feminist vision. Squier shows that Woolf's earlier works depict London as a competitive patriarchal environment that excluded her, but her mature works portray the city as beginning to accept the force of female energy. Squier argues that this transformation was made possible by Woolf's creative ability to appropriate and revise the masculine literary and cultural forms of her society. The act of writing, or "scene making," allowed Woolf to break from her familial and cultural heritage and recreate London in her own literary voice and vision.

Virginia Woolf and London is based on analyses of Woolf's memoirs, her little-known early and mature London essays, Night and Day, Mrs. Dalloway, Flush, and The Years. By focusing on Woolf's changing attitudes about the city, Squier is able to define Woolf's evolving belief that women could "reframe" the city-scape and use it to imagine and create a more egalitarian world. Squier's study offers significant new insights into the interplay between self and society as it shapes the work of a woman writer.

Susan Squier is associate professor of English at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. In addition to being the author of many articles on Virginia Woolf, Professor Squier is the editor of Women Writers and the City: Essays in Feminist Literary Criticism (University of Tennessee Press, 1984).