

IN FORMATION:



**WOMEN'S
VOICES
IN PRINT,
GENRE,
AND FORM**



**KENNESAW STATE
UNIVERSITY**

MUSEUMS, ARCHIVES AND RARE BOOKS
Bentley Rare Book Museum



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All images are courtesy of the Bentley Rare Book Museum.

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Curator's Statement

Upon reading the title of this exhibition, you may be wondering why a curator would invoke the words of legendary music artist Beyoncé Knowles-Carter for an exhibition about rare books. Well, I am happy to answer that for you.

This exhibition is a collective celebration of women's voices and the ways in which women both figuratively and literally stand "in formation" to change the world through print. Although the five-hundred-year-old history of print and publishing in the West is deeply rooted in patriarchy, women have dodged, confronted, and overcome gender discrimination to make their voices heard. In Europe, women had a long history of printing, running printing houses, writing feminist literature, and crafting literary masterpieces all before the seventeenth century. In the United States, women of the twentieth century paid homage to their literary ancestors and revived stories of their predecessors for new audiences. Today, women write, buy, edit, publish, sell, print, preserve – every action word you can think of – in the world of print, and this exhibition surveys the fruits of these labors over the course of several centuries.

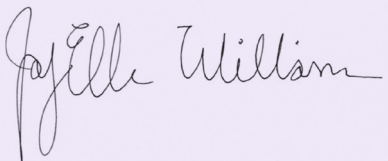
In Formation: Women's Voices in Print, Genre, and Form uses multiple elements to tell the diverse stories of women in print. The large wall panels broadly contextualize the social, political, and intellectual environments in which women lived and explain how these factors impacted

their ability to express themselves through printed texts. The cabinets (In Verse, In Prose, In Publishing, In Art, In Education) showcase the creativity and intellect of women through several genres and forms. These materials especially highlight relationships between women that are embedded in the physical text or its intellectual contents. Though absent from this catalog, the interactives placed throughout the physical exhibition space reify the incomparable role of women in developing literature, letterpress, and the literary archives market.

If you identify as a woman, I hope this exhibition empowers you and sheds light on a history that often forgets to mention how important you are. If you do not identify as a woman, I hope this exhibition impels you to seek more knowledge on the history of women in print and encourages you to support women writers, printers, publishers, and booksellers.

To all my bookish ladies, let's continue to slay.

JoyEllen Williams

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "JoyEllen Williams". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Curator, Bentley Rare Book Museum

WOMEN'S VOICES IN THE BENTLEY RARE BOOK MUSEUM



A woman promoting book donations for soldiers during WWI, 1919, courtesy of the Library of Congress

Women are involved in all aspects of the printed word, from production to dissemination to interpretation. Despite the persistence of social and political obstacles, women have been content creators and book innovators since the emergence of print in the West during the fifteenth century. The unique experiences of women are responsible for the development of several genres that emerged since the early modern period, notably feminist prose and romantic fiction. Today, women are transforming the modern book trade from a field that has historically centered the literary works

“Always stay gracious, best revenge is your paper.”

– Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, “Formation” (2016)

of white men to one that presents and values diverse women writers and publishers. Through informative panels, rare texts, and interactives, this exhibition presents a survey of women’s voices represented in the Bentley Rare Book Museum’s collection. The exhibition is not a summation of women’s contributions to the printed word; such an expansive topic is beyond the scope of the Bentley Rare Book Museum’s collection. Instead, the items showcased here present a carefully curated selection of works created and disseminated by women in the English-speaking world. These



“The Librarian,” featured in *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, 1927, courtesy of the Bentley Rare Book Museum

texts, placed in conversation with one another, illustrate the myriad ways women innovate, reconstruct, sell, and archive the printed word.

WOMEN'S VOICES IN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPACES



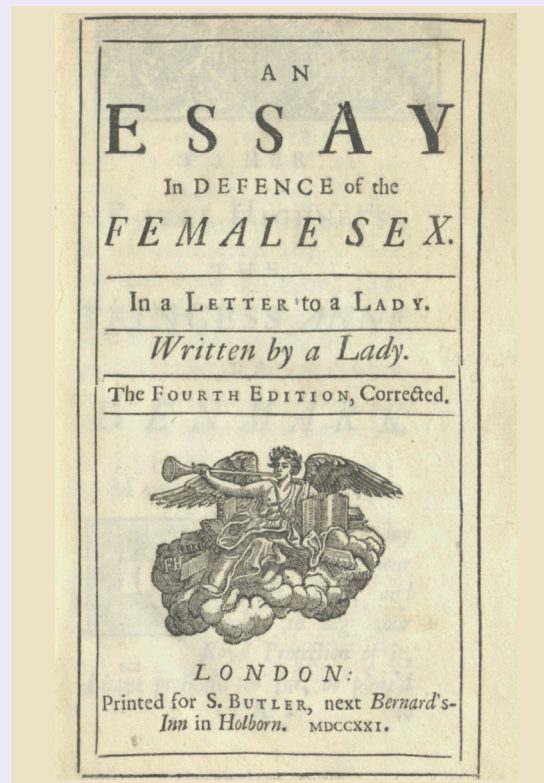
Portrait of English writer Aphra Behn painted by Sir Peter Lely, circa 1670, public domain

In late medieval and early modern Europe, literary endeavors were classed and gendered. Most women lacked access to the educational opportunities and rights necessary to develop reading and writing skills. The few women who were afforded these opportunities were usually members of the court or descendants of wealthy, highly educated families. While it was acceptable for men to write across several genres and disseminate these writings publicly, women's writing endeavors were expected to remain in private forms, like letters and diaries. The content of women's writing held

**“...there have been women in all Ages,
whose Writings might vie with those of the
greatest Men, as the present Age, as well
as past, can testify”**

– Judith Drake, *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (1721)

societal expectations as well; women were encouraged to write about religion and domestic matters but little else. When printing and literacy rates heightened in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, women expanded their breadth of writing into more public spaces with varying outcomes. The successful plays and prose fiction of Restoration-era writer Aphra Behn made her one of the first women in England to earn a living by writing. Contrarily, Judith Drake anonymously published a feminist prose work in the late seventeenth century, and for years, this work was credited to Mary Astell, one of her contemporaries.



Title page to *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* by Judith Drake, 1721, courtesy of the Bentley Rare Book Museum

WOMEN-FOCUSED WRITING

In the publishing world today, the romance genre is a one-billion-dollar industry. The history of romantic fiction is closely tied to the unique experiences of women and the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century. While Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela* is often cited as the first romance novel in English, love-centered prose was extant prior to Richardson, and many of these works were written by women. During Richardson's era, women writers like Frances Burney enjoyed critical acclaim for romantic fiction. Burney's novel *Evelina* was published in 1778 and is considered

one of the most famous courtship novels. Burney's influence reverberated among women readers and writers of the time, including Jane Austen. Centuries later, the New Woman movement of the nineteenth century and modernist ideals of the twentieth century complicated the neat and tidy marriage plots of previous eras and brought feminism to the forefront. The intersection of modernism and feminism is perhaps best exemplified through the work of Virginia Woolf, whose stream-of-consciousness style and keen literary criticism helped innovate the twentieth-century novel.

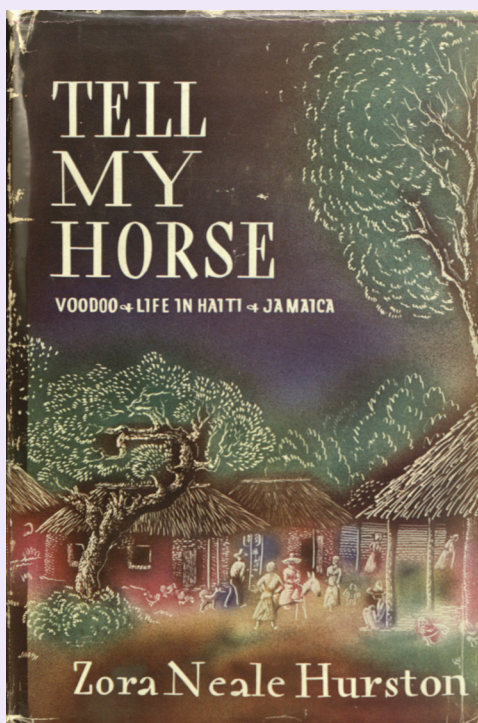
“Romance has largely been authored by women writers, focused on women’s perspectives, and marketed to women readers.”

– Rebecca Romney, *The Romance Novel in English* (2021)



Movie poster for *Forbidden Lips* adapted from Clara Louise Burnham’s romance novel *The Lavarons*, circa 1927, courtesy of the KSU Archives and Special Collections

COLORING THE CANON



Dust jacket of Zora Neale Hurston's *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica*, 1938, courtesy of the Bentley Rare Book Museum

Gaining entrance into the Western literary canon has been an uphill battle for writers of color, especially if they identify as women. This struggle is evident through early editions of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* and other standard texts of the mid-twentieth century that largely omitted the works of women and people of color. The homogeneity of the canon, however, never prevented women of color from celebrating and publicizing each other's work. Harlem Renaissance giant Zora Neale Hurston would have faded into obscurity had it not been

“How was the creativity of the black woman kept alive, year after year and century after century, when for most of the years black people have been in America, it was a punishable crime for a black person to read or write?”

– Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1983)

for the efforts of Alice Walker who revived and canonized her works. Likewise, legendary librarian and bibliographer Dorothy Porter spent over forty years at Howard University bringing African American

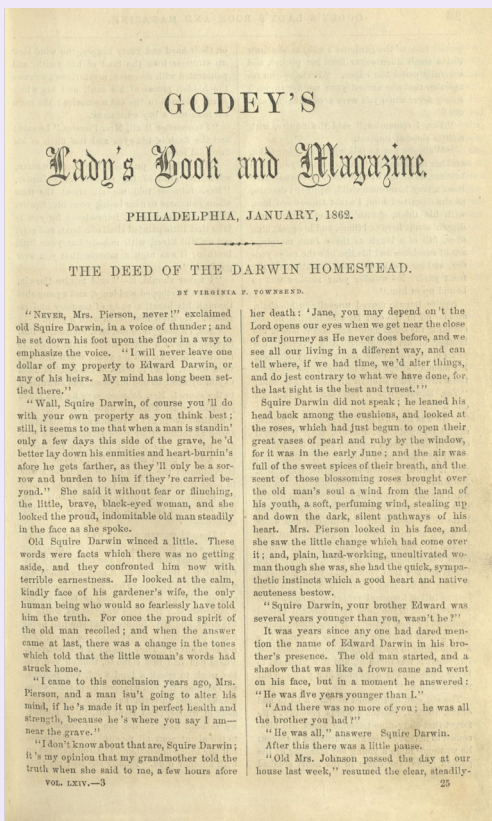
literature to light. Porter revamped discriminatory classification systems, developed research tools and bibliographies, and helped steer the direction of Black Studies in the United States. Today, printed



Photo of Dorothy Porter Wesley instructing manuscript staff, 1974, courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

counter-anthologies and online initiatives like The Zora Canon demonstrate how women of color continue to read, activate, and archive each other's work in the twenty-first century.

WOMEN IN THE BOOK BUSINESS



Page from Godey's *Lady's Book* edited by Sara Josepha Hale, 1862, courtesy of the Bentley Rare Book Museum

Women are crucial to the book business and always have been. Women of the handpress period (circa 1500 – 1800) served as trusted correctors and editors for printed works and often assumed leadership roles in printing houses if their husbands or male relatives passed away. The print and publishing industry remained male dominated during the machine-press period (circa 1800 – 1950), but several women defied the odds. Sarah Josepha Hale served as editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, making her the first woman to edit a major woman's journal in the

“I would say [to book dealers], ‘Show me where your women are.’ And they would say they didn’t have any. But then I would come back with a stack of books, and they would say, ‘Ah! There they are.’”

- Caroline Schimmel, *The Booksellers* (2019)

United States. In the first half of the twentieth century, writers Virginia Woolf and Laura Riding founded publishing houses with their respective partners. About fifty years later, award-winning author Toni Morrison worked as an editor at a major publishing firm and helped shape the landscape of Black print culture in America. In the twenty-first century, women are becoming more visible in the notoriously exclusive antiquarian book trade. Book dealers



Rosa Duffy outside her Atlanta-based antiquarian book shop “For Keeps Books,” 2019, courtesy of Carolyn Wheeler and WABE

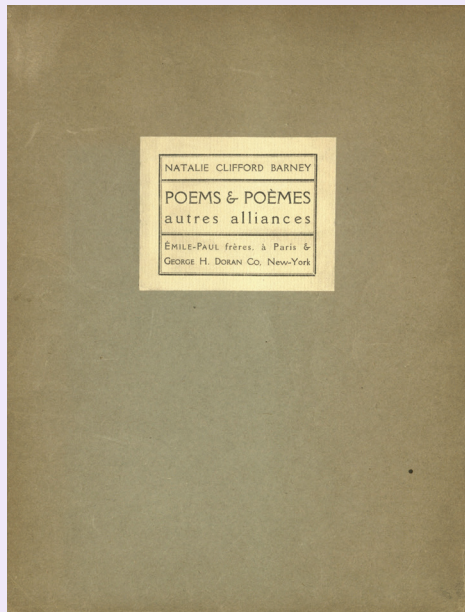
Rebecca Romney, Heather O’Donnell, and Atlanta’s own Rosa Duffy prove that women are essential to the long-term success of the rare book business despite the gender disparities that still exist in the industry.

IN VERSE



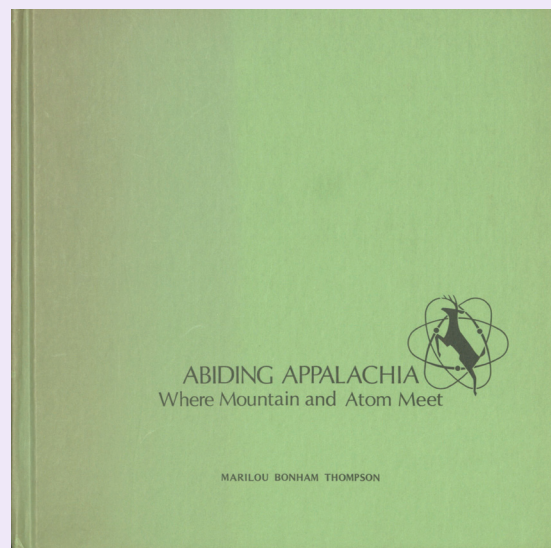
Poetry is often considered the enigma of language yet also its highest form. This cabinet includes twentieth-century works by three American writers who expressed amorous, ancestral, and controversial elements of their identity through poetry. Modernist, expatriate writer Natalie Clifford Barney openly expressed lesbian desires during the early twentieth century. She employs bilingual verse to

convey these themes in her 1920 volume *Poems and Poèmes / autres alliances*. Nikki Giovanni's Black Arts Movement poetry of the 1960s and 1970s was labeled fierce and militant, yet *Love Poems* demonstrates a more tender side that many readers



Cover of *Poems and Poèmes / autres alliances* by Natalie Clifford Barney, 1920

overlooked. In *Abiding Appalachia*, Cherokee writer Marilou Awiakta uses verse to portray the multifaceted peril of atomic energy. Awiakta expresses the deep emotions that arise for an indigenous person whose ancestral homeland is transformed into an atomic site controlled by the U.S. government.

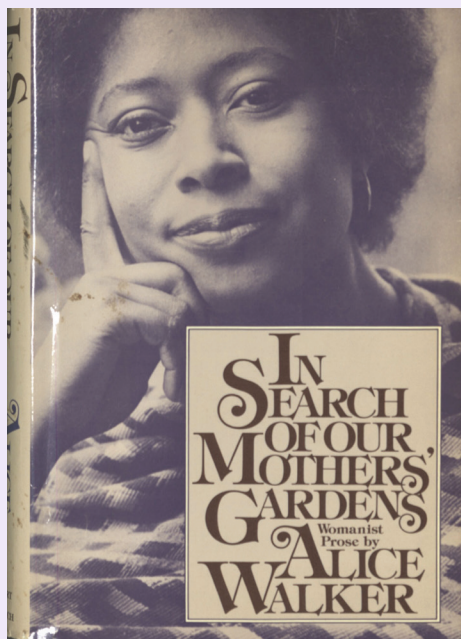


Cover of *Abiding Appalachia* by Marilou Awiakta, 1978

IN PROSE

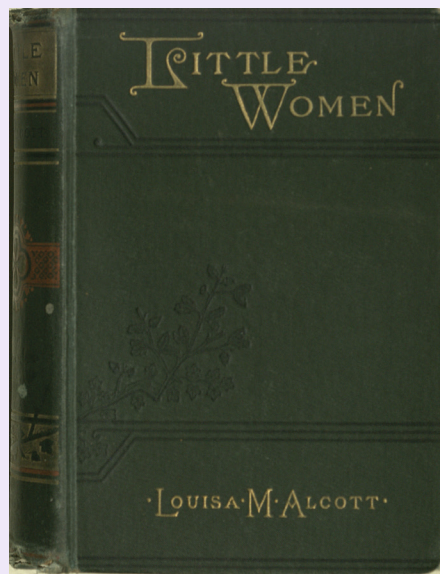
Women use prose writing to convey their unique experiences and to advocate for themselves. The cabinet above shows three types of prose writing authored by women from vastly different eras and cultural backgrounds. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is a landmark feminist work that attacks misogynist ideologies and lays bare the toxic social constructions that subjugate

women. While the target audience of Wollstonecraft's magnum opus is debated, Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* speaks directly to women, specifically Black women. Walker traces her own literary



Cover of *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* by Alice Walker, 1983

lineage and reflects on writing and motherhood – a dual responsibility that many women, including Walker, shoulder. Louisa May Alcott presents the social complexities of poverty, war, and American womanhood in her classic novel *Little Women*, a book that mirrors her own upbringing and is beloved by many women readers today.

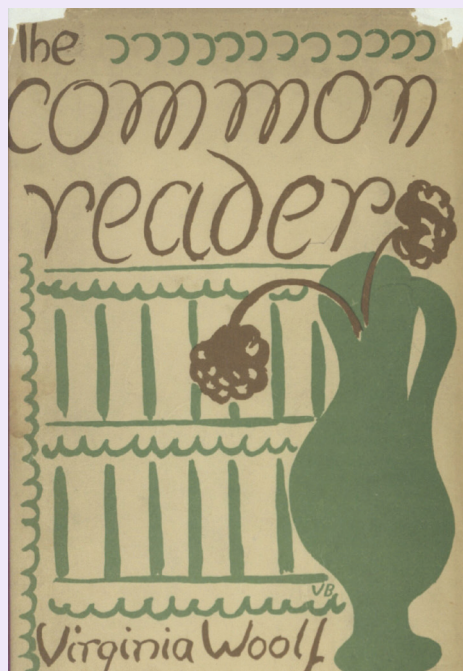


Cover of *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, 1891

IN PUBLISHING

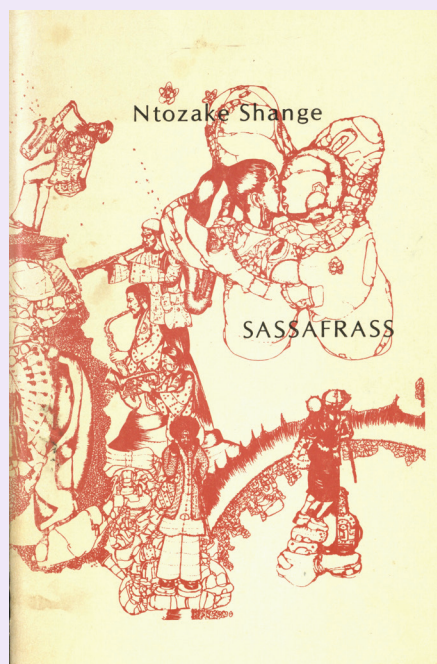
The work of printers and publishers remains invisible to most readers, yet this industry largely dictates the literary content available to communities. Notable women writers have entered the print and publishing world to carve out spaces for voices and perspectives ignored by mainstream audiences. Driven by a desire for autonomy, Virginia Woolf and husband Leonard Woolf founded London's Hogarth

Press in 1917. The press grew into an established and prosperous publishing house, outputting some of Woolf's most lauded works including *A Room of One's Own*, *The Common Reader*, and *Mrs. Dalloway*. During the second wave of feminism in 1960s



Cover of *The Common Reader* by Virginia Woolf, 1925

American feminist poet and author, Alta Hester, founded Shameless Hussy Press - the first feminist press in the United States. The press served as a medium of counterculture and published the early work of several legendary feminists. From 1970 until 1986, Toni Morrison's guiding hand edited the work of emerging Black writers and activists like Angela Davis, Gayl Jones, Muhammad Ali, and Toni Cade Bambara. Morrison strategically navigated the publishing industry to place Black voices in front of literary agents and into the hands of the public.



Cover of *Sassafrass* by Ntozake Shange, 1976

IN ART



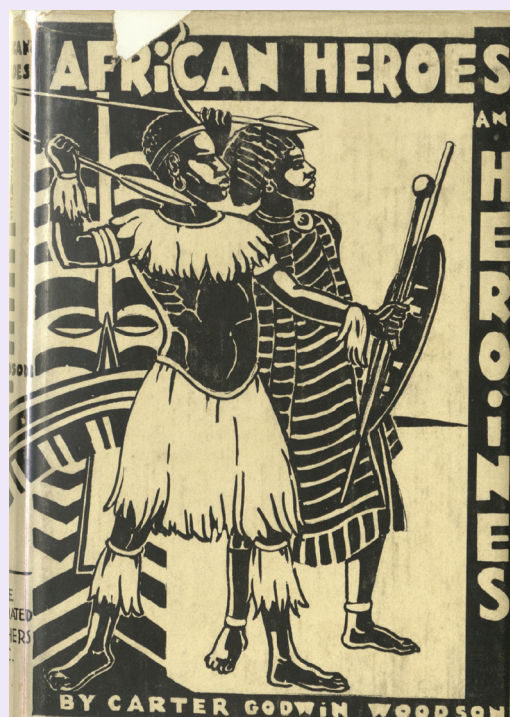
Women are innovators in the art world, blending styles and experimenting with form to produce unprecedented works of beauty and relevance. Lois Mailou Jones was an African American artist and educator who used her life experiences to paint, illustrate and design artwork that reflected her African ancestry. Inspired by the Harlem Renaissance and the time she spent abroad in Europe and the Caribbean, Jones crafted a style that incorporated

African tribal art and bold patterns. She combined her love for art with her background in education by illustrating several books for children that centered the Black experience and



Image of Forest Light by Radha Pandey, 2013

conveyed pride in African roots. Almost a century later, women artists are continuing to advance artistic experimentation by drawing upon methods and natural resources from around the globe. One such artist is Radha Pandey, a papermaker and letterpress printer with expertise in European, Eastern, and Indo-Islamic papermaking. Pandey's widely acclaimed artists' books draw inspiration from historical works and use complex paper layering and folding to explore the fragility of the natural world.

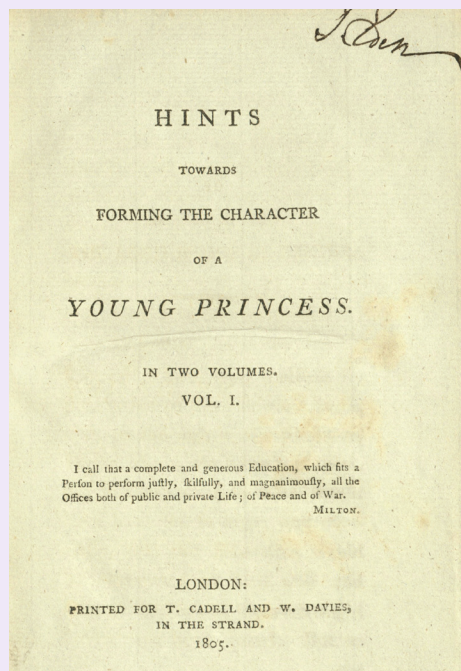


Cover of *African Heroes and Heroines* by Carter G. Woodson and illustrated by Lois Mailou Jones, 1944

IN EDUCATION

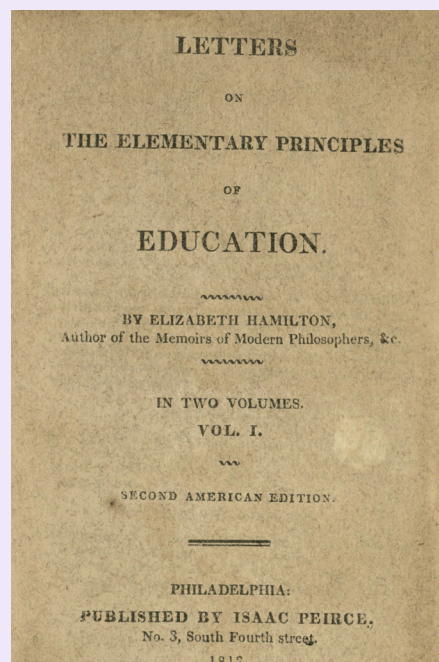
Throughout history, the right to education has been perpetually denied to women and children. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, women writers wrote tracts and larger prose works presenting their personal philosophies on education. The evangelical playwright and activist Hannah More spent the latter portion of her life writing pro-

education works and establishing schools for impoverished children in England. Despite her progressive activism, More's conservative views on religion, feminism, and the boundaries of women's education greatly clashed with



Title page to *Hints Towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess* by Hannah More, 1805

those of fellow eighteenth-century writer Mary Wollstonecraft. Scottish writer Elizabeth Hamilton also wrote a series of works on education during the first few years of the nineteenth century, which captivated an audience in the United States. One of Hamilton's friends, Maria Edgeworth, received a strict and robust education as a child at her father's insistence. Maria Edgeworth wrote several didactic works for children and collaborated with her father on prose works discussing educational philosophy.



Title page to *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education* by Elizabeth Hamilton, 1813

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Student engagement with rare books is critical to the mission of the Bentley Rare Book Museum. Our collection of over 10,000 rare books and manuscripts spans a variety of subjects and formats ranging from ancient cuneiform tablets to contemporary graphic novels. In this exhibit case, we highlight students who have completed exceptional work with materials from the Bentley Rare Book Museum.

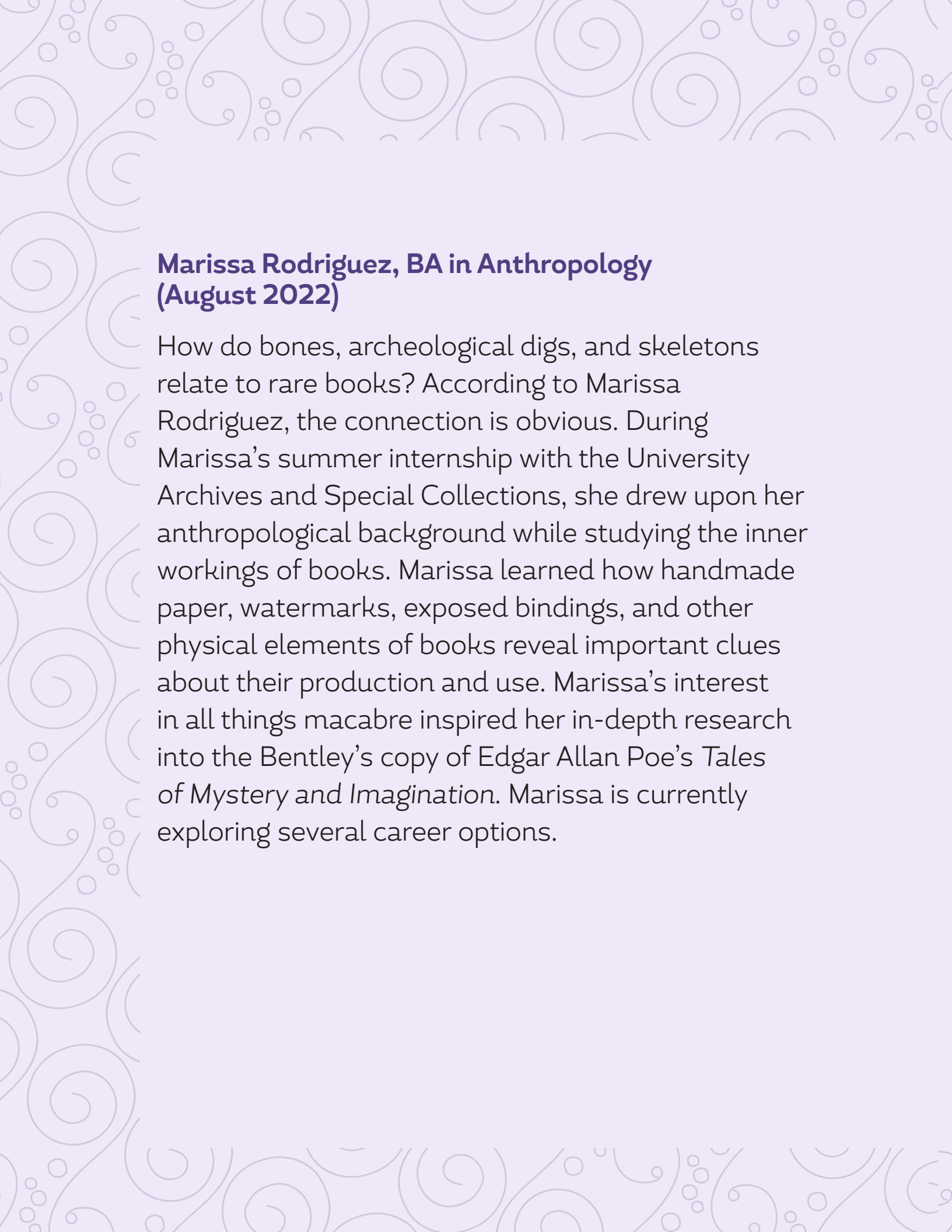




Katie Hegebarth, MA in Art and Design with a Concentration in Museum Studies (August 2022)

Katie first learned of the treasures in the Bentley Rare Book Museum during an instruction session for her Technology and Museum Management course. She began her internship with the University Archives and Special Collections in summer 2022 and used her background in photography to critically analyze visual elements of rare and unique books ranging from the handpress period to the contemporary era. Katie also collaborated with her fellow intern Marissa Rodriguez on the creation of a zine highlighting turn-of-the-century illustrated books. In addition to continuing photography work, Katie plans to pursue a career in collections management for museums.





**Marissa Rodriguez, BA in Anthropology
(August 2022)**

How do bones, archeological digs, and skeletons relate to rare books? According to Marissa Rodriguez, the connection is obvious. During Marissa's summer internship with the University Archives and Special Collections, she drew upon her anthropological background while studying the inner workings of books. Marissa learned how handmade paper, watermarks, exposed bindings, and other physical elements of books reveal important clues about their production and use. Marissa's interest in all things macabre inspired her in-depth research into the Bentley's copy of Edgar Allan Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. Marissa is currently exploring several career options.



“Although I was a little intimidated at first, I felt so welcome here at the Bentley Rare Book Museum, and I will always remember that the world of rare books can be enjoyed by everyone!”

– Marissa Rodriguez, '22

Acknowledgements

In Formation is an experiment in my creative process that would never have been possible without the support of several people. First, I'd like to thank Curator Emeritus Mr. Robert Williams for his constant encouragement and mentorship. Thank you, Mr. Williams, for teaching me how to uncover connections within and among books. This exhibition also demonstrates strong collaborative forces within the Department of Museums, Archives and Rare Books (MARB) at Kennesaw State University. I would like to personally thank Dr. Catherine Lewis and Dr. Tamara Livingston for their empowering leadership of MARB and wise counsel during the curation process. I would like to thank MARB staff members Zoila Torres (exhibit design), Tony Howell (exhibit installation), Stefanie Green (purchasing and logistics), Amber Smith (purchasing and logistics), and Léla Calixte (research assistance and scanning) for helping to make this exhibition and its opening reception come to fruition. I profusely thank all MARB staff members who provided feedback in any form during the curation process.

I extend a huge thank-you to artists Ashley DeVan and Maddi Bryce Smith for allowing their stellar work to be featured in this exhibition. I also want to thank the Bentley Rare Book Museum's local partners, Read 4 Unity and Black Coffee. To all our collaborators and partners, I appreciate your enthusiastic support of the Bentley Rare Book Museum's mission and programs. Finally, I am immensely grateful to our university's president Dr. Kathy Schwaig and interim provost Dr. Ivan Pulinkala for their strong leadership of Kennesaw State University and continued support of the Bentley Rare Book Museum.



Joy Ellen Williams

Women Featured in the Exhibition

(in alphabetical order)

- Alcott, Louisa May (1832 – 1888). American writer.
- Astell, Mary (1666 – 1731). English writer.
- Austen, Jane (1775 – 1817). English writer.
- Awiakta, Marilou (1936 –). Indigenous American writer.
- Barney, Natalie Clifford (1876 – 1972). American, expatriate writer.
- Behar, Ruth (1956 –). Cuban American writer.
- Behn, Aphra (1640 – 1689). English writer.
- Bell, Vanessa (1879 – 1961). English artist.
- Burney, Frances (1752 – 1840). English writer.
- Butler, Octavia E. (1947 – 2006). African American writer.
- DeVan, Ashley. American artist.
- Drake, Judith (circa 1670s – 1723). English writer.
- Duffy, Rosa. African American bookseller.
- Edgeworth, Maria (1768 – 1849). Irish-English writer.
- Giovanni, Nikki (1943 –). African American writer.
- Glancy, Diane (1941–). Indigenous American writer.
- Hale, Sarah Josepha (1788 – 1879). American editor.
- Hamilton, Elizabeth (1756 – 1816). English writer.
- Hurston, Zora Neale (1891 – 1960). African American writer.
- Jones, Gayl (1949 –). African American writer.
- Jones, Lois Mailou (1905 – 1998). African American artist.
- More, Hannah (1745 – 1833). English writer.

Women Featured in the Exhibition (cont.)

(in alphabetical order)

Morrison, Toni (1931 – 2019). African American writer and editor.

O'Donnell, Heather. American bookseller.

Pandey, Radha. Indian and Norwegian papermaker and letter-press printer.

Riding, Laura (1901 – 1991). American writer.

Romney, Rebecca (1985 –). American bookseller.

Rona, Elizabeth (1890 – 1981). Hungarian scientist.

Rubin, Vera (1928 – 2016). American scientist.

Schimmel, Caroline. American book collector and bibliographer.

Shange, Ntozake (1948 – 2018). African American writer.

Smith, Maddi Bryce. American artist.

Walker, Alice (1944 –). African American writer.

Wesley, Dorothy Porter (1905 – 1995). African American librarian and bibliographer.

Wollstonecraft, Mary (1759 – 1797). English writer.

Woolf, Virginia (1882 – 1941). English writer.



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