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LYNN MULLINS: Well, welcome everybody. Thank you. I'm Lynn Mullins -- Director of this library, the Dana Library, John Cotton Dana Library, which is the main library on Rutgers Newark campus -- and [I'm] very, very happy to welcome this distinguished group today to Dana [Library]. Today's program, *Beyond Words: The Books of Ilse Schreiber-Noll* -- and Ilse is in the front row -- is a very special one centered at the nexus of art and literature and poetry. We are believers in words in this library. That is what draws many of us here. But we are also believers in the power of art. When the two come together in the way that they have in the books of Ilse Schreiber-Noll -- the art building on the words and taking us just a little bit beyond -- what we have is something to truly behold. We are honored to be able to bring this exhibition of Ilse's beautiful books, *Beyond Words*, to open up the academic year here at Dana. An important part of today's program is a reading by the distinguished poet Galway Kinnell, also in the front row next to Ilse, who has collaborated with Ilse on her books. Thank you Galway for joining us today. I'd like now to introduce my very good colleague, Michael Joseph, Rare Books librarian in the Library's Special Collections Department in New Brunswick. Many of you know that Michael has worked with me for more than 11 years now putting together the annual New Jersey Book Arts Symposium -- an exhibition which takes place here at Dana in this room in November. It was in fact at one of these symposia that we first met Ilse who made a presentation and her works were on display. Michael will introduce Ilse and then Galway

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Kinnell. Michael. MICHAEL JOSEPH: Thank you Lynn.

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I will introduce Ilse Schreiber-Noll and Galway Kinnell now. I will do it slowly because I had a root canal about three hours ago and my cheeks are numb. [Laughter] And in speaking quickly I don't want to inadvertently chew off my mouth. [Laughter] Also let me just note before I begin the introduction that Ilse's introduction will be short. Not because we don't love her work or wish to engage with it, but she modestly requested a short introduction. Ilse Schreiber-Noll, born in Germany, lives in America in Tarrytown, New York, teaches at Purchase College. She comes to book art as a painter and print-maker, adopting a popular and iconic form to reflect attention on the concerns of society and -- as she has written -- "to fight for peace and social justice". Her art is forthrightly and foremost political. Like all political artists -- whether she takes as her subject the victims of apartheid, fundamentalists, violence, homelessness, war, pollution, or some other social ill -- her intent seems to be to remind us that we have the power as well as the moral responsibility to mitigate another's suffering. Of course the political is also the personal and in many ways in many of her primal or large vertiginous images one can sense a struggle to formalize catastrophe, to engage with the dark angel of history. What -- invoking Mircea Eliade, the father of comparative religion -- we might call the "terror of history" and wrest from it the consolation of meaning. An explanation, not in words, but in composition, line and color. We should not be surprised that in her work we find mythic forms and gestures, a recurrence of elemental principles such as mother, father, Earth, day, night, sleep, protection, love. Galway Kinnell has published 15 books of poetry. In 1983 he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and shared the National Book Award for his *Selected Poems 1982*. The following year he was awarded the MacArthur Foundation Award which MacArthur Laureate, Jim Collins was kind

enough yesterday to let us know in his Times op-ed piece, "The Foundation bestows for creativity and not for being a mere genius." Kinnell has also published a novel, *Black Light*, a collection of edited interviews, *Walking Down the Stairs* and several translations of poetry beginning with Rene Hardy's *Bitter Victory* and including the poems of Francois Villon, Ivan Gaul's (sp) *Lackawanna Elegy*, Eve Bonfoise (sp) *The Early Poems: 1947 to 1959*, and the one that may interest us most tonight, *The Essential Rilke*. In addition to his collaborations with Schreiber-Noll, Galway Kinnell has generously provided poems for many eminent, artistic and fine presses. The RaRa Avis Press, the Perishable Press, the Red Osier Press (sp), the Aurelia Press, and the Janus Press, to name only a few. That he has repeatedly invested himself in the retinal manifestation of his work, jibes with his often-admired poetic predilection for description, which Harold Bloom praises highly for possessing a Whitmanesque amplitude. Making what I think is a similar point in reverse, the poet Donald Hall notes, "When Galway Kinnell puts his feet into old shoes bought at the Salvation Army, he does not fill them. The shoes fill him." Admiration for Galway Kinnell's poetry has come from all quarters. Richard J. Calhoun calls him, "One of our most accomplished poets". Patrick Keane, "One of the most powerful and moving poets of his generation". Keane also may serve to bring us to a convergence of Kinnell's and Schreiber-Noll's concerns when he describes Kinnell's poetry as an elementary poetry; a poetry of dark woods and snow, of wind and fire and stars, of bone and blood. "His subjects," says Keane, "are perennial; love illumined and made more precious by the omnipresence of death." The poet, Hank Lazer, also hones in Kinnell's heightened heroic occupation with life and death; locating the best of his poetry as entering the crucial territory in the life-death interface. Although I suppose I should be the life/death interface. To reinforce and clarify this perception I want to share a comment that Kinnell made to Margaret Edwards. I don't know that I am right to interpret it in the way I have, but since the poet is here and capable of disclaiming any responsibility for my interpretation, I will just go ahead and say that the following lines might be about art too; about what art Kinnell believes is demanded of us - of all of us in that crucial territory of the life-death interface. On its surface however, the

passage is a brief meditation on tending to children. It is a quotation. "It is a special time, those minutes, hours sometimes we spend with little children in the middle of the night. I've always liked getting up and going to my children. And partly asleep myself, most of what we call personality or individuality we leave back there in our bed. The child too is half asleep, so we hold each other -- creature and creature -- clasping one another in the darkness. We probably have to know each other well by daylight for these cosmic hugs, almost devoid of personality, to be possible. It is good for the child that the hugs take place for during them something sets inside that will make it possible to experience a similarly primal embrace later on in adult life with a lover. It's like happiness. Everyone uses the word, but it's obvious that many don't really experience it and never will. Probably because they were not disposed that way as little children." [Applause]

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ILSE SCHREIBER-NOLL: Okay.

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That was great Mike [chuckle]. So. So first I'd like to thank Lynn Mullins, Mullins, and Michael Joseph for giving me this opportunity to exhibit my work here in their library and for all the help I have received from them and the library staff to display my work. Many thanks to the Jersey Center for the Books [Arts] and Rutgers University Libraries for co-sponsoring this program. And thanks to my husband, Klaus, for his continuous help and support. And last, my gratitude goes to Galway Kinnell for being here. And with this, to make this evening special and complete. Galway's poetry has over the years greatly influenced my work. And even if often invisible, has become the voice which speaks underneath the surfaces of my paintings and prints together

with the voices of Paul Celan (sp), Rilke (sp), Brescht (sp) and Ingeborg Bachmann (sp) and other great poets. I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to work with Galway and I think I am to be able to call him a friend. Galway and I have collaborated on five books of which two are from his [unintelligible] translations. Four of these books are shown in this exhibition. I forgot what I am saying. Okay. Our last collaboration is a poem Galway wrote in response to 9/11 entitled, *When the Towers Fell*.

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That's enough. I cannot talk anymore. We go to the next step, okay? Thank you Galway for being here. [Applause]

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Thank you for being here. GALWAY KINNELL: Well I'm very happy to be here and I've admired Ilse's work so much and I've had the privilege of her incorporating some of my poems into her work. So, I'm going to read from,

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I'm going to read three, one poem in its entirety, of mine, and a couple in part and the ninth *Elegy of Rilke* entire -- my translation. And all of these, all of these have been published. Are they out there? Yes. You'll see them out there. So I'll say nothing more. This one is called *How Could She Not* and it's dedicated -- well not dedicated, to but it's written for -- Jane Kenyon, a poet who died young. Died in 1995 and was married to Donald Hall. And Donald Hall called us the morning of

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her death and we lived in northeastern Vermont and Don lives in sort of middle- western New Hampshire, so we can kind of see over into the same territory. "Having been washed and washed the air glitters, small heaped accumuli carry across the sky. A short, hard shower, it's parallel diagonals visible against the firs douses and then refreshes the crocuses.

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We knew it would happen one day this week, and this morning we heard that she had died an hour ago. I step out the open door and look across at her New Hampshire. There too, the sun is bright and a few clouds make their shadowy ways along the horizon. How could it not have been today? In another room, Kyrie Tikhonova (sp) is singing the Laudate Dominos of Mozart from far in the past. Her voice just hearable over whisperings of a line of scythes and the rattlings of mowing machines drawing their cutter bars, little reciprocating triangles through the timothy.

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All of them singing to the stalks being made to lie down in the sunshine. Did she wake in the dark of this morning almost used up by her year of pain, briefly remitted now and then by hope? By first light did she glimpse the world as she had loved it and see that now it would not be wrong to die for she would be leaving him in a day like paradise? Near sunrise did her hold loosen a little, having these last days spoken her whole heart to him who spoke his whole heart to her? Might she not have felt that in the silence he would not feel that any word was missing? When full daylight came how could she not have slipped into a spell with him next to her. His arms around her as they had been, it may then have seemed all her life. How could she not

press her cheek to his cheek that presses itself to hers from now on? How could she not rise and go with sunlight at the window, loved arms around her and the sound fading, deepening?

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Hard to say of a single engine plane in the distance coming to take her that no one else hears." And now I'm going to read -- not this whole poem -- called, *When One Has Lived a Long Time Alone*, but three sections from it. The actual poem has nine or 10 sections. Oh no, 10 or 11 sections depending on which additions you buy. [Laughter]

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So the first one is, "When one has lived a long time alone one refrains from swatting the fly and lets him go. And one is slow to strike the mosquito though more than willing to slap the flesh under her and one hoists the toad from the pit too deep to hop out of and carries him to the grass without minding the poisoned urine he slicks his body with. And when envelops in a towel the Swift who fell down the chimney and knocks herself against window glass and releases her outside and watches her fly free. A lifeline flung at reality when one has lived a long time alone." This is the seventh, "When one has lived a long time alone one likes alike the pig who brooks no deferment of gratification and the porcupine or thorned pig who enters the cellar but not the house itself because of eating down the cellar stairs on the way up. And one likes the worm who, by bunching herself together and expanding, works her way through the ground no less than the butterfly who totters full of worry among the Day Lilies as they darken. And more and more one finds one likes any other species better than one's own which has gone amuck making one's self estranged when one has lived a long time alone." And here is the last section, "When one has lived a long time alone and the Hermit Thrush calls and there is an

answer and the bullfrog, head half out of water utters the cantillations he sang in his first Spring, and the snake lowers himself over the threshold and creeps away among the stones. One sees they all live to mate with their kind. And one knows after a long time of solitude, after the many steps taken away from one's kind toward these other kingdoms, the hard prayer inside one's own singing is to come back if one can to one's own. A world almost lost in the exile that deepens when one has lived a long time alone."

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Let's see.

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We're going to read. I say we because there are some lines of German that I quoted in this poem and Rilke, Ilse is going to come up. I said Rilke [laughter].

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The nearest thing we have to Rilke will come up and read

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the German. So I'm just going to. This is *When the Towers Fell* and I'm just going to read a very small selection. It would take, takes about half-an-hour to read the whole poem. I'll just read a couple of little sections and quotations from other poets are strewn throughout the poem.

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So, [inaudible] yeah. I will. I will, yeah. Yeah. So this is a little tiny section, "The banker is talking to London. Umberto is delivering breakfast sandwiches. The trader is working the phone. The mail-sorter starts sorting the mail.

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[unintelligible French]

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Poor and rich, wise and foolish, priests and laymen, noblemen, serfs, generous and mean, short and tall and handsome and homely." Francoise Villon, *The Testament*. Then.

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Then we need you.

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Maybe you could stand over here. Perhaps you could see it a lot better because. So these are, these lines are from Paul Celan -- his great poem, *Death Fugue*. Okay. "The towers burn and burn in a distant shot like smokestacks spewing oily Earth- remnants. ILSE SCHREIBER-NOLL: [unintelligible German] GALWAY KINNELL: Black milk of daybreak, we drink it at nightfall.

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ILSE SCHREIBER-NOLL: [unintelligible German]

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GALWAY KINNELL: We drink it at midday, at morning, we drink it at night.

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ILSE SCHREIBER-NOLL: [unintelligible German]

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GALWAY KINNELL: We drink it and drink it.

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This is not a comparison, but a corollary, not a likeness, but a common lineage. Soldiers moving through mud at ninety-thousand-dead-per-mile. Black men castrated and strung up from trees. Train upon train headed eastward made up of boxcars shoved full to the corners with gypsies and Jews. [Audio interference] State murder of 20, 30, 40 million of its own. Atomic blasts wiping cities off the Earth. Fire bombings, death marches, starvation, assassinations, disappearances. Entire countries turned into minefields, mass graves, craters, rubble. The towers vomit these omens that the last century dumped into this one for us to dispose of. They are our futures. That is the black milk of our species swiping the sky. ILSE SCHREIBER-NOLL: [unintelligible German] GALWAY KINNELL: We're digging a grave in the sky. There'll be plenty of room to lie down there."

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And here is toward the end of the poem.

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"And I sat down by the waters of the Hudson, by the North Cove Yacht Basin, Yacht Harbor and thought of those on the high floors who knew that they would burn alive and then burned alive. And I wondered, are there mechanisms of death so mutilating to existence no one gets over them ever. Not even the dead.

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Then before me I saw in steel letters welded to the railing posts, Whitman's words written when America plunged into war with itself. 'City of the world, proud and passionate city, meddlesome, mad, extravagant city.'

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I remembered what he wrote after the war was over and Lincoln dead. 'I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war.' {This is Whitman.} 'I saw they were not as was thought'. They themselves were fully at rest. They suffered not. The living remained and suffered, the mother suffered and the wife and the children and the musing comrade suffered.'

" And then the last section, "In our minds the glassy blocks succumb come over and over into themselves, slam down floor by floor into themselves. Blowing up as if in reverse. Exploding downward and outward, billowing through the streets, engulfing the fleeing. As each tower goes down, it concentrates into itself, transforming itself, infinitely, slowly into a black hole infinitesimally small. Mass without space where each light, each life put out lies down within us." Now I'm going to read a little a little poem which Rilke has not,

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which Rilke has not [laughter] illustrated, but maybe will soon. It's called, it's called *It All Comes Back*. "We placed the cake with its four candles poked into thick, soft frosting on the seat of his chair at the head of the table for just a moment while we unfolded and spread Spanish cloth over Vermont maple. Suddenly he stepped from the group of schoolmates and parents and family friends and ran to the table and just as someone cried, "No, no don't sit," he sat down right on top of the cake. And the room broke into groans and guffaws. Actually it was pretty

funny. We all started yelping our heads off and actually it wasn't in the least funny. He ran to me and I picked him up, but I was still laughing and indignant fury he jabbed his thumbs into the corners of my mouth, grasped my cheeks and yanked. He was so muscled and so outraged I felt he might rip my whole face off. Then I realized that was exactly what he was trying to do. It came to me, I was one of his keepers. His birth and the birth of his sister had put me on Earth a second time with a duty this time to protect them and to help them to love themselves. And yet here I was laughing in solidarity with a bunch of adults against my own child. Hey-hawing away without once wondering if we weren't underneath, all of us, merely striking back too late at our own parents for humiliating us. I gulped down my laughter and held him and apologized and commiserated and explained and then things were right again. But to this day it remains loose, the face, seat of superior smiles on the bones from that hard yanking. Shall I publish this story from the past and risk embarrassing him? I like it that he fought back. But what's the good -- now he's 36 -- of telling a tale of his mortification when he was four? Let him decide. I'll give him three choices. He can scratch his slapdash checkmark whose rakish hook makes me think of his old high school hockey stick in whichever box applies. Box 1: tear it up. Box 2: don't publish it, but give me a copy. Box 3: Okay. Publish it on the chance that somewhere someone survives

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of those said to die miserably every day for lack of the small clarifications sometimes found in poems." [Applause and laughter] Ta da Rilke! [Laughter] Rilke this...We know elegies have 10 sections -- as probably most of you know -- and this is the ninth. To me it's the most wonderful and noble of all the, of all the elegies. So I'm going to read it and about halfway through Ilse is going to come up and pick up in German.

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You have the German here? Yes. And pick up in German from where I've been reading.

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And then she will read a little while and I'll start again where she started reading and I'll start reading in English and then to the end.

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But this will give you a sense of the, of the "Rilkean" music. "Why, if our time on earth could be spent as a Laurel, it's green darker than all other greens, it's leaves edged with wavelets something like the smile of a wind.

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Why then must we be human, and avoiding our destiny, still seek it? Not because there is happiness. This hasty profit snatched from imminent loss. Not out of curiosity nor to give the heart practice, conditions which would also apply to the Laurel. But because being here is so much. Because everything in this fleeting world seems to need us and strangely speaks to us. Us the most fleeting. Once for everything, only once, once and no more. And we too only once. Never again. But to have been this once, if only this once. To have been of the Earth can never be taken from us. And so we press on and seek to achieve it. Seek to hold in our simple hands, our overcrowded gaze, our speechless heart. Seek to become it and give it to whom? Better still, hold on to it all forever. Ah, but into that other relation what can we take with us? Not the

power to see learned here so slowly and not the things that have happened here. Not one. The pain then. Most of all the heaviness and the long experience of love which is to say everything beyond words. But later, among the stars, what's the good? They are better unsayable for the wanderer doesn't come down from the mountainside bringing to the valley a handful of earth unsayable to all, but rather a word gained. A pure word. The yellow and blue gentian. Are we perhaps here to say house, bridge, fountain, gate, pitcher, fruit tree, window, at most column, tower? But to say you understand. Oh to say them as even the things themselves never envisioned themselves so tenderly to be. Is this the secret ruse of our reticent Earth when it urges lovers on? That in their emotion each and every thing delights in itself. Threshold. What does it mean to two lovers when they wear away a little their own older threshold? They too, after the many before, before those to come. Lightly.

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Here is the time for the sayable. Here it's home. Speak and profess it. More than ever the things we can experience fall away for that which dislodging replaces them is act without image. Act under crusts that shatter willingly, but as soon as the inner act outgrows them and fine but as soon as the heart. Sorry.

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[Not "but"] As soon as the inner act outgrows them and finds new containment between the hammers our heart endures. Like the tongue between the teeth which yet continues to praise. ILSE SCHREIBER-NOLL: [unintelligible German] GALWAY KINNELL: Praise this world to the angel. Not the one beyond words. You won't impress him with the glory of your feelings in space where he feels with more feeling. You're a beginner. Rather show him some ordinary thing shaped from generation to generation that lives as ours

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next to our hand and within our glance. Tell him about things. Then he will stand more amazed as you did beside the rope-maker in Rome or the potter by the Nile. Show him how joyful how pure and ours a thing can be. How even lamenting sorrow decides to take form, serves as a thing or dies into a thing and in passing, beyond us blissfully slips from the violin. And these things, which live by passing, understand that you praise them. Fleeting, they look to us for rescue. Us, the most fleeting. They want us to transform them completely in our invisible heart into, oh infinitely, into ourselves whoever finally we may be. Earth, isn't this what you want? To arise in us invisible? Isn't your dream someday to be invisible? Earth invisible. What, if not transformation, is your urgent commission? Earth, my dearest, I will. Oh believe me, your Spring-times are not needed anymore to win me. One, a single one is already too much for my blood. Namelessly from afar I have chosen you. You have always been right and your holy idea is intimate

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death. Look I am alive. What from? Neither childhood nor future grows less. Surplus life wells up in my heart." I just want to go back four lines and say another way of translating that line. "You have always been right and your holy idea is the intimacy of death. Look I'm alive. What from? Neither childhood nor future grows less. Surplus life wells up in my heart." Thank you. [Applause]

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LYNN MULLINS: We've had many memorable occasions in this room throughout the years, but this certainly was one of the most moving and beautiful

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and we thank you so much Ilse, Galway and the others who contributed to it.