

Tori Torres

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### A Night with David Grann

David Grann, author of “Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders,” and “The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny and Murder,” detailed how his immersive research projects fostered a passionate career in producing award-winning nonfiction novels and book-to-screen adaptations.

Grann spoke with Professor Debbie Danielpour at Boston University’s Conversations in the Arts and Ideas at Tsai Performance Center this evening. Grann walked through the motivation behind his novels and how he managed to spend over five years researching and producing a singular project.

“It’s a process over time that trust gets built, and you try to be as bare and judicious as you can,” Grann said in relation to committing a large portion of his life to a project.

Grann felt that his role in the film adaptation process revealed he belongs in the archives – researching and authentically uncovering new stories to tell through writing. Grann differentiated his novels and films as separate mediums, and accredited the screenwriters’ brilliance and how their abilities contrast his own.

“The only thing I really care about is that they [filmmakers] share that same fierce commitment to the story as I do,” Grann said.

Grann emphasized the importance of experiencing the environment one writes about. In preparation to write about the Osage nation in “Killers of the Flower Moon,” Grann slept in the Oklahoma prairie fields and tried to replicate the experiences of his characters.

“I think of all of us as riddles and we’re all conundrums, and we’re riddles to ourselves,” Grann said. “And most of us are made up of a lot of different components, so when you write you want to get at that complexity.”

Grann discovered his passion for nonfiction writing after listening to his grandmother tell stories about his deceased grandfather in chronological order. He realized his skills, “lay in excavation,” and could still focus on setting, dialogue, and telling stories of human beings through nonfiction writing.

Grann was introduced by his son Zach Grann, a student at the Berklee College of Music, who performed a song on the piano inspired by his father’s novel “The Wager.” The Conversations in the Arts and Ideas is dedicated to honoring creativity and bringing the arts to the stage, according to Carrie Preston, Associate Director of the Center on Forced Displacement at Boston University.

“I thought it was really interesting how Grann was able to take a historical event and turn it into a novel. And then his son took it one step further and turned it into a song,” Lena Jack, a sophomore studying accounting at Boston University said.

The auditorium was packed with Boston University students and aspiring writers, who laughed along with Grann as he made references to his novels.

In order to gain a better understanding of the time period he’s researching, Grann said that he reads more fiction than nonfiction in his everyday life. He referenced “Moby Dick” and western fictions as inspiration for his own novels.

“The best parts of the conversation were the specifics about the adaptation and writing process itself,” Colleen Foran, a graduate student studying art history at Boston University said. “I like the structure in his books so it was interesting to hear him explain his process.”

Grann gave advice to young writers looking to make a career in the arts.

“The blessing is to find something you love. Find a story you believe in,” Grann said with enthusiasm. “That is what keeps you going.”