



Musings

Fall 2020 Newsletter

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Northwestern

Department of
English

WEINBERG COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

FROM THE CHAIR

March 11 feels like a long time ago. That was the last time the department gathered in person, for a champagne toast in honor of Chris Herbert, upon his retirement after more than fifty years on the faculty. Professors recalled his many decades of award-winning teaching and dedicated mentoring of graduate students and junior faculty alike. (See tributes from former students on page 10.)

Spring break was spent scrambling to reconfigure lecture- and seminar courses for remote learning. The campus closed, the university budget was slashed, and salaries and hiring were frozen. Then came the murder of George Floyd on Memorial Day and the protests that engulfed cities and small towns across the country. Graduate students in the humanities and humanistic social sciences scripted a petition calling for the university to defund the police, while faculty debated their role amid the social unrest.

A Faculty Committee on Equity met over the summer and planned a series of anti-racist initiatives for the current academic year. We have just embarked on a series of dialogues and workshops, knowing that change will not happen overnight. But we also know that if any good will come from the pandemic, it will be a more honest accounting of the systemic racism in the academy and, yes, in our own department.

Please wish us well on our journey.

Susan Manning
Chair of English
Bergen Evans Professor in the Humanities
English, Theatre, Performance Studies



A WORD FROM EGSO

As a rather unconventional academic year begins, we have an opportunity to reflect on the 2019-2020 academic year and look forward to the upcoming year. The Department started off this year with our annual (and virtual) Fall Collation where Department Chair Susan Manning welcomed us back to the Zoom classroom. As part of a year-long series, “Beginnings, Middles, and Endings,” Professors Nick Davis and Shauna Seliy gave us a window into their methods of laying out the groundwork for their engaging projects in the beginning stages of composition.

As always, EGSO kicked off the year by welcoming new students to the department. Students-in-Coursework Representative Paulina Jones-Torregrosa organized this year’s peer mentor program and in September we held a Zoom welcome event for first-years. Last year, students-in-coursework representative Kaitlin Browne organized our quarterly colloquia, which featured work from both PhD and MFA+MA students. In the fall, Natalie Rose Richardson and Nina Moon spoke, and in the winter, Erica Hughes and Rishika Batra spoke.

Last year, Students-in-Candidacy representative Adam Syvertsen organized a series of professionalization workshops for students. Professors Tristram Wolff and Juan Martinez held a workshop for literature and creative writing pedagogy in the fall. In the spring, we held a remote grant and fellowship workshop with help from the Northwestern Office of Fellowships. This year, Students-in-Candidacy Representative Elena Bellaart organized our first fall workshop with English Subject Librarian, Josh Honn, who showed us how to maximize the resources available to us in the midst of the pandemic.

The past year’s programs and events would not have been possible without the incredible generosity of the students, scholars, and faculty members who gave their time to enrich the life of our department. Equally, none of this would have been possible without the peerless efforts of Jennifer Britton, Kathy Daniels, David Kuzel, Nathan Mead, and Ashley Woods.

Finally, we must acknowledge that we are navigating perpetually uncharted territory this year amid myriad ambient anxieties. As we press on with our work and convene in virtual settings, it is all the more important that we continue to support one another, make time for constructive conversations about our current and future practices, and collaborate to rethink how we can make our academic space a more equitable, antiracist, and compassionate environment.

Jennifer Comerford and **Adam Syvertsen**, Co-Chairs
Nina Coomes, MFA+MA Representative
Elena Bellaart, Students-in-Candidacy Representative
Paulina Jones-Torregrosa, Students-in-Coursework Representative
Rio Bergh, Archivist

NEW FACULTY

Kalyan Nadiminti (Ph.D. English, University of Pennsylvania), Assistant Professor of English, writes and teaches on postcolonial and Global Anglophone literatures, with a particular focus on twentieth and twenty-first century South Asian writing in English. They are especially interested in South Asia's engagement with U.S. empire and the Global War on Terror, comparative paradigms of detention and human rights, as well as global literary markets and the contemporary creative economy.

Kalyan is currently working on a book project, "Provincializing 9/11," which contends that Global South writers construct literary genealogies of terror to interrogate the mythic status of 9/11 as a foundational event in global histories of political violence. In genres ranging from novels and poetry to memoirs, paintings, and graphic novels, the project places South Asian Anglophone literature in dialogue with diasporic and detainee art and writing in the wake of U.S. empire.

Their scholarly essays and reviews are forthcoming or have previously appeared in *Post45/Contemporaries*, *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, *Journal of Asian American Studies*, *South Asian Review*, and *LARB*, among other venues. Their article, "The Global Program Era: Contemporary International Fiction in the American Creative Economy," is the kernel for a second project on contemporary South Asian realisms. Before Northwestern, Kalyan taught at Gettysburg College, where their work was supported by a Mellon Fellowship, and at Haverford College.



Photo credit: Justin Hoch

Charif Shanahan, Associate Professor of Instruction, is a poet, essayist, and translator. He is the author of *Into Each Room We Enter without Knowing* (SIU Press, 2017), winner of the Crab Orchard Series in Poetry First Book Award, and a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Poetry and the Publishing Triangle's Thom Gunn Award.

Shanahan's poems appear in *American Poetry Review*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Times Magazine*, PBS NewsHour, and *Poetry*, among other journals. His work has been anthologized in *American Journal: Fifty Poems for Our Time* (Graywolf Press, 2018), Furious Flower's *Seeding the Future of African American Poetry* (Northwestern, 2019), *The BreakBeat Poets Vol 3: Halal If You Hear Me* (Haymarket, 2019), and the Library of America's forthcoming *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song* (ed. Kevin Young).

For his work, he is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship; the Wallace Stegner Fellowship and the Jones Lectureship at Stanford University; a Fulbright Senior Scholar Grant to Morocco; the Gregory Pardlo Fellowship from the Frost Place; and residency fellowships from Cave Canem Foundation, the MacDowell Colony, Millay Colony for the Arts, La Maison Baldwin in St Paul, France, and the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, among other awards and recognitions.

Originally from the Bronx, Shanahan holds an AB in Comparative Literature and Creative Writing from Princeton University; an AM in Comparative Literature and Literary Translation from Dartmouth College; and an MFA in Poetry from NYU's Graduate Creative Writing Program. Former Programs Director of the Poetry Society of America, he has taught literature, creative writing, and language at California College of the Arts (CCA), the Collegio di Milano (Italy), New York University, and Stanford University.

He is currently at work on two collections of poetry, as well as a creative non-fiction project that explores questions of mixed-race identity in the contemporary US; Blackness in the Maghreb; and the transnational dimensions of racial experience.

NEW GRADUATE STUDENTS

Agam Balooni (PhD) graduated with a BE (Hons) from Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani in 2013 and an MA in Linguistics from Jawaharlal Nehru University in 2018. Following this, he joined Ashoka University's PhD program in the Department of English. His research interests include the gothic, in particular its intersection with the history of the market, its fusion with realism in the 19th century, and the significance of its transnational and comparative dimensions.

Kai Chase (PhD) graduated with a BA in English and a minor in Psychology from Cazenovia College in 2016 before attaining their MA in English from the University of Vermont in 2018. While at UVM, they explored interests in postcolonial literature and gravitated toward a geographical focus in Latin America and the Caribbean. Within this context, they consider the construction of nationalisms and the role of imperialism through an intersectional, Queer, and Marxist lens. Their academic work informs and is informed by their role as an activist.

Jose Chavez (CLS/English PhD) just earned his BA in Comparative Literature at Binghamton University, and is entering Northwestern as a doctoral student in the CLS PhD program with English as his home department. His areas of interest include Media Theory, Surveillance Studies, Dataveillance, Electronic Literature, Video Game Studies, Digital Humanities, Film Theory, Cultural Studies, Critical Theory, Racial Bias in Policing, Psychoanalysis, and Neoliberalism.

Michaela Corning-Myers (PhD) graduated from Ohio State University with a BA in English Literature and a second BA in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. During her undergraduate studies, Corning-Myers composed a senior thesis entitled "The Transformations of Girls and Wives in Emily Dickinson's Poems" which closely interrogates the relationships women and girls hold with patriarchal figures in Dickinson's poems. Her current research interests center within 19th-century American literature, and include the representation of economic institutions in poetry and prose written by women, the narratives of immigrants and asylum-seekers, and the representation of these narratives in popular media.

Samantha English (PhD) grew up in Chicago. She graduated from Wellesley College in May 2019 with a BA in English. Her honors thesis considered the ways in which Victorian novelists confront patriarchal poetic traditions, looking

particularly at subversive avian images in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Samantha's current research interests lie in what she calls the "figurative landscapes" of nineteenth-century literature by or about women and concern the intersection of gender and sexuality studies with different forms of cultural studies, such as animality studies and the history of science.

Eliza Feero (PhD) is from Buffalo, New York, and graduated from Brown University in 2018 with a BA in Comparative Literature (English and Arabic). Her primary interests are in medieval studies, with a focus on manuscript studies, queer studies, and digital humanities. She is currently particularly interested in questions of textual afterlife, or how a story/text is reworked/retold to address new audiences, cultures, or periods, as well as how audiences interact with and rework a text, both physically and intellectually.

Allison Gibeily (PhD) studied English and Creative Writing at the University of Maryland: College Park as an undergrad. After earning her BA in 2013, she taught at an international school in Dubai before returning to the U.S. to teach high school English for three years. She finished her MA at UMD, where she studies science and medicine in eighteenth-century literature. She is particularly interested in the exchange of scientific knowledge between England, the Levant, and the Ottoman empire, as well as representations of artisanal scientific practices in British travel literature from the period.

Chris Lombardo (MFA+MA – Fiction) graduated from Cornell University in 2018 with a BA in English Literature and Physics. His honors thesis investigated representations of trauma in video game narratives, viewed mainly through the question of endings and structured repetition in cyclical stories. His fiction also revolves around the nature of endings large and small, while drawing from a range of interests in subjects like ecology, quantum mechanics, and astronomy. He was born and raised just outside Philadelphia, and, if you're curious, he can teach you what a jaw is.

Govind Narayan (PhD) graduated from Ashoka University in 2018 with a BA degree and postgraduate diploma in English Literature. His postgraduate thesis titled "Heterotopias of Value" explores the movement of various commodities across spaces in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* to highlight spatial aspects of evaluation and

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DEGREES COMPLETED

Arif Camoglu (CLS, Ph.D.)

Spectral Empire: Anglo-Ottoman Poetics of Sovereignty

Sara Černe (Ph.D.)

American Sediments: Race and the Environment in Literature along the Mississippi after Twain

Noah Chaskin (Ph.D.)

Queer Correspondence: Form and Femininity in the Long Eighteenth Century

Bonnie Etherington (Ph.D.)

One Salt Water: Writing the Pacific Ocean in Contemporary Indigenous Protest Literatures

Maziyar Faridi (CLS, Ph.D.)

On an Aporotic Poetics of Relation: Translation, Difference and Identity in Modern Poetry and New Wave Cinema of Iran (1920s-1970s)

Mohwanah Fetus (Ph.D.)

Geographies of Memory and Pleasure in 20th/21st Century Black Literatures

Eric Hengstebeck (Ph.D.)

Hypnaesthesia: The Perception of Sleep in Brown, Poe, and Melville

Elliott Kingston (M.A.)

The False Promise of Making it in America: Assimilation in "American Pastoral" and "Native Speaker"

Delali Kumavie (Ph.D.)

Dreams of Flight: Literary Mapping of Black Geographies through the Air, Airplane, and Airport

Marjan Mohammadi (CLS, Dual Ph.D. between Northwestern and Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3)

Beyond Redemption: The Crisis of Sovereignty and The Return of Melancholy

Antonio Papanikolas (Ph.D.)

Sounds Political: Listening to African American Literature, 1845-1903

Sarah Wilson (Ph.D.)

Beyond Consolation: The Ethics and Politics of Sorrow in Late Medieval England

JOB PLACEMENT

Anne Boemler (PhD 2019) - Upper School English Teacher at St. Paul Academy and Summit School

Corrine Collins (PhD 2019) – Assistant Professor at the University of Southern California

Bonnie Etherington (PhD 2020) – Environmental Futures Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Colorado: Boulder; Assistant Professor at the University of the South Pacific (beginning 2021)

Maziyar Faridi (PhD 2020, CLS) – Assistant Professor at Clemson University

Ean High (PhD 2019) – Assistant Professor at the University of Tennessee: Martin

Delali Kumavie (PhD 2020) – Postdoctoral Fellow in the Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard University; Assistant Professor at Syracuse University (beginning 2021)

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FACULTY NEWS

John Alba Cutler was awarded national fellowships from the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University and the American Council of Learned Societies for 2020-21 to support the development of his book manuscript, *Latinx Modernism and the Spirit of Latinoamericanismo*. He was an invited speaker at the Trowbridge Initiative in American Cultures at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and completed a term as the interim director of the Latina and Latino Studies Program at Northwestern.

Eula Biss' new book *Having and Being Had* was released this September. Excerpts can be found online in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, and the *Paris Review*, along with interviews in the *Nation*, *Jezebel*, *On the Media*, and *All Things Considered*. Biss was profiled in the *Chicago Tribune* and the book was reviewed by the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and elsewhere. Biss appeared in online conversations this fall with Maggie Nelson, Claudia Rankine, Aleksandar Hemon, Cathy Park Hong, and Sarah Broom.

Her fellowship with the American Library in Paris for spring 2021 is currently on hold, but the library hosted an online discussion of her work. "Collector's Item," her collaboration with the Mexican

filmmaker Dalia Huerta Cano, was selected for this year's ZEBRA Poetry Film Festival and the Black Canvas Contemporary Film Festival, among other festivals. "Coming and Going," another collaboration with Dalia Huerta Cano, debuted at the Lit & Luz Festival in Chicago. Biss wrote an introduction to the new edition of Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* that will be published this coming winter and she will be editing a folio themed on "ownership" for the *Yale Review*.

She is currently at work on a new collection of essays about ownership from medieval England to contemporary South Africa, with excellent research assistance from graduate students Michelle Lee and Nina Coomes.

Brian Bouldrey's 2003 *Boom Economy* and his 2005 *Love, the Magician* have been brought back into print in the US and Canada by ReQueered Tales, as classics in the genre.

Tracy C. Davis is spending this year as a Kaplan Faculty Fellow, writing a book about 19th-century transnational liberal activists. *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance Historiography*, edited with Peter W. Marx, came out this fall. The Summer Institute in Cologne [sic!] is being reconstituted as [six!], a consortium of six institutions, including Northwestern and

Cologne along with JNU (Delhi), Ghana, Tel Aviv, and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. This year, [six!] will convene as a virtual workshop on festivals (November-May), supported in part by a Buffett Institute Global Campus Collaborative Grant.

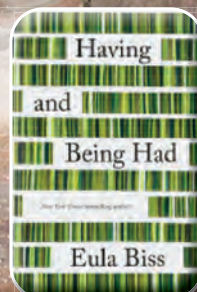
She is involved in two new public-facing online projects: this summer, the [Research in Theatre and Performance](https://www.r18collective.org/) initiative created forums for graduate students and contingent faculty working on dissertations, essays, and books to develop new mentoring relationships; and the R/18 Collective (<https://www.r18collective.org/>), which aims to forge partnerships between scholars and theatre makers and reactivate the repertoire of the long 18th century, launched a site featuring resources for the study of performance in this period.

Sheila Donohue was promoted to the rank of Professor of Instruction.

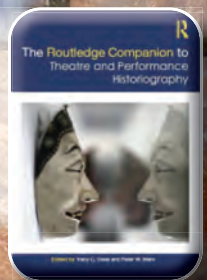
Christine Froula published "Unwriting *The Waves*," in *Genesis and Revision in the Work of Modern British and Irish Writers*, ed. Bloom and Rovera, and "Goldie's 'War and Peace': Marinetti Meets Aristophanes and Beethoven in Bloomsbury," in *Virginia Woolf, Europe, and Peace: vol. 1, Transnational Circulations*, ed. Mildeberg. She also wrote an experimental short story, "The Words."

FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

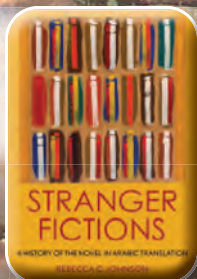
Eula Biss
Having and Being Had
Riverhead Books 2020



Tracy C. Davis
ed. with Peter W. Marx
The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance Historiography
Routledge 2020



Rebecca Johnson
Stranger Fictions: A History of the Novel in Arabic Translation
Cornell University Press 2021



Susan Manning
ed. with Janice Ross and Rebecca Schneider
Futures of Dance Studies
University of Wisconsin Press 2020



Carl Smith
Chicago's Great Fire: The Destruction and Resurrection of an Iconic American City
Atlanta Monthly Press 2020



Reginald Gibbons' eleventh book of poems, *Renditions*, will be published in early 2021.

Michelle N. Huang interviewed 2020 National Book Award finalist poet Mei-mei Berssenbrugge alongside choreographer Teddy Yoshikami for the Bay Area poetry journal *Tripwire*. Her articles, "Matériel Culture: The Militourist Aesthetic of Mary McCarthy's Vietnam War Reportage" and "Racial Disintegration: Biomedical Futurity at the Environmental Limit," are forthcoming in *Contemporary Literature* and *American Literature*, respectively.

Lauren M. Jackson has continued writing criticism for *The New Yorker*, where she was made a contributing writer in August; an essay for the October 19th issue of the magazine follows the indomitable star power of Dolly Parton. Her book *White Negroes* (2019) has just been released in paperback and appeared on the longlist for the Museum of African American History's Stone Book Award. She is currently working on a second book of essays, "Back: An American Tale," forthcoming from Amistad Press.

Rebecca Johnson was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor this year. Her book, *Stranger Fictions: A History of the Novel in Arabic Translation* is now at press for an early

2021 release from Cornell University Press. She has also taken a position as Associate Editor of the *Journal of Arabic Literature*. Her other projects include a forthcoming essay in *CL: Comparative Literature*, a co-translated book of poems by the Syrian poet Faraj Bayraqdar, and co-organizing the annual symposium on Arabic literature to be held at Columbia University's campuses in New York and Paris. This year's theme is "Arabic Literary Theory."

Juan Martinez was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor.

Justin Mann attended the Penn State CALS First Book Institute in May, where he workshopped material from his manuscript in progress, "Breaking the World: Blackness and Insecurity after the New World Order." He worked with a cohort of scholars developing first book projects and his work was read by Cynthia Young, Sean Goudie, and Priscilla Wald.

Susan Manning continues to work on a collection of her own essays, titled *Critical Histories of Modern Dance*, while also pursuing editorial projects. A cluster of essays she edited on South African choreographer Nelisiwe Xaba, including her own essay titled "Cross-Viewing between Berlin and Chicago," appeared in the summer 2020 issue of *TDR: A Drama Review*. Also now in print is the coedited anthology, *Futures of Dance Studies*. And she has just launched a new editorial project titled *Dancing on the Third Coast: Chicago Dance Histories*. Manning was recently named the Bergen Evans Professor in the Humanities.

Jeffrey Masten was the Alice F. Holmes Summer Institute for Literature Distinguished Visiting Scholar at University of Kansas this past summer, where he led a series of virtual graduate seminars on early modern sexualities. In the journal *GLQ* earlier this year, his book *Queer Philologies* was reviewed with two others (<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/746105/pdf>) as "a high-water mark in early modern

sexuality studies [that] will influence early modern queer studies for years to come." He was a guest commentator in the Shakespeare Association seminar "New Philologies" in April. He will be lecturing "at" the University of Padua's English and American Studies seminar on Marlowe and Shakespeare's "Queer Futures" in November.

Barbara Newman stayed home and cursed the plague like everyone else, bidding a sad farewell to speaking engagements in Utah, Washington D.C., Edinburgh, Oxford, and Prague. Though not a fan of Zoom, she discovered that it's not too bad for a tiny medieval Latin class, though she dreads more arduous teaching efforts in the winter. Her book

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Betsy Erkkila
*The Whitman Revolution: Sex,
Poetry, and Politics*
University of Iowa Press 2020



Natasha Trethewey
*Memorial Drive: A Daughter's
Memoir*
Ecco 2020



GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

Sara Černe (PhD 2020) and **Katherine Scharfenberg** (5th year) both presented papers as part of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute's Spring quarter "Emerging Scholars" series. Their papers were titled, respectively, "The Mississippi River in Native American Poetry" and "Telling Territory: Thomas Jefferson, Hendrick Aupaumut, and a Mohican Land Claim in Indiana."

In October of 2019, **Jayme Collins** (6th year PhD) attended the Voices of Contemporary Art (VoCA) Artist Interview Workshop held at the Glenstone Museum in Maryland, working on best practices for interviews alongside art historians, oral history experts, and museum professionals. More recently, Jayme spent two of what should've been four weeks in March at the Beinecke Library, a research trip curtailed by the onset of the pandemic. Jayme's visit was being supported by one of the Beinecke's Visiting Graduate Student Fellowships, and her time was spent looking through Simon Cutts' "Constructed Archive" and the papers of Erica Van Horne.

Accepted as a Tin House Scholar, **Nina Li Coomes** (2nd year MFA+MA) participated in the 2020 Tin House Winter Nonfiction Workshop in Newport, Oregon, working with novelist and essayist Esmé Weijun Wang. Additionally, her essay, "Notes on Citizenship," was included as a Notable Essay in Best American Travel Writing 2020.

In the Fall of 2019, **Maria Dikcis** (7th year PhD) joined the Graduate Student Advisory Committee of the Northwestern Prison Education Program (NPEP). She is currently developing educational programming for incarcerated students as Director of the Cook County Jail Partnership. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, NPEP received over \$30,000 through local fundraising campaigns to purchase soap, hand sanitizer, surgical face masks, and nitrile gloves for incarcerated men and women at Stateville Correctional Center, Logan Correctional Center, and Cook County Jail.

Over the course of the 2019-20 academic year, Maria also co-facilitated a Critical Prison Studies Reading Group with support from the Program in Critical Theory. The group brought together graduate students, undergraduates, and faculty from departments across the humanities, social sciences, and School of Communication to discuss foundational texts on the history of mass incarceration in the United States, as well as prison abolition movements and strategies.

Maria was named a 2020 Career Development Boot Camp Fellow by the Modern Language Association. She received a grant to attend the MLA Annual Convention in Seattle, Washington where

she participated in a series of workshops, lectures, and site visits exploring the role of the humanities within academia and throughout the arts and cultural sector. Maria's article "Gertrude Stein Learns to Code: Brian Kim Stefans' *Kluge: A Meditation* and the Corruptibility of Modernist Form" is forthcoming in *ASAP/Journal*.

Menglu Gao (7th year, CLS) was the recipient of the 2019 Midwest Victorian Studies Walter L. Arnstein Prize for Dissertation Research

Paulina Jones-Torregrosa's (3rd year PhD) article, "I Am Always Met at the River: Revisiting *This Bridge Called My Back*," has been accepted for publication in a special edition of *Feminist Studies*. Her work will be part of a fortieth anniversary retrospective on *This Bridge Called My Back* and *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave*, forthcoming in summer 2021.

Nina Moon (6th year PhD) did a presentation for Osher Lifelong Learning Institute in September, entitled "Traveling Women in the Eighteenth Century."

Katherine Scharfenberg is one of the 2020-21 fellows in the Kaplan Humanities Institute's Franke Fellowship Program.

In 2020, **Serena Simpson** (3rd year MFA+MA) won the Disquiet International Literary Prize in Nonfiction for her essay "On Choosing," which was published in *Ninth Letter* literary magazine. The prize also included full tuition to attend the 2020 Disquiet conference in Lisbon, an event that was one of the many victims to the pandemic and will hopefully be rescheduled for 2021. Serena was also named a nonfiction scholar for the 2020 Sewanee Writers Conference - another which has been rescheduled tentatively to 2021.

JOB PLACEMENT continued from page 4

Marjan Mohammadi (PhD 2020, CLS) – Assistant Professor at Bilkant University in Turkey

Sarah Mason (6th year PhD) - Associate Academic Advisor for the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas: Austin

Scott Newman (PhD 2020, CLS) – post-doc at UCLA

Todd Nordgren (PhD 2018) – Director of LGBTQ Services & Adjunct Professor of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Dickinson College

Serena Simpson (2nd MFA+MA) - Communications Specialist with Northwestern University Information Technology

Simone Waller (PhD 2019) – Assistant Professor at Reed University

Harrington Weihl (7th-year PhD) – Program Assistant in the Northwestern University Cook Family Writing Program

Sarah Wilson (PhD 2020) - Coordinator for Adult Seminars and Public Program at the Newberry Library

NEW GRADUATE STUDENTS continued from page 4

the uncanny presence of dynamic metonymies in the deceptively linear determination of exchange value. Since his graduation, Govind has worked as a teaching fellow at Ashoka University and a professional musician in New Delhi and Mumbai. His current research interests include Victorian literature, material culture, and environmental humanities.

Suzanne Scanlon (MFA+MA – Fiction) is from Chicago. She is the author of *Promising Young Women* (Dorothy, 2012), and *Her 37th Year, an Index* (Noemi, 2015). She teaches in the School of the Art Institute Chicago and elsewhere.

Katana Smith (MFA+MA – Poetry) is originally from Aurora, Colorado. This past Spring, she received a BA in Creative Writing from Knox College, where she was a McNair Scholar. In her research and creative work, she is interested in race as it is expressed through character and symbol.

Kira Tucker (MFA+MA – Poetry) Kira Tucker is a poet and visual artist from Memphis, Tennessee. Kira recently graduated magna cum laude from Emory University, earning her B.A. in English and Creative Writing with a minor in Linguistics. Her latest projects include the completion of her inaugural poetry collection, *Verge*, as well as her Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship senior thesis, “Poems without a Hero: An Analysis of Lifemaking amid Absurdity in the Poetry of Anna Akhmatova.” She was recently chosen by Tina Chang as the winner of the Agnes Scott College Writers’ Festival Contest in poetry. She was also honored with the Maya Angelou Literary Arts Award from the Emory NAACP. Kira was named the 2020 Lightkeeper of

Emory and inducted into the 100 Senior Honorary for her various achievements in academics, arts, and service.

S. Yarberry (PhD) is a trans poet and writer. They graduated from Washington University in St. Louis with an MFA in Poetry, where they served as the Junior Teaching Fellow in Poetry. S. also has a BA in English literature from Lewis & Clark College. In the simplest of terms, their research interests are all things (William) Blake. In more strenuous of terms their research interests include the ways in which the poetry of William Blake has affected, and is affecting, contemporary prosody, trans poetry & poetics, and, more generally, 21st-century poetry and prosody. Their poems can be found in *Tin House*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Sixth Finch*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boiler*, among others. Their other writings can be found in *Blake/ An Illustrated Quarterly* and *Bomb Magazine*.

Christopher Herbert Professor Emeritus

Thoughts on Professor Herbert's retirement

From 1969 to 2020, Christopher Herbert, the Chester Tripp Professor of the Humanities, served Northwestern as an exemplary scholar, teacher, and departmental and college citizen. The winner of two WCAS Outstanding Teaching Awards, Herbert introduced legions of undergraduates and graduate students to the richness of Victorian literature; his course on Dickens became a signature. He served as Chair of English and as Associate Dean of the Humanities in the Weinberg Dean's Office. The recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Council of Learned Societies, Herbert published five books in his field: *Trollope and Comic Pleasure* (Chicago, 1987), *Culture and Anomie: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1991), *Victorian Relativity: Radical Thought and Scientific Discovery* (Chicago, 2001), *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Princeton, 2007), and *Evangelical Gothic: The English Novel and the Religious War on Virtue from Wesley to Dracula* (Virginia, 2019).

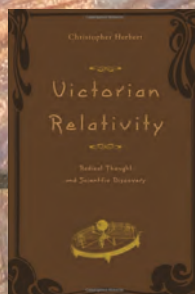
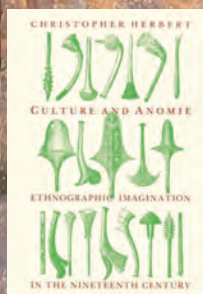
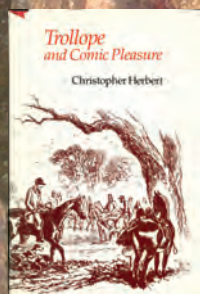
Former students reflected on how Chris made the texts he taught relevant and engaging. Chris Buczinsky remembered how Chris's class on Clifford Geertz taught him to "see reading as much larger than the books I so desperately wanted to understand." Brian Bouldrey remembers Chris's Dickens class as "the best literature class I ever took" and recalls how Chris brought the text alive: "He'd do the police in different voices! He made me cry in class with his dramatic reading."

Other students attest to Chris's scholarly brilliance. Bradley Deane admits feeling daunted by his own doctoral research after reading Chris' article on *Pickwick Paper* and harboring "a deep envy for his prose. It's one thing to have written so many timely and influential books in our field, but it's quite another to have done all that with such grace and panache." Deanna Kreisel notes how Chris "was a huge part of the feeling of rigorous support and generous intellectual engagement I was lucky enough to have as a graduate student. He managed... to combine great kindness and great skepticism when warranted."



Chris's kindness and generosity also surfaced to the forefront of colleagues' and students' recollections. Barbara Newman recalls him driving her to O'Hare after interviewing at Northwestern, "a service well beyond the call of duty." Bradley Deane remains grateful for Chris's "generosity, patience, and wisdom...during the years he helped me with my dissertation." Some students have even noted how they internalized Chris's kindness in their own lives: Chris Buczinsky remembers seeing Chris in conversation with his son and finding it a "revelation... I said to myself: 'Someday, if I ever have a son, I want to talk to him like that.'"

Chris's humanity not only lingered with his students but shaped the department as a whole. Barbara Newman remembers Chris serving as Chair at the height of the Culture Wars and how his steady presence helped the department come through those difficult years with a heightened sense of collegiality and purpose.



FACULTY NEWS continued from page 7

on *The Permeable Self: Five Medieval Relationships* is finally in press at Penn, and *The Works of Richard Methley* (a translation of the last great English mystic before the Reformation) will be published by Liturgical Press in January. To pass the tedious hours, she has taken on lots of peer review and given three Hildegard webinars. Her major achievement for the year, however, has been to remain alive and moderately sane (though by the time you read this, the election will be over so that may have changed). She also has a cheery new slogan: “Hang in there, 1348 was worse!”

Regina Schwartz’s *On Sacramental Poetics*, which she co-edited with Patrick McGrath, is now in production at Notre Dame Press. She gave a keynote at a conference on Migration at the University of Cambridge in September 2019, “Loving Justice” and Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury was the respondent. An online interdisciplinary symposium on her 2016 book *Loving Justice, Living Shakespeare* is at <https://syndicate.network/symposia/literature/loving-justice-living-shakespeare/>

Laurie Shannon was named a Visiting Fellow at the Warburg Institute at the School of Advanced Study (University of London) for 2019-20. Last fall, she gave lectures on Shakespeare at the Warburg and the Globe Theatre; her interrupted fellowship will resume a later date. An essay, “*King Lear* with Sheep,” will be out soon in the *Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Animals*. Together with Sally Wainwright and others, this summer Shannon co-founded The Anne Lister Society, an association to foster research on the 19th-century Yorkshire lesbian, diarist, and polymath.

Helen Thompson has received fellowship support for the 2020–21 academic year from the Alice Kaplan Humanities Institute to pursue her third book project, provisionally entitled, “Transmuting Forms: Alchemical Secrets and British Literary Modernity, 1660–1740.” She is enormously grateful for this opportunity to investigate anti-mimetic representation in early modern chymical science and an emergent mode of oppositional political critique, the coded secret history. For the 2021–22 academic year, Thompson has been invited to pursue her project with a residential fellowship group (topic: “Sensing the Truth: Changing Conceptions of the Perceptual in Early Modern and Enlightenment Europe”) at the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies (IIAS) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. COVID-19 permitting, she will join the group at IIAS from January through May 2022. She recently published an article related to her new project, “Pernicious Science: Artifice and the Form of Narrative in Eliza Haywood’s Secret Histories,” *Restoration* 44: 1 (Spring 2020).

Natasha Trethewey’s new book, *Memorial Drive: A Daughter’s Memoir*, a finalist for the Carnegie Medal and optioned by Sony Pictures Television for development as a drama series, was

released in late July with reviews in such outlets as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *The New Yorker*, along with *Time Magazine* listing it as one of their 100 must-read books of 2020. *Memorial Drive* is also an instant *New York Times* Bestseller, Notable Book, and Editor’s Choice. It’s also included on NPR’s list of best books in 2020, and in the ten best books of the year by the *Washington Post*. Natasha has also been awarded the 2020 biennial Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry for lifetime achievement in poetry.

Tristram Wolff is enjoying a year-long fellowship from the Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities during the 2020-21 academic year.

This year, **Wendy Wall** and her co-creator of *The Pulter Project: Poet in the Making* (<http://pulterproject.northwestern.edu/>) completed editions of all 120 of Hester Pulter’s poems (Pulter is a recently discovered 17th century religious, political, and scientific writer). The project continues to accrete materials and evolve, as scholars submit contrasting editions. Wendy received a grant for a symposium, “Teaching with *The Pulter Project*,” from Alumnae Association, which Covid delayed; this meeting will gather scholars across the world to develop a pedagogical wing for the site. Wendy presented at The Chicago Colloquium for Digital Humanities and Computer Science, and will be working on a book provisionally titled “Revolution, Resurrection, Dissolution: Hester Pulter Reimagines the Early Modern World” when she is the Fletcher Jones Foundation Distinguished Fellow at the Huntington Library in 2021-22 (She was supposed to be at the Huntington this year, but the pandemic interfered, alas!). And she continues to do public-facing work: in addition to teaching a course for high school teachers at the Newberry Library, “*The Merchant of Venice: Staging Gender, Class, Sexuality, Race*,” Wendy offered a course at Stateville prison, along with Katie Blankenau, on contemporary novels. Students read works by Jesmyn Ward, Tommy Orange, Marilynne Robinson, Justin Torres, Chang-Rae Lee and others, so quite a change from early modern studies!

Rachel Jamison Webster’s book, *The Sea Came Up & Drowned* was published by Raw Books in March 2020. The book combines visual collages and erasure poems “mined” from John McPhee’s book on geology, *Annals of the Former World*, as it meditates on mining, climate change and human estrangement from the living earth. Rachel’s essay, “History is Another Word for Trauma,” was featured in the Yale Review’s *Pandemic Files* in May 2020, and will be published in the Yale UP *Pandemic Files Anthology* in January 2021. Her essay, “We Are Not All Orphans,” about DNA reveal videos, Disney mythology and the narrative reparations occurring through ancestral research, was published by Parhelion in Summer 2020. She is at work on a book of creative nonfiction that combines ancestral, colonial and early U.S. history.

ALUMNI NEWS

Mary K Bercaw Edwards (Ph.D. 1984) is currently an Associate Professor of English and the Director of Maritime Studies at the University of Connecticut, also serving as one of the editors of the international journal *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies*. She's also a U.S. Coast Guard-licensed captain with 58,000 miles at sea, all under sail.

Sarah Blackwood (Ph.D. 2009) is Associate Professor of English at Pace University, NYC, where she has just begun a (tumultuous!) year as chair of the department. She recently wrote the introduction to a new Penguin Classics edition of Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*, published in November 2019, which will also be published as a collectible hardcover in the Penguin Vitae series in Fall 2020. She writes cultural criticism on photography, women's art cultures, and children's books regularly for *The New Yorker*, and is beginning a new trade nonfiction project on mid-twentieth-century children's book authors and editors, including Peggy Parish, Louise Fitzhugh, Virginia Hamilton, June Jordan, and Ursula Nordstrom. Progress on everything is miniscule with small children still at home most of the time from their NYC public school, but hope remains!

Katy Chiles (Ph.D. 2008) has been elected Chair of the Advisory Council of the American Literature Society and now holds the Carroll Distinguished Teaching Professorship in the University of Tennessee English Department.

Melissa Daniels-Rauterkus (Ph.D. 2012) is starting an edition of Sutton Griggs's *Overshadowed* with fellow alum **Greg Laski** (Ph.D. 2012)

This year, **Joanne Diaz** (Ph.D. 2008) was promoted to the

rank of Full Professor at Illinois Wesleyan University. She is the editor of *Literature: A Portable Anthology*, fifth edition (Bedford/St. Martins, 2021), and with **Abram Van Engen** (Ph.D. 2010), she is the co-host of a new podcast called Poetry for All (<https://poetryforall.fireside.fm/>). You can subscribe via iTunes or wherever else you like find your favorite podcasts.

Becky Fall (Ph.D. 2016) continues her work at the Newberry Library's Center for Renaissance Studies, where she ran both a Virtual Research Methods Workshop titled "How to Go Public with Premodern Studies" (September 2020) and a Virtual Professional Development Seminar on Grant Writing (August). Through April and May, she was the organizer/director of the Premodern Writing Support Network, and she presented at the Academic Professionalization Seminar: "Careers Beyond the University" at UCLA in May. In April, Becky was invited to give a talk titled "Public Shakespeares and New Media: Critical Approaches" at the Shakespeare Association of America. In 2021, two books including chapters by her will be published; "Sense/Nonsense: Sense and Discontent in *The Second Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*," in *Shakespeare/Text*, and "'The Best Fooling': *Every Man Out of His Humour*, *Twelfth Night*, and Early Modern English Nonsense Games," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Nonsense*.

Carissa Harris (Ph.D. 2012) won the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship's Biennial prize for Best First Book of Medieval Feminist Scholarship for her 2018 monograph, *Obscene Pedagogies: Transgressive Talk and Sexual Education in Late Medieval Britain*. She is currently writing her second book as a 2020-21 member of Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study.

ALUMNI PUBLICATIONS

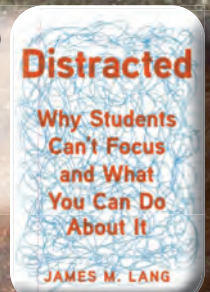
Bill Buege (MA 1970)
In Their Time
Burlesque Press, LLC
(May 7, 2020)



Melissa Daniel-Rauterkus's
(PhD 2012)
Afro-Realisms and the Romances of Race: Rethinking Blackness in the African American Novel,
Louisiana State University Press
(April 15, 2020)



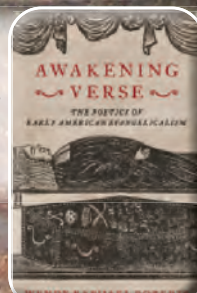
James M Lang (PhD 1997)
Distracted: Why Students Can't Focus and What You Can Do About It
Basic Books
(October 20, 2020)



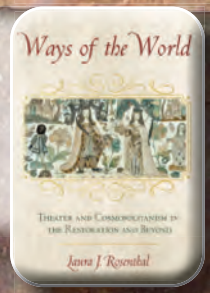
Jennifer Michael
(PhD 1996)
Let Me Let Go
Finishing Line Press
(January 10, 2020)



Wendy Roberts (PhD 2012)
Awakening Verse: The Poetics of Early American Evangelicalism
Oxford University Press
(October 1, 2020)



Laura Rosenthal (PhD 1990)
Ways of the World: Theater and Cosmopolitanism in the Restoration and Beyond
Cornell University Press
(November 15, 2020)



Heidi Kim (Ph.D. 2010) has been appointed the inaugural director of the newly established Asian American Center at UNC Chapel Hill. Her second book, *Illegal Immigrants/Model Minorities: The Cold War of Chinese American Narrative*, is due out from Temple University Press in March 2021.

Jeff Knight (Ph.D. 2009) is taking over the editorship of *Modern Language Quarterly* in July 2021, and is also finishing a book for Bloomsbury Publishing titled *Shakespeare on the Page: Texts, Books and Readers*, anticipated out in 2023.

Greg Laski (Ph.D. 2012) recently published “Reconstructing Revenge: Race and Justice after the Civil War” in *American Literature*. The essay, which is part of a new book project on the Reconstruction era, was honored with two national prizes: the 1921 Prize, awarded by the American Literature Society, and the Norman Foerster Prize, given to the best essay published annually in *American Literature*. Greg will be back in Chicago as a Newberry Library long-term fellow in 2021-22.

Janaka Bowman Lewis (Ph.D. 2009) is still an Associate Professor of English at UNC Charlotte, and Director of Women’s and Gender Studies. She is also serving as Interim Director of the Center for the Study of the New South this year. In 2020 she also published two new/new-ish children’s books; *Brown All Over* (republished with discussion) and *Dr. King is Tired, Too!* (co-authored). Janaka was also named the recipient of the Bonnie Cone Early Career Professorship in Teaching at UNC Charlotte (2019-2021) and was recently named one of *Charlotte Business Journal’s* 2020 “40 Under 40” chosen for leadership and civic engagement in the city of Charlotte.

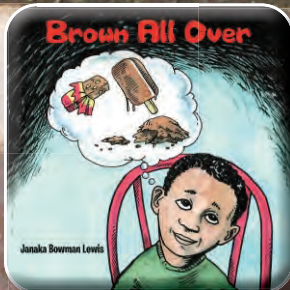
John Edward Martin (Ph.D. 2006) was recently promoted to Associate Librarian at the University of North Texas, where he is the Scholarly Communication Librarian. He’s been busy since March helping faculty and students transition to online courses and research during the COVID-19 pandemic, developing resources for scholarly publishing and digital scholarship projects, and continuing his work with the Digital Frontiers organization and Comics Studies@UNT. Both groups, in collaboration with comics studies communities at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and Michigan State University, recently hosted the [Flyover Comics Symposium](#). He also recently delivered a paper on “Comics as Scholarly Communication” at the Michigan State University Comics Forum, and hosted a monthly virtual chat on “Poe and Comics” for the Poe Studies Association.

Josh Smith (Ph.D. 2011) is one of the editors of *A Companion to Geoffrey of Monmouth*, an open-source volume that brings together scholars from a range of disciplines to provide an updated scholarly introduction to all aspects of Geoffrey’s work. <https://brill.com/view/title/39588>

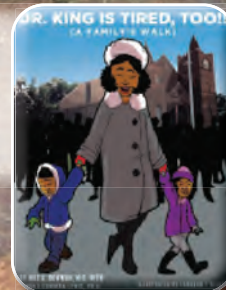
Jade Werner (Ph.D. 2014) was promoted in July of 2020 to Associate Professor of English at Wheaton College in Massachusetts.

Bill West (Ph.D. 1966), professor emeritus in English from Loyola University of Chicago, has been given the 2019 Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award by *Who’s Who in America*.

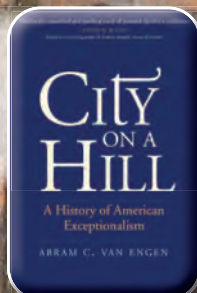
Janaka Bowman Lewis (PhD 2009)
Brown All Over
republished w/discussion
AuthorHouse (2020)



Janaka Bowman Lewis (PhD 2009)
co-authored with Mac Bowman
Dr. King is Tired, Too!: A Family's Walk
Book Vine Press
(September 4, 2020)



Abram Van Engen (PhD 2010)
City on a Hill: A History of American Exceptionalism
Yale University Press
(February 25, 2020)



Jade Werner (PhD 2014)
Missionary Cosmopolitanism in Nineteenth-Century British Literature
Ohio State University Press
(June 1, 2020)



GRADUATE PAPERS & CONFERENCES

English Graduate Student Organization's 2019-20 Colloquium Series

FALL

Natalie Rose Richardson (3rd year MFA+MA) "A Partial History of Loving: Writing into a Historical Archive"

Nina Moon (6th year PhD) "Many times wonderful and strange: Utopian Fantasies, Imperial Longings, and Narrative Possibility in *The Female American*"

WINTER

Rishika Batra (3rd year MFA+MA) "The Whistling Fissure: Poetry & Possibility"

Erica Hughes (3rd year MFA+MA) *Our Past Bowed Like the Branches of a Madrone Tree*: A Poetry Reading

2019-20 CONFERENCES

OCTOBER 2019

[Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present
11th Annual Conference](#)
University of Maryland: College Park

Matthew Beeber (7th year PhD) "The Art of Coalition"

[North American Victorian Studies Association](#)
Columbus, OH

Clay Cogswell (7th year PhD) "What Belonged to Storm?: The Allegorical Limits of Realist Narration in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*"

NOVEMBER

[Midwest Modern Language Association Convention](#)
Chicago, IL -

Maria Dikcis (7th year PhD) "Down and Dirty: Mimeography and DIY Activism of the Underground Press Revolution" (presenter); "Doggelgängers, the Internet, and Pedagogy" (panel chair)

[American Studies Association Annual Meeting](#)
Honolulu, HI

Maria Dikcis (7th year PhD) "In Print, Out of Bounds: Penal Press Poetry and the "Question" of Creative Freedom"

JANUARY 2020

[Modern Language Association](#)
Seattle, WA

Jayne Collins (6th year PhD) "Archival Ecology: Jen Bervin's *Silke Poems* (2017)"

Sara Černe (PhD 2020) "Salvage the Field: Environmental Justice in Kiese Laymon's *Long Division* and Southern Studies in National Discourse"

Bonnie Etherington (PhD 2020) Poetic Text(ile)s Material Genealogies and Trans-Pacific Writing in the Work of Penina Ava Taesali and Emelighter Kihleng

MAY

[Cultural Studies Association Conference](#)
Conference conducted via synchronous virtual meetings

Maria Dikcis (7th year PhD) Anti-Portraits of Ink and Earth: Kara Walker's Silhouettes and Ana Mendieta's Siluetas

We are grateful to everyone who has donated to the department over the years. It is with your continued support that we are able to offer our graduate students the many opportunities for research and professionalization funding available to them.

We list here, with our most sincere thanks, our valued donors from this past year.

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Musings

2020 Newsletter

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Please send thoughts and news to

Musings

Department of English

1897 Sheridan Road

University Hall 215

Evanston, IL 60208

grad-english@northwestern.edu

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