

UC DAVIS DEPARTMENT OF

# ENGLISH

## NEWSLETTER

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### FROM THE CHAIR

Elizabeth Carolyn Miller

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Students:

My first year as Department Chair is now careening to a close, and it was, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, a year crowded with incident. It has also been a year crowded with pleasures, for while I have been a member of the department since 2008, I find myself newly amazed by the colleagues, students, and staff who make this department such a wonderful place to work and to learn. For me, the learning curve was particularly steep this past year, and serving as Chair has taught me a great deal about how our department and university function. One of the lessons I've learned is how much we owe to our wonderful staff at Voorhies Hall. Working with them every day has been one of the pleasures of my new life as Chair, and I would particularly like to thank those with whom I have worked most closely: Lynda Jones, Darla Tafoya, and Mary White. They have been incredibly patient with me as I learned the ropes of the first floor, and I have a new respect for their professional expertise, which helps keep our proverbial trains running on time.

Another pleasure of being Chair has been the opportunity to take an active role in the hiring of new faculty. After several years in which we have been able to do very little hiring, we are lucky to have a bumper crop of three wonderful new scholar-teachers joining us this fall: Tobias Menely, a specialist in eighteenth-century British literature and literature of the environment, currently an assistant professor at Miami University of Ohio; Katie Peterson, a poet, currently professor of the practice of poetry at Tufts University; and Margaret Ronda, a scholar of contemporary poetry and literature of the environment,



currently an assistant professor at Rutgers University. We are tremendously excited to welcome these new colleagues to Voorhies Hall, and you can expect to read more about them in next year's newsletter.

Several members of our faculty deserve thanks for serving in important administrative roles this past year. Professor Lucy Corin has just finished her first year as Director of Creative Writing, a year during which she took on some major projects to innovate our creative writing program. Professor Matthew Stratton has just finished his first year as Director of Undergraduate Studies, and will continue his work as an advocate for undergraduate education next year. Finally, Professor John Marx is nearing the end of his two-year term as Director of Graduate Studies, and we are grateful for his hard work on behalf of our graduate students. Come fall, John will be taking a much-deserved sabbatical, leaving the graduate program in the capable hands of Professor Mark Jerng, who will begin a two-year term in this post.

Many of our faculty members have received special recognition for their scholarship and teaching during the last year. I am proud to say that Professor Margaret Ferguson was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences as part of an illustrious class of 2014 inductees that includes Al Pacino and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. She joins two emeriti faculty members who have received this major honor in the past: Sandra Gilbert and Gary Snyder. Professor Ferguson is also serving this year as President of the Modern Language Association, the largest scholarly organization devoted to the study of literature and language, which officially makes her the busiest woman in the business (see page 8).

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Professor Seeta Chaganti has been awarded a Distinguished Teaching Award for Undergraduate Teaching; Professor Desirée Martín's book *Borderland Saints: Secular Sanctity in Chicano/a and Mexican Culture* has been awarded the 2013 Outstanding Book Award from the Latin American Studies Association; Professor Danielle Heard was awarded a UC Davis Hellman Fellowship for 2014-15; and Professor Scott Simmon, our former chair, received a 2013 Film Heritage Award from the National Society of Film Critics for his recent DVD collection, *American Treasures from the New Zealand Film Archive*. Finally, Professor Yiyun Li was awarded the Benjamin H. Danks award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, an award to honor "an exceptional young writer" (see page 16).

We had a remarkable group of undergraduate majors this year, too. One of our graduating seniors, Laurel Carney, received the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research for her project "Plead the Belly: Stories of Crime, Death, and Pregnancy in Early Modern

England and Today," written under the direction of Professors Fran Dolan and Lynn Freed. Annika Cunningham, another English major, received Honorable Mention for her project, "Chaucer's Chessboard: Reading Spaces in *The Book of the Duchess*," written under the direction of Professor Seeta Chaganti (see page 24). To have two English majors win top honors in this campus-wide competition has been thrilling! I am pleased to announce as well that Laurel Carney and Annika Cunningham were joint winners of the English Department's Lois Ann Lattin Rosenberg Outstanding Graduating Senior Award, which was announced at our year-end award ceremony on June 4<sup>th</sup>.

Let me close by thanking our two wonderful editors for this newsletter, Ph.D. candidates Tobias Wilson-Bates and Sarah Haertig. Please enjoy the fruits of their labor!

Cordially, Liz Miller

## DEPARTMENT CONFERENCES

### THE CONTOURS OF ALGORITHMIC LIFE

This year, the Mellon Research Initiative in Digital Cultures at UC Davis—directed by Colin Milburn of English and Kriss Ravetto of Cinema and Technocultural Studies—sponsored The Contours of Algorithmic Life (an algorithm is a step-by-step procedure for solving a problem or accomplishing some end). Organized by a group of graduate students including Josef Nguyen, Tanner Jupin, and Marty Weis, the conference brought together an interdisciplinary group of scholars from across the nation to discuss the increasingly important role algorithms play in shaping our world. The conference explored both the specific uses of algorithms and algorithmic culture more broadly, including topics such as: gamification, the computational self, data mining and visualization, and surveillance. It featured keynote presentations from Tom Boellstorff (UCI), Jeff Burke (UCLA), and John Bischoff (Mills).

### *Western Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies*

On February 14-15, UCD hosted the annual meeting of the Western Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (WSECS). Professors



Alessa Johns and Julia Simon (French), along with the graduate students of the Eighteenth-Century Research Cluster, organized the meeting's conference around the theme, "Love and Affect in the Long Eighteenth Century." Over three dozen faculty and students from various disciplines and across the

western states presented papers, including several students from our English department. Dr. Barbara Schaff's keynote talk on research opportunities in Germany opened the conference, while topics ranged from desire and sensibility to politics and performance.

## FACULTY PROFILE: KATHLEEN FREDERICKSON



Kathleen joined the UC Davis faculty in 2008. She works with the cultural studies graduate group, and supports the designated emphasis in critical theory as well as feminist theory and research. Her areas of interest include Victorian literature and culture; feminist and queer studies; the history of biology, psychology, and the social sciences; Marxism; and psychoanalysis. Her first book *The Ploy of Instinct: Victorian Sciences of Nature and Sexuality in Liberal Governance* is forthcoming with Fordham University Press.

**You are affiliated with the QFT Research Cluster, the Cultural Studies Graduate Group and the Critical Theory and Feminist Theory DE's. How has this diverse set of affiliations enhanced your research?**

My work has always been interdisciplinary so, in some sense, the research project predated the affiliations, but the affiliations have certainly come to support the kind of research that I do. It's great to learn how people are thinking in anthropology or gender studies, for instance. I feel very lucky that there are all sorts of opportunities for talking to people in other departments on this campus. The Critical Theory DE and the Cultural Studies Graduate Group are great spaces to have conversations with people that you might not necessarily meet in a departmental context.

**Your new book, *The Ploy of Instinct: Victorian Sciences of Nature and Sexuality in Liberal Governance* is slated to be published this summer. Would you mind talking to me a bit more about what issues it engages with?**

The book looks at the changes in the concept of instinct that were taking place over the course of the 19th century, as instinct was moving from being a term primarily positioned as a binary twin to reason, used in the governmentality of imperial projects--instinct was identified with the knowledges of animals and savages-- and how that structure moved into psychoanalysis and psychology in the last years of the nineteenth century.

This is, after all, a curious move, given, as Foucault and others have pointed out, sexology and psychoanalysis rely on self conscious introspection, which is exactly the thing that instinct wasn't supposed to be able to do, as a mode for producing knowledge about sexuality. My book looks at that transition and tries to ask, first of all, why it

occurred; second of all, what happens to the concept of instinct over the course of this transition and what does that allow us to rethink in terms of the governmentality of sexuality, for sure, but more generally, empire, capital and gender.

**The *Ploy of Instinct* will be your first book. Could you speak a bit about what that process has been like? How long did it take you and how closely does it resemble your dissertation project?**

The first time you do anything, you don't necessarily know what the steps look like, but in retrospect, they seem somewhat obvious. It doesn't much resemble my dissertation project; there are two chapters that look like better versions of dissertation chapters and there are two chapters that don't look like dissertation chapters at all. In terms of the introduction and the coda, they bear little-to-no resemblance to anything I wrote in graduate school. You can certainly see traces, but it's been pretty radically rewritten: different archives, different arguments.

**How has it been working with a publisher?**

Fordham has been fantastic. I'm part of a series called "The Forms of Living"; it is an interdisciplinary series that publishes work in history, philosophy, theory, and anthropology that is in some way thinking about the relationship between knowledge and life. It's been fun to imagine the book in dialogue with fields that I'm not so well versed in. For instance, there is a book, by an anthropologist, on South Africa, pre and post apartheid. That's obviously quite removed from my Victorian Britain book and I'm not an anthropologist, but it's been really great to imagine my work in conversation with other books in the series.

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## FACULTY PROFILE

*Continued from page 3*

**What drives your interest in the history of science and psychoanalysis?**

We stumble upon projects for reasons that are radically local, in the sense that the local is produced by a series of effects that sometimes come from afar. I didn't anticipate beginning a book on instinct, I actually thought I was going to write about Affect. It was in the 2000's at a moment when Affect Theory was rising to predominance so I thought I was going to do that. I was also in a graduate program where there were a number of people who were well versed in that literature, so there were a bunch of reasons why I thought I was going to do that kind of work.

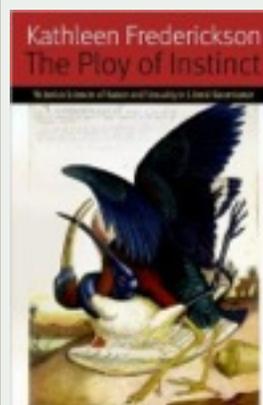
I was spending a lot of time talking with anthropologists in graduate school, so I was learning a lot from them and somewhere along the way I wrote a conference paper about instinct and Galton and it kind of stuck. I didn't start thinking that that was going to be the germ of the dissertation and then the germ of the book, but that was the genealogy. I thought I was going to write this affect project and wound up writing this instinct project, which is adjacent to affect, but also radically different from it. It allowed me to draw together my work in gender studies and English. The science studies part actually came later; I started writing this project having been pretty well trained with gender and sexuality studies and Victorian literary studies, but it turns out that if you are going to write a book about instinct, you learn some things about science.

**Now that you've published your first book, what's next on your to-do list?**

You start your second book (or you continue work on your second book). I've given one keynote speech and one conference paper that I see attached to a second project. I think I'm going to work on the changing utility of "density" as a term in the history of psychology. At the beginning of the 19th century, "density" enters the vocabulary for "stupidity," so that you get a dense person as a particular mode of being stupid. You can be empty-headed, which is one way of being stupid, and you can be dense, which means that your mind is over-stuffed, or too packed to

permit penetration from ideas from the outside, but also generates a sense of heaviness and force at the same time.

By the end of the 19th century you, of course, get Freud on "condensation" where the density of the symptom or the "dream image" brings together a lot of disparate elements and unlike the stupidity density, which is supposed to be sort of simple and uniform, density becomes the locus of complexity. How did that happen? What is it in changes of 19th century theories of density that might account for that and what kinds of governmental effects might result from this shift?



It is paradoxical that instinct became a central term for late Victorian sexual sciences as they were elaborated in the medicalized spaces of confession and introspection, given that instinct had long been defined in its opposition to self-conscious thought. *The Ploy of Instinct* ties this paradox to instinct's deployment in conceptualizing governmentality.

Instinct's domain, Frederickson argues, extended well beyond the women, workers, and "savages" to whom it was so often ascribed. The concept of instinct helped to gloss over contradictions in British liberal ideology made palpable as turn-of-the-century writers grappled with the legacy of Enlightenment humanism. For elite European men, instinct became both an agent of "progress" and a force that, in contrast to desire, offered a plenitude in answer to the alienation of self-consciousness.

This shift in instinct's appeal to privileged European men modified the governmentality of empire, labor, and gender. The book traces these changes through parliamentary papers, pornographic fiction, accounts of Aboriginal Australians, suffragette memoirs, and scientific texts in evolutionary theory, sexology, and early psychoanalysis.

## MELLON RESEARCH INITIATIVE IN EARLY MODERN STUDIES



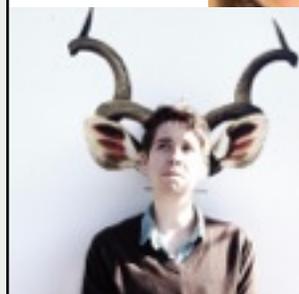
(Dyani Johns Taff, Chris Wallis, Valerie Billing, and Sawyer Kemp have all been awarded Mellon summer fellowships)



### Mellon Initiative's Third Year

This was the final year of the Mellon Research Initiative in Early Modern Studies, which Professor Gina Bloom has been co-directing with Professor Margaret Ferguson. The Initiative has supported the work of two first year Ph.D. students in the department. Two first-year Ph.D. students, Lee Emrich and Samantha Snively, were named as Mellon fellows and participated in organizing events for the Initiative over the course of the year. They, along with first-year Ph.D. student Ashley Sarpong, will also be supported by Mellon funding over the coming summer. Four additional English department Ph.D. students were named as Mellon Research-Teaching Fellows and worked together with other early modernists on campus over the course of the year to produce innovative teaching materials that bring their research expertise into the undergraduate classroom. Fellows will be funded over the coming summer on their proposed research projects, and the teaching materials they have developed will serve as models for other early modernists on campus.

The Mellon Initiative also sponsored a trip for advanced graduate students to the Huntington Library in Pasadena, CA, where Professor Fran Dolan helped familiarize students with the library's resources. Four Ph.D. students from English were among the group selected to go on this trip: Valerie Billing, Sara Petrosillo, Karolyn Reddy, and Christopher Wallis. Additionally, the Initiative sponsored visits by several prestigious visitors, who delivered public lectures and met separately with graduate students. Particularly noteworthy was the visit in May from Bruce R. Smith (Deans Professor of English at the University of Southern California), who spoke to a packed room about his research on sound and ran a workshop for graduate students to discuss their research projects. In February the Early Modern Initiative teamed up with the Mellon Digital Cultures Initiative to bring to campus Katherine Rowe (Professor of English at Bryn Mawr College and incoming Provost at Smith College) and Elliott Visconsi (Chief Academic Digital Officer and Associate Professor of English and Law at Notre Dame University) to talk about Shakespeare in the digital age.



(Early in the fall quarter, professors Professors Gina Bloom and Fran Dolan organized a trip for early modernist graduate students in English to attend a performance of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* at the California Shakespeare Theater in Orinda, CA.)

## FACULTY NEWS

**Gina Bloom** published two essays during this past academic year: "Ophelia's Intertheatricality, or, Why Performance is History" was co-written with Anston Bosman and William N. West and appeared in *Early Modern Theatre Journal* 65 (2013): 165-82; "Games," an essay related to her book in progress, appeared in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry S. Turner (Oxford UP, 2014), 189-211. Gina has also begun serving as the Project Director for *Play the Knave*, an interactive Shakespeare video game that is being developed by faculty and graduate students in UC Davis's ModLab. She delivered talks this spring about the game at the Contours of Algorithmic Life conference, organized by graduate students at UCD, and at a Mellon Symposium for Teaching organized by UCLA's English Department.

**Nathan Brown** is the recipient of a 2013-2014 Hellman Fellowship. He will receive an award of \$15,000 in support of research toward a new book project on the problem of measure in philosophy, science, and poetry.

**Seeta Chaganti** has been awarded a Distinguished Teaching Award for Undergraduate Teaching, one of the top teaching prizes at Davis.

**Frances Dolan** recently published a book for classroom use in a new series, the *Arden Shakespeare: Language and Writing*. Her book is on *Twelfth Night*. (see page 7)

**Margaret Ferguson** has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences! The 2014 class of inductees has just been announced: <https://www.amacad.org/multimedia/pdfs/classlist2014.pdf>.

**Lynn Freed** sold a novel to FSG (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), and also has a piece of memoir coming out in *Harper's Magazine*.

**Elizabeth Freeman** will be honored in June 2014, when *Social Text* "Periscope" publish a dossier of essays on Elizabeth Freeman's remarkable book, *Time Binds*.

**Danielle Heard** has been awarded a UC Davis Hellman Fellowship for 2014-15. This is an award of \$15,000 to "provide support and encouragement for the research of promising Assistant Professors."

**Alessa Johns'** book *Bluestocking Feminism and British-German Cultural Transfer, 1750-1837* will be appearing later this year from the University of Michigan Press. Recently, she was invited to speak at UCLA's Clark Library, where she gave a paper titled "For

Show or Use: Reformist Moves of Philippine Charlotte of Brunswick-Wolfenbuettel"; she will be presenting a paper at Oxford University in September titled "Translating Reform: Women and British-German Networks in the 1790s."

**Yiyun Li** was awarded the Benjamin H. Danks award from American Academy of Arts and Letters. Since 2003, the Academy has given an annual prize of \$20,000 in rotation to a composer of ensemble works, a playwright, and a writer. Reviews of her book have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, and *The Los Angeles Times* among others (see pages 16-17).

**Desirée Martín's** book *Borderland Saints: Secular Sanctity in Chicano/a and Mexican Culture* (Rutgers UP, 2013) has been awarded the 2014 Outstanding Book Award from the Latin American Studies Association.

**Elizabeth Miller** was awarded a Chancellor's Fellowship, an early-career award for faculty with outstanding records of achievement. Each fellow receives an award of \$25,000 and the "Chancellor's Fellow" title for five years.

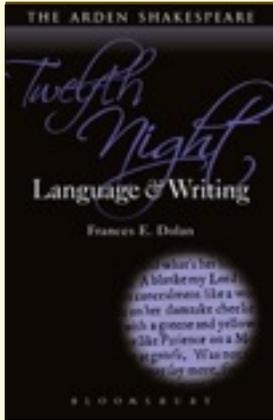
**Scott Shershow** published *Deconstructing Dignity: A Critique of the Right-to-Die Debate* (University of Chicago Press, 2014), a thoughtful study of the right-to-die debate that uses Derridean deconstruction to examine the self-contradicting concepts of human dignity and the sanctity of life (see page 7).

**Scott Simmon** was the subject of an article in the *Guardian* featuring his screening of the Orson Welles film: *Too Much Johnson*. *The American Treasures from the New Zealand Film Archive*, the most recent DVD curated by Scott Simmon, was given a 2013 "Film Heritage Award" by the National Society of Film Critics. Their awards announcement is at this link: <http://www.nationalsocietyoffilmcritics.com/>

**Matthew Stratton** published *The Politics of Irony in American Modernism*. Stratton's book shows how American literary culture in the first half of the twentieth century saw "irony" emerge as a term to describe intersections between aesthetic and political practices (see page 7).

**Joe Wenderoth's** *If I Don't Breathe How Do I Sleep*, his fourth book of poetry, has been published by Wave Books (see page 7).

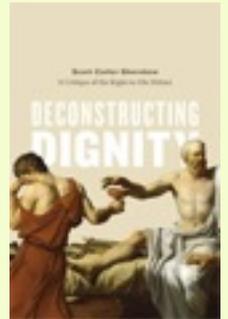
## FACULTY PUBLICATIONS



Professor **Frances E. Dolan** has published *Twelfth Night: Language & Writing* as part of the Arden Shakespeare series by Bloomsbury Press. In the book Dolan examines the puzzling pronouns and puns, the love poetry, mischief, and disguises of *Twelfth Night*, exploring its themes of grief, obsessive love, social climbing and gender identity, and helping readers towards their own close-readings.

**Scott Shershow's**

*Deconstructing Dignity: A Critique of the Right-to-Die Debate* has received high praise from Brown University's Gerhard Richter, who writes that "In his moving final interview, Jacques Derrida worried that he and deconstruction itself would, upon his death, immediately begin to be forgotten by cultural memory and relegated to the archival dustbins of history. Scott Cutler Shershow's rigorous deconstructive rereading of the right-to-die debate...demonstrates that, on the contrary, the legacy of Derridean deconstruction today continues to be inherited, extended, and reworked in the most urgent and creative forms imaginable."



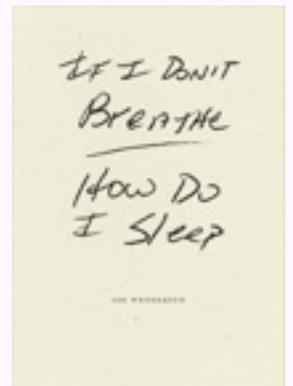
In *The Politics of Irony in American Modernism*, **Matthew**

**Stratton** tackles the Sisyphean task of tracing the labyrinthine history of "irony" as it was mobilized within a variety of political agendas. Amanda Anderson of Brown University calls the book, "An important and deeply insightful book. Moving past familiar debates on the politics of irony, Stratton argues for an understanding of modernist irony as an aesthetic practice that not only sharply reorients political perception, but also promotes dispositions and habits of analysis that are indispensable to political thought and action."



**Joe Wenderoth's**

*If I Don't Breathe How Do I Sleep?* has netted significant praise. *Publishers Weekly* has declared the collection, "The product of a truly innovative voice; these poems show Wenderoth working at the peak of his abilities."



## EMERITI BULLETIN



**Peter Hays** published *Fifty years of Hemingway Criticism*, a collection of his essays on Hemingway, this past year. He will present a paper at the 16th Biennial

H e m i n g w a y

Conference this summer, and he remains as news and Notes editor of *The Fitzgerald Newsletter*.

**Marijane Osborn** has recently published three book chapters. "Participatory Parables: Cinema, Social Action, and Steinbeck's Mexican Dilemma" appears in *The Political Companion to John Steinbeck*. Her second piece, "Archaic Magic of Wolf and Eagle in the Anglo-Saxon 'Wen' Charm," is part of *The Book of Nature and Humanity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. And, finally, her "Visualizing the Material Culture of *Beowulf*" can be found in *Teaching Beowulf in the Twenty-First Century*.



## FACULTY INTERVIEW: MARGARET FERGUSON



Margaret Ferguson is President of the Modern Language Association this year. She joined the UC Davis faculty in 1997. Before coming to Davis, she taught at Yale, Columbia, and the University of Colorado at Boulder. Her areas of interest include Renaissance literature, literacy studies, and feminist theory. Her MLA projects include co-chairing, with immediate Past President Marianne Hirsch, a Working Group charged with proposing revisions to the MLA's intellectual structure; after extensive consultation with members via the new web platform, the MLA Commons, the Working Group submitted its recommendations to the Executive Council in February 2014. The changes were approved and will begin to be implemented in 2016. Ferguson is also chairing a new subcommittee of the Executive Council on "K-16 Education." She has won fellowships from the NEH, the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, and, most recently, from the American Council of Learned Societies. Her current book project is on "Cultural Debates About Hymens in Early Modern England," with an opening chapter on ancient Greek and Hebrew concepts of "virginity" and an epilogue on the modern surgical practice of "hymenoplasty."

**As President of the MLA, you have talked about how important it is to connect meaningfully to the K-16 education system. Could you speak to your projects touching on this concern?**

Yes, thank you for giving me the opportunity. I've started a new planning sub-committee for the MLA called K-16 education, which stemmed from a long time concern, on my part, for articulation issues. I feel like the California public school system is a vast network that should be better connected and especially now around the Common Core, which has as one of its goals college readiness in English Language Arts. My current project through this committee is to try and establish partnerships between specific universities and specific secondary schools in certain school districts. I'm interested in how we can support existing partnerships and also, possibly, start some new ones. I'm looking for seed-grant money to do a very modest pilot program with maybe three or four such partnerships in different parts of the country.

**The Presidential theme you have selected for the 2015 MLA is "Negotiating Sites of Memory." How do you feel this topic is especially relevant to our current moment?**

I'm interested in thinking of sites as well as memory for this theme and the ways in which the sites have multiplied from manuscript and print to film, theater, and digital media. How is time, the recovering of past time, related to the spaces in which recoveries are communicated, always partially? Many of these sites of memory are portable; if they are books, they travel. It's also timely in terms of my own field. I was elected as someone who works on what is considered an 'old' field: Renaissance. I am curious to see what I bring as a scholar to the MLA's office, and I am, in a way, trying to bridge some of the gaps that have grown up

between people who claim that presentism is the reigning orthodoxy across disciplines in the modern university, partly because of the emphasis on 'profitable' knowledge production. How are the people who are working on the past, which is like a different country, the 'third world of the past,' incorporated into an organization that calls itself the Modern Language Association and that came into being by making a pragmatic cut between modern and classical? One of the forums will be on the concept of the 'non-modern' in the MLA and Fran Dolan is going to speak on "memories of composting," which she's working on now.

**I would imagine that being President gives you a bit more of a bird's-eye view of the American educational establishment. Has it changed your perspective on the state of education in this country?**

I think what I've learned is that there isn't a single 'educational establishment.' There is the Department of Education which is certainly influential and has been driving the common core state standards, which has implications for all kinds of post-secondary institutions, including community colleges. But, I think it is much more heterogeneous than I realized and there's so much difference between Ivy League schools which have very long and large endowments and the public universities that are educating by far the largest number of students. I feel as if from working on the common core, the MLA has really expanded my knowledge of the various challenges that teachers are having as workers in colleges and at all levels of the profession. I think questions of academic freedom of speech have come to the fore. I had a sense of local institutional politics from the four universities I've worked at, but, until now, I didn't have a sense of how they play out in waves across different regions of the country.

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## FACULTY INTERVIEW: MARGARET FERGUSON

*continued from page 8*

**Your work has focused on virginity. Do you feel this is a subject that has changed in significant historical ways or does it seem to have a certain kind of conservative inertia?**

Well if my subject were virginity I would say definitely, it does have a conservative inertia. But my subject is a subset really of what may be considered the broader interdisciplinary field that focuses on virginity in men and women in different cultures and different historical periods. I'm specifically interested in the body part that was called "hymen" in Ancient Greece, although there it did not refer to a [specifically female] body part but to a membrane that was thought to be around all organs in animals. Is it something that human beings have constructed, fetishized, fantasized to protect certain economically and theologically valuable ideas of virginity? These are ideas which have a certain 'tranhistorical inertia', but which have not, by any means been definitive for every culture or even an issue of debate. My work started out located in that period and in the Northern European, specifically English place, but I found I couldn't discuss it without also discussing what's happening currently with the new sorts of reproduction of the perhaps non-existent phenomenon and also looking back to the past. It provides for an interesting topic which allows me to do what I like to do as a comparatist, which is to look backwards, but also sideways.

**There has been a great deal of debate recently about declining enrollment in the humanities. What is your opinion on the state of the field?**

I agree with Michael Bérubé, John Marx, and others who think that the new report of the humanities death is 'greatly exaggerated,' to echo Mark Twain, but on the other hand, I see locally that the number English majors has gone down since 2011 right here in Davis. We are experimenting with some different kinds of courses that make the case for English teachers who encompass expertise in film and digital humanities, and, in this department, we also have people who do interesting research on gaming.

**In your discipline, there is a great deal of translation necessary, even from relatively modern English, in order for students to access the material. Does the current educational scene, with its focus on standardized testing over interpretation, seem to be robbing the current generation of that skill set?**

It depends on the test. From what I've seen as a parent, SAT tests do focus on primarily nineteenth and twentieth-century literary examples rather than other kinds of texts that are important to my discipline. They also reward a Latinate vocabulary; the SAT is going to be changing that next year, but, as I learned, *Frankenstein* is the novel that has the most SAT words in it and many of them are words with Latin origins. I don't think those tests give much incentive to secondary school teachers to have students experiment and read Chaucer, seeing if they can make sense of a different English with a different look. There are also many ways of teaching language that aren't English only and the standardized tests haven't figured out how to do that yet.

**Graduate students have come to think of the MLA as synonymous with the job market. Could you speak to the organization's relationship to academic jobs?**

The MLA has collected data on academic jobs for 40 years and is the most reliable and capacious source for information about how many students in MLA fields have gotten jobs, and to some extent, what happens after their first job. Its most energetic work now is as an advocate for students on the market and also a gadfly for institutions about what is appropriate behavior on search committees. There is also a new task force coming out in a few weeks about expanding career horizons for Ph.D.'s in the Humanities, which I think is not an effort that is being made instead of continuing to work for more tenure track jobs, but as a complementary and, dare I say, reality based initiative. I think there could be some changes for the good in what looks to me like an inevitable decrease in the number of MLA interviews that are actually conducted at the convention. Personally, I'd much rather have young scholars there giving papers and meeting people and talking to editors than going to interviews that may or may not yield them anything.

For more information on the work and thoughts of Margaret Ferguson and on the continuing work of the MLA visit the MLA website <http://www.mla.org/ferguson> or watch her speak on the initiatives she is interested in during her tenure in office <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBidJuC-Do0>.

## GRADUATE ADVISER'S COLUMN



Associate Professor of English John Marx has served as Graduate Adviser from 2012-2014. He is the author of *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge UP, 2005/2009), and *Geopolitics and the Anglophone Novel, 1890-2011* (Cambridge UP, 2012). Professor Marx is currently an editor for the journal *Contemporary Literature*. He is working with Mark Cooper writing a reappraisal of twentieth-century humanities disciplines tentatively entitled "[Mass Media and the Humanities Workforce](#)." Those interested may follow their work-in-progress blog "[The 1960s Origins of the Academic Labor Crisis](#)".

I am thrilled to have had the opportunity to serve a second year as Graduate Adviser. It has been an exciting academic session, and I have learned much from working with English graduate students, collaborators in the Davis Humanities Institute, and colleagues across campus and the University of California system who are concerned with the future of Ph.D. study in the humanities. As anyone spending time around Voorhies knows well, the big news in the English graduate office in the last sixth months was a changing of the guard. Longtime friends and colleagues Janie Guhin and Levada McDowell retired at the end of 2013, and we were joined in January by Eleanor Yu and Darolyn Striley. Meanwhile, with continued support from the UC Davis Provost's Fellowship, Mellon Foundation research initiatives, and other sources, our students advanced important scholarly projects, published their work in top journals, and coordinated events whose topics ranged from the Queer, Feminist, and Transgender Studies Research Cluster's "TransAmericas Conference" to the Digital Cultures Initiative's "The Contours of Algorithmic Life" (both of which took place one particular busy day in May).

Molly McCarthy, Associate Director of the Davis Humanities Institute, and I have been working the past year on the matter of "Alt Ac." This term started life as a Twitter hashtag a few years back, but has since morphed into a nationwide effort by organizations that include the MLA and AHA to rethink Ph.D. training in light of the whole range of jobs beyond academia that successful students acquire upon graduation. At UC Davis, we have been laboring in this area on multiple fronts. Molly and I have been engaged in infrastructure building by forging connections between the DHI, Office of Graduate

Studies, and the Internship and Career Center. Teresa Dillinger and Gwynn Benner have been our allies in those offices and helped us coordinate the inaugural event in a new category of programming we are calling "Ph.D. Unlimited." On April 28, more than 100 graduate students from across the humanities registered for a series of workshops and a discussion forum with Julia Brookins (Special Projects Coordinator for the AHA), Jodi Samuels (a member of the organization Versatile Ph.D. and an Assistant Director of Development for the California Primary Care Association), and David Shepard (Lead Academic Developer for the UCLA Center for Digital Humanities). Lastly, English Ph.D.s Russell Backman and Kate Jylkka have been doing detective work, tracking down humanities Ph.D.s to see where they are working now so as to provide our current students with a network of contacts in the academy and beyond.

Back in the department, the Graduate Committee put the finishing touches on a program of summer support for Ph.D.s making normative progress. This program was begun by my predecessor Professor Gina Bloom, and has become sufficiently successful that rising third and fourth year students preparing for their exams can now look forward to summer fellowships to help them do that work. ABD students can expect the same if they complete a dissertation chapter by the end of the winter quarter (as a result, for faculty the arrival of fresh dissertation chapters is an increasingly reliable herald of spring). Such summer support has proven to be a vital recruiting tool during the past two years, for it demonstrates the department's commitment to helping students stay on track over what are arguably the most challenging years of their Ph.D. education.

*continued on page 11*

On the recruiting front, fall 2014 will see the enrollment of new students invested in areas from eighteenth-century studies to digital humanities, medieval literature to contemporary poetics. Members of our incoming class have the support of diverse fellowships: UC Davis Provost's Fellowship in Humanities and Social Science, the Graduate Scholars Fellowship, and the Mellon Research Initiative in Digital Cultures. One student arrives having deferred her admission and having spent the last year on a Fulbright Fellowship (see pages 14-15).

The list of notable fellowships, awards, and publications earned by our continuing graduate students is impressive indeed. For a comprehensive accounting of the publications, I would refer you to pages 11-13 in this newsletter. Among the awards I'd like to call out in particular are Simon Abramowitsch's Bancroft Library Study Award for 2014-15, Jordan Carroll's Provost's Dissertation Year Fellowship in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences for 2014-15, Heather Jennings's Davis Humanities Institute Dissertation Year Fellowship for 2014-15, Dyani Johns Taff's 2014 Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award, and Nicole Kenley's David Noel Miller Scholarship Essay Prize for "Hackers Without Borders: Global Detectives in Stieg Larsson's Millennium Trilogy." On the job placement front, please join me in congratulating Valerie Billing, who will be teaching at Knox College in the fall, and Matt Franks, who is on his way to Bates College. Erin Hendel,

meanwhile, will be starting work this summer in a full-time position at The Nature Conservancy in Montana.

New and continuing students alike have been getting to know Darolyn Striley and Eleanor Yu (as well as her fish sidekick, Thomas). I cannot thank these two enough for their work in 2014, and I am looking forward to collaborating in interesting experiments in filing organization with Darolyn over the summer. I'm sorry to say that Eleanor's time with us is short: she's off to medical school! Thanks are due as well to this year's placement advisers, Gina Bloom and Colin Milburn, and to the Graduate Committee (Claire Waters, Desirée Martin, Mark Jerng, Elizabeth Freeman, and Joshua Clover) for their hard work and good humor. I am grateful to Kim Swanberg and Marty Weis, valiant EGSA chairs.



Eleanor and Darolyn enjoying the weather and good company!

Best wishes, finally, to Mark Jerng, who takes over as Graduate Adviser in the coming year. Please be nice to him.

### Graduate Teaching Awards



**The Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award** for 2013 was awarded to Dyani Johns Taff. Her students were extremely excited to nominate her for the award, writing that "In addition to Ms. Taff's expertise, enthusiasm, and ability to create a dynamic classroom environment, her dedication to each student's education goes above and beyond the call."

**Simon Abramowitsch**, was awarded a Principles of Community Teaching Award for Graduate Teaching Assistants from the UC Davis Office of Campus Community Relations for his Spring 2014 ENL 3 class, which is titled "Others, Outsiders, and Outliers." In it, the class investigated inclusion, exclusion, and interaction through poetry, prose, and drama from the 16th century to the present. The students' final project was to create a broadside using a text in the course readings, addressing the themes of inclusion, exclusion, and interaction. They then distributed these on campus.



# PH.D. PROGRAM NEWS & AWARDS

## Ph.D.s Conferred 2013-2014

**Kristen Aldebol, Ph.D. 2014**

**Dissertation:** Managing a Literate Laity: The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man in Fifteenth-Century England

**Valerie Billing, Ph.D. 2014**

**Dissertation:** Big Women, Small Men: The Erotics of Size in Early Modern English Literature and Culture

**Kelly Neil, Ph.D. 2014**

**Dissertation:** Inscrutable Suicide: Politics, Gender, and the Felo de se in Early Modern Drama

**Erin Hendel, Ph.D. 2014**

**Dissertation:** We the Many Peoples: Literatures of Alternative Nationalisms in the United States, 1820-1900

**Erin Paszko, Ph.D. 2014**

**Dissertation:** Reluctant Realism: On Postcolonialism, Terrorism, and the Contemporary Crisis of Capitalism

**Grace Tirapelle, Ph.D. 2014**

**Dissertation:** Hotel Publics: Space, Hospitality, and U.S. Literature, 1893-2010

**Nicholas Valvo, Ph.D. 2014**

**Dissertation:** Penurious Payments: Debt, Dependence, and Communal Form in Eighteenth-Century Britain

**Simon Abramowitsch** has been selected as a participant for the Seminar in Experimental Criticism and Theory IX Johannesburg Workshop of Theory and Criticism for the Summer 2014 session, the theme of which is "Archives of the Non-Racial." The workshop gathers together intellectuals, scholars, and graduate students from the global North and South for two weeks of lectures, dialogues, and exhibitions. This year will be a mobile workshop—the group will travel to key sites in the South African anti-apartheid struggle throughout the course of the seminar.

**Ian Afflerbach** has two publications forthcoming this year. The first "Liberalism's Blind Judgment: Richard Wright's Native Son and the Politics of Reception" will appear in *Modern Fiction Studies*, and the second,

"On the Use and Abuse of Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* for Reading Tess Slesinger's *The Unpossessed*," appeared in the March 2014 *Notes and Queries*. 259.1.

**Valerie Billing's** article "Female Spectators and the Erotics of the Diminutive in *Epicoene* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*" just came out in the Spring issue of *Renaissance Drama* (42.1).

**Elizabeth Crachiolo** received a Newberry Renaissance Consortium Grant to present a paper at the Newberry Library's Multidisciplinary Graduate Student Conference. The paper, titled "Queen Bees, Queen Bess, and the Gender Politics of Butler's *Feminine Monarchie*," was selected for publication in *Newberry Essays in Medieval and Early Modern Studies*.

**William Hughes** published his article, "(Post)colonial, Queer: *Lord Jim*," in the most recent issue of *Conradiana: A Journal of Joseph Conrad Studies*. Earlier this year, he presented a paper entitled "'A Dark Gap in the Long Monotonous Street': The Breakdown of Bodies and Infrastructure in *Dombey and Son*" at the 35th annual conference of the Nineteenth Century Studies Association in Chicago.

**Nicole Kenley's** Miller Prize winning essay, "Hackers without Borders: Global Detectives in Stieg Larsson's Millennium Trilogy," is forthcoming in the *Clues* special issue on global crime.

**Angela Hume Lewandowski's** first full-length book of poetry has been accepted for publication by Omnidawn. Her book will appear in spring 2016. Recently, Angela published an exchange with the poet Brian Teare at *The Conversant*. This year she co-edited/curated, with the poet Laura Mullen, a special issue of the journal *The Volta* on the topic of "trash." She also published a piece on the work of Myung Mi Kim in *OmniVerse*, and has chapters forthcoming in *Anne Carson: Ecstatic Lyre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015) and *A History of American Poetry: Contexts—Developments—Readings* (Trier, Germany: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2015). This spring, Angela joined the Board of Directors for the San Francisco-based literary organization Small Press Traffic. Moving forward, she will also co-curate the Oakland-based Hearts Desire reading series, hosted by the Bay Area Public Schools.

**Laurel Recker's** article, "'Happen Is Never Once': The Temporality of Modernism's Black Atlantic," is forthcoming in *Arizona Quarterly*.

**Martin Weis's** work, "*Assassin's Creed* and the Fantasy of Repetition," will appear in the collection *Early Modernity and Video Games*, edited by Florian Kerschbaumer and Tobias Winnerling.

*continued on page 12*

# PH.D. PROGRAM NEWS & AWARDS

## 2013-2014 Awards and Announcements

The **Provost Fellowship** for continuing Ph.D. students for 2014-2015 was awarded to Jordan Carroll.

The **Davis Humanities Institute** awarded a **Dissertation Year Fellowship** to Heather Jennings for 2014-2015.

A **Bancroft Library Study Award from the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley**, which provides a year of funding, has been won by Simon Abramowitsch to support his research on his dissertation "The Production of Multi-Ethnic American Literature in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1966-1996: From the Black Panther Party to the Institutionalization of Diversity."

**English Department Distinguished Dissertation Fellowships** were awarded this year to: Molly Ball, Pearl Chaozen-Bauer, and Will Elliott.

The **David Noel Miller Scholarship Essay Prize** for the best English graduate-student essay of the previous academic year was awarded to Nicole Kenley for her essay "Hackers Without Borders: Global Detectives in Stieg Larsson's Millennium Trilogy." Honorable mention went to Lindsay Baltus for "Technological Ghost Effects, Textual Strategies: Race, History, and the Posthuman Body in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*."



HArCS Dean's Summer Fellowships were awarded to Pearl Chaozon-Bauer, Chris Wallis, Heather Jennings, and Tobias Wilson-Bates.

Mellon Summer research funds were awarded to Dyani Johns Taff, Chris Wallis, Sawyer Kemp, and Valerie Billing.



Russell Backman has been awarded the department's exchange position with Johannes Gutenberg Universität in Mainz, Germany for 2014-15.



## Recent Placement News

### Fall 2013

**John Mac Kilgore**, Florida State University (Assistant Professor)

**Mindi McMann**, The College of New Jersey (Assistant Professor)

**Barbara Zimbalist**, University of Texas, El Paso (Assistant Professor)

### Fall 2014

**Valerie Billing**, Knox College, Galesburg, IL (2-year Visiting Assistant Professor)

**Matt Franks**, Bates College, MN (Visiting Assistant Professor)

**Erin Hendel**, The Nature Conservancy in Helena, MT (Development Writer)

# PH.D. PROGRAM

## Incoming Class, Ph.D. in English Literature, Fall 2014

**Sophia Bamert**, a native of New York City, graduated from Oberlin College with a B.A. in English and Environmental Studies and a minor in German, earning Highest Honors in English. She has spent the 2013-2014 year in Mönchengladbach, Germany, as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant at a secondary school. She plans to specialize in ecocriticism and is especially interested in urban spaces and 19th and 20th century literature. Sophia's greatest hobby is dancing — all styles, but in recent years lindy hop and other swing-era dances in particular.



**Katherine Buse** did her undergraduate degree in English at Duke University, where an interest in the apocalypse in contemporary literature led her to apply for a Marshall Scholarship for the University of Liverpool's MA in Science Fiction Studies. There she focused on representations of climate change in speculative fiction. She continued to explore environmental issues, SF, and science in literature through an M.Phil in Criticism and Culture at Cambridge. Katherine grew up in Chapel Hill, North



Carolina, and is fascinated by the pop-psychology-science-self-help nexus, talk radio, domestic arts from cooking to bookbinding, and other human beings.

**Cassandra Dunn** holds a B.A. from UCLA and extensive training in how to move back and forth across the country. The latest move took her to University of Chicago for an M.A. and a post-grad job in the university president's office.

In a broad sense, Cassie is interested in the way we deal with everyday/sublime concepts like string theory and body modification through technology by tying them down to humanness in fiction. Specifically, her past research has analyzed the use of structures of competitive evolution



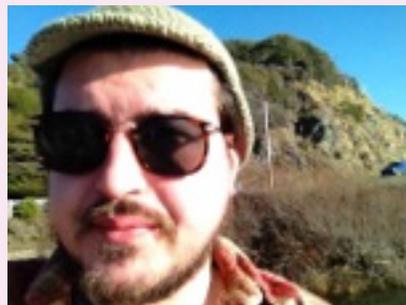
to marginalize and resist the effects of the cybernetic and alien body. At Davis, she is looking to explore more of the slippage between philosophies of humanness and the stunning leaps in science and technology that have been made in recent years.



**Jessica Gray** received a BA in English from the University of North Florida, where she developed interests in early British literature and origin myths. She went on to complete an MA in Literature at Wright State University, where she focused on eighteenth-century British

literature and material culture. Jessica has a background in childbirth education and is especially drawn to metaphors and narratives of birth, reproduction, and origins. She is fascinated with the epistemological shift from magico-religious worldviews to scientific materialisms and wants to examine how this shift affected ideas about the "bringing into being" of texts, objects, and bodies.

**Thomas Hintze** grew up in New York's Hudson Valley. He attended Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore for his undergraduate education and majored in Film & Media Studies and Writing Seminars. Thomas is interested in contemporary poetics, transnational literatures, Marxism, and the relationship between literature, social movements, and the commons. He has worked as a freelance journalist, bike messenger, adventure tour guide, and junior sommelier. He currently lives in Sonoma County and works at a winery. He also writes Oulipo-inspired poetry.



Originally from Hawai'i, **Rebecca Hogue** earned her M.A. in 2013 from Georgetown University, and has spent the last four years teaching English at a boarding school in the Washington, D.C. area. She received her bachelor's degree from Columbia University where she majored in American Studies and lettered in intercollegiate women's basketball. Rebecca's areas of interest include Pacific Islands Studies, Transnational American Studies, Post-Colonial Theory, and Eco-Criticism. Otherwise, she enjoys coffee, colorful neckties, maps, and trees.



**Jess Krzeminski** earned her B.A. in English from Carleton College in Northfield, MN. Having always dreamt of living in NYC, she moved to Manhattan after college and earned her M.A. in Humanities and Social Thought from the John W. Draper Interdisciplinary program at NYU.

There, she fell in love with Henry James. Since graduating from NYU in 2012, Jess has been working as a college counselor and English tutor/homeschool teacher. At Davis, she plans to focus on fin de siècle transatlantic, but especially British Victorian, authors and their novels and the applicability of queer theory to 19th century women, their bodies, and the children they bear. One of Jess's favorite living authors is Simon Van Booy and she hopes to soon learn to be a better cook.



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# PH.D. PROGRAM

# CREATIVE WRITING

## Incoming Class

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**Sally Lochowski Tanaka** began her university education at UC Davis as a pre-nursing major, subsequently receiving her BSN and MN from UCLA. Her interest in the humanities and their interplay with the health sciences prompted her to return to college, this time at the University of the Pacific, where she graduated in May with her BA in English. She is interested in trauma (especially disease/pandemic) and its effect on collective memory and literary output. Besides following the CDC website, Sally enjoys family, travel, libraries, and the evening news. She looks forward to completing her academic adventures where she began—at UC Davis.



**Bethany Qualls** completed her B.A. in English and French at Earlham College, then left her native Indiana to teach and work in France, Serbia, Greece, and Turkey. She's lived in San Francisco since 2008, where the siren song of literature called her to an M.A. at San Francisco State University. Her research interests include the long eighteenth century, the novel, feminist theory, and prostitute narratives. She's particularly interested in the value of sex and its relationship to the cultural valuation of women. When

not reading voraciously, she enjoys electronic music, swimming, food, fashion, and meeting new people.

**Briana Wagner** grew up on the East Coast and attended Hamilton College for undergrad, where she majored in English literature and minored in mathematics and Hispanic Studies. At UC Davis she would like to further explore medieval literature, and particularly representations of gender and sexuality. Briana spent the past summer working at a bookstore and interning for a New York literary agency. In her free time, she enjoys reading, crafting, baking, and dancing.



UC Davis English also welcomes **Averyl Dietering**, who was unable to be reached for this column.

## Creative Writing M.A.s Conferred in June 2014

“woman with pickaxe”

**Emma Estrella**

“Goat Man”

**Joseph Hill**

“The Outer Reefs: A Novel”

**Ben Hinshaw**

“Small Gestures”

**Christina Magana**

“The Direction of You”

**Ryan Mattern**

“Fugue State”

**Tamer Mostafa**

“Reverse Jokes”

**Brandon Norris**

“You Will Be Made Whole”

**Ishelle Payer**

“What Animal”

**Susana Ponce**

## AUTHOR PROFILE: YIYUN LI



Yiyun Li grew up in Beijing and came to the United States in 1996. She attended the Iowa Writer's Workshop and has an M.F.A. in creative nonfiction writing from the University of Iowa. Her stories and essays have been published in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *Zoetrope: All-Story*, *Best American Short Stories*, *O Henry Prize Stories* and elsewhere. She has received grants and awards from the Lannan Foundation, the Whiting Foundation, and most recently, the Academy of Arts and Letters. She was selected by *Granta* as one of the Best Young American Novelists, and named by *The New Yorker* as one of top 20 fiction writers under age 40 from the US. Her debut collection, *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers*, won the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award, PEN/Hemingway Award, Guardian First Book Award, and California Book Award for first fiction. Her latest novel, *Kinder Than Solitude*, was published this year.

**Originally you were on track to be a scientist. What first sparked your interest in writing fiction?**

When I was in a science program I took a writing class and I fell in love with it, so I decided to give it a try.

**Would you say that your science background has influenced your work in any way?**

Not in terms of its subject matter, but I would say that I learned discipline from being a scientist and I learned to think things through. It is also very easy for me to do research. I've needed to do medical research, so I think I have benefited from my science background.

**What is it like telling stories in a language that you did not grow up speaking?**

Mostly it is to my advantage because it really makes me think through everything. When we use our native language, sometimes we just think through things very fast; we don't slow down, and, for me, I have to look at every word I write and ask, is this the right word? Does it say what I want to say? So it's a very slow process, but I think it helps my thinking.

**Are there aspects of your creative mind that don't quite translate?**

No, only because I've never written in Chinese. English is my first language as a writer so it became very natural, and, in the end, all my creative work was done in English.

**Your latest book, *Kinder Than Solitude*, was released earlier this year. Can you talk a bit about the inspiration behind this work?**

There was this case when I was in China about a young woman who was poisoned and the case was never resolved even though it was pretty clear who poisoned her. I wasn't really interested in that case, but I was interested in why people poison each other. I like to think about murder as a crime with plot, but poisoning is a special kind of murder. It is a very intimate murder, an intimate plot; you have to know the person, you have to be able to put poison in this person's food or drink. I'm always curious about poisoning. I also think that a lot of crimes are crimes of passion, but poisoning is not a crime of passion; poisoning is a really cold-hearted crime. Trying to wipe out someone without being caught: that's the psychology of someone who poisons another person. That act of violence, not physical, but psychological violence, is interesting to me.

*continued on page 17*

## AUTHOR PROFILE: YIYUN LI

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**What made you decide to write a mystery novel?**

The funny thing is, it's actually not a mystery. From the first page, you know who poisoned her. I especially set it up that way; the mystery is not what drives the novel. It is more about after, rather than before it. Real mystery focuses mostly on what leads to the poisoning and who does it, but I'm interested in the moment someone is poisoned and what happens to all the people around that person.

**What was your process like? How would you say that your work with UC Davis students has shaped your writing life?**

I write with discipline. What I write is mostly what I teach my students: how to tell the difference between a situation and a story because, often times, students have a situation, but they don't have a story. I see that again and again in my students' work and I see that in my work too. I will write for three days or two weeks and it's still a situation. How do you make the leap from situation to story? That's the same in teaching and in writing.

**Did you find the shift from being a writer to teaching writing difficult?**

I don't find it difficult even though they require different skills, but as a writer I'm slow. I have to think through things very slowly and when you teach you have to be a little faster. That makes me

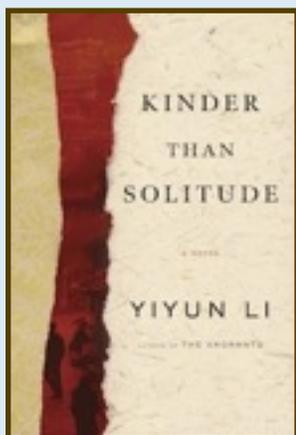
pay more attention to certain things. For instance, if you are lecturing in front of one-hundred-twenty students, you have to get their attention. It's all a performance. I'm realizing that teaching has a lot to do with performing.

**You were recently awarded the Benjamin H. Danks Award by the Academy of Arts and Letters. What does this award mean to you?**

I would imagine that it is a huge recognition. I like that they said that they do this every three years for either a musician, a writer or a playwright. It's an award for different kinds of artists so I am very happy.

**Do you have any advice for aspiring young writers?**

I think reading is the most important thing. I see students who are really eager to "be a writer" or "to become a writer" and to get published, but I think those things are really secondary. If you really are good you will get there, but without reading you will never become a good writer. I always say that they have to read good books before they can write good stories, so reading is always the most important thing.



"The surface of Yiyun Li's prose is deceptively still, but just beneath the surface is the sadness, pain and tragedy of three lives, each one driven into a kind of damaged solitude by the memory of the past. Her characters are portrayed with a harsh beauty, and one's emotions become deeply engaged with their fates, and by the mystery of a poisoned woman, a crime which has shaped - perhaps deformed - them all. This is an exceptional novel and Yiyun Li has grown into one of our major novelists."

- Salman Rushdie

"Yiyun Li has such an authentic voice, and she is not afraid of cutting to the bone to get to the truth of relationships and emotions. I believe *Kinder Than Solitude* is her best novel yet."

- Lisa See, author of *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*

# CREATIVE WRITING

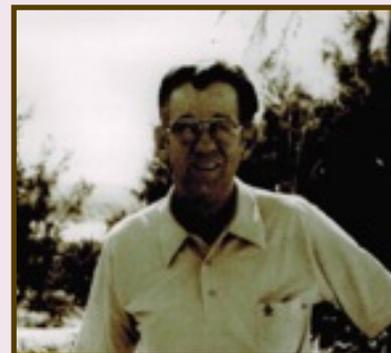
## The Maurice Prize



**Winner of the 2013  
Maurice Prize for Fiction:**

*Landfalls*

**Naomi Williams, M.A. 2007**

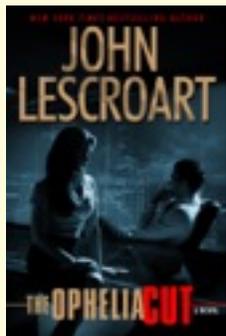


Maurice Lescroart

The UC Davis English Department and novelist John Lescroart are pleased to announce that Naomi Williams is the winner of the 9<sup>th</sup> annual Maurice Prize in Fiction contest. Naomi will receive the \$5,000 prize for her winning entry, *Landfalls*, selected from novels submitted this year. She is a 2007 graduate of the M.A. English program for creative writers.

*Landfalls* was selected the best novel submitted by M.A. alumni of the Creative Writing Program at UC Davis who have not published a book-length manuscript.

The Internet Loves You by Julia Alicia Case (Class of 2006) was selected as runner-up.



John's most recent novel, *The Ophelia Cut*, was published by Atria Books in May 2013

*New York Times* best-selling author **John Lescroart** established the Maurice Prize, which has been awarded yearly since 2005. The \$5,000 prize is a gift from John in honor of his father, Maurice, for whom the contest is named.

It is John's hope to inspire the department's graduates to publish their literary work; of the eight winners in the history of the Maurice Prize, five have gone on to achieve that goal of publication.



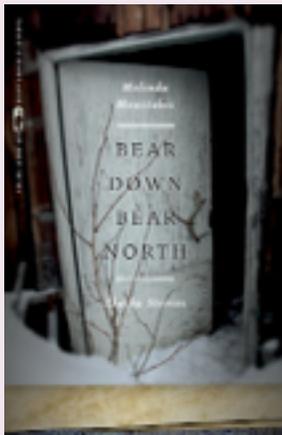
John Lescroart

# CREATIVE WRITING

## The Maurice Prize

Previous recipients of this award include:

**Cora Stryker**, 2012 winner (M.A. 2007), *The Evolution of Flight*



**Maria Kuznetsova**, 2011 winner (M.A. 2010), *The Accident*

**Melinda Moustakis**, 2010 winner (M.A. 2006), *Bear Down, Bear North* (University of Georgia Press, 2011)

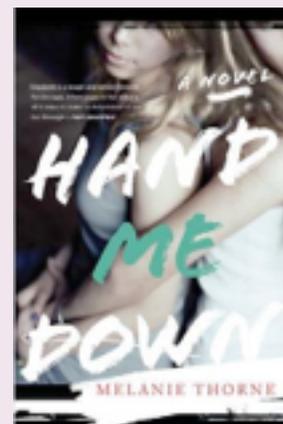


**Angie Chau**, 2009 winner (M.A. 2005), *A Map Back to You* (released as *Quiet As They Come* by IG Publishing, 2010)

**Melanie Thorne**, 2008 winner (M.A. 2006), *Hand Me Down* (Dutton, 2012)



**Elizabeth Chamberlin**, 2007 winner (M.A. 2006), *these people, they crawl all over the place*



**Shawna Ryan**, 2006 winner (M.A. 2001), *Locke 1928* (El Leon Literary Arts, 2007)

# CREATIVE WRITING

## Incoming Class, M.A. in Creative Writing, Fall 2014



**Marshall Callaway** has lived all over the United States, but thankfully cannot shake his Southern roots. His non-traditional educational and life journeys provide a bank of source material that even the FDIC would be loath to insure.

Nature, humanity, queerness, loss, and the absurdities of life inspire him to challenge traditional form. He is excited and humbled to join the program and see how he can add to it while making his superiors uncomfortable. In the best ways possible, of course.

Disneyland told the man that the incident with the overweight parkgoers and the derailed cruise-boat was grounds for a transfer, and that he must abandon his post at the Jungle Cruise and begin at the Dumbo Parade immediately. It was only a week later that he

was fired from the park for good – likely for incompetence, but Disneyland cited his "inability to adhere to the code of conduct," as the man refused to shave his neck beard. The man's mother, noticing her son's sullenness after losing his job, purchased tickets and coerced him into attending Jewish Singles Night at the Anaheim JCC. There, he would meet an overeducated Iowa-native, and together they would flee north and bring three boys with obscenely Biblical names into the world, Samuel, Joseph,



and **Jacob Garber**.

**Kateland Harte** Kateland was born in Florida. Her interests include language, film, food and politics. In Fall 2014, she will be a first-year fiction student and a TA in the English Department.



**Jennie Li** was born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii and holds a B.A. in English with an emphasis in creative writing from the University of San Diego. She enjoys writing about cultural and religious identity crises, and likes reading stories about adventure. When she's not reading or writing, she's probably at home watching baseball or *Running Man*. Her interests include short stories, ice cream, and traveling.

**(Nicholas Malone)** "known nervous poet& cool uncle natalie cornflakes: leaves contact cases absolutely everywhere; couch-sleeper; get him drunk and he can tell you- angrily- all about the meaning of the word "hipster;" likes to steal tp from any and every peet's coffee location; can't pronounce four-syllable words when excited; dries clothes in his oven; lives in a hobbit-hole despite being surprisingly tall; has had the same cover photo of a plastic chair for 2+ years; gets slightly offended if you don't know the difference between a moped and a scooter; has drank more espresso than most will in their entire lives."-DMoney



**Becky Mandelbaum** is from Lawrence, Kansas where she graduated from The University of Kansas with a BA in English and a penchant for making ornamental dolls out of human hair. For the past two years she worked as a passage writer for the Kansas Assessment Program, where she wrote the little stories and essays that appeared on standardized tests. As a result, large populations of anonymous Kansas children find her repulsive, which is okay since she will be far away from their sharp little teeth in Davis. Outside of writing she loves animals, road trips, and being outdoors.

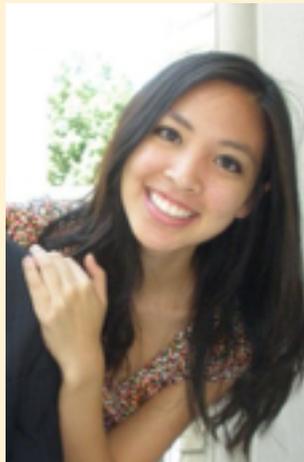


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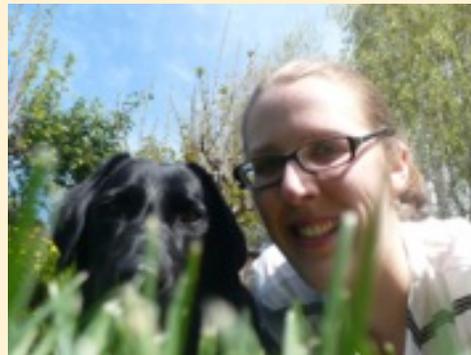
## Incoming Class, M.A. in Creative Writing, Fall 2014

*continued from page 20*

**Nancy Nguyen** and Richard Nixon don't share a lot in common. In fact, they are both very different and unrelated people. Still, they do share a select number of similarities. Richard Nixon was born in Yorba Linda, California. Nancy Nguyen lives in a neighboring city and has been to Yorba Linda a lot. Richard Nixon has his own library in Yorba Linda. Nancy Nguyen has once loitered at a library for so long that she had to be politely asked to leave. Richard Nixon had a five-o'clock shadow. Nancy Nguyen has a habit of standing very close to a mirror, touching her upper lip, and wondering if she should use hair-removal cream. Lastly, they were both born with volatile delusions. So Richard Nixon used his for--well, you know how it went. Nancy Nguyen uses hers to write.



**Lauren Swift** writes poems, but she would probably rather be watching reality tv. She likes to crochet while



she watches reality tv, so that she can be doubly productive. She thinks funfetti cupcakes are clearly the superior cupcake variety. She would watch a Star Wars

marathon with you any day. Her sport is bowling. She really likes the jokes they print on popsicle sticks. If you want to be friends with her, you must first gain the approval of her dog, Sir Beckett; a spoonful of peanut butter will usually do the trick, unless you are particularly suspicious.



Born in Seoul, **Seychelle [say-shell] Steiner** grew up in Sacramento but spent her summers in Hawaii. Although she enjoys surfing, one of her greatest fears was being attacked by a shark, which even caused her to avoid the deep end of the pool. She graduated from UC Davis with a B.A. in

English. Creatively, she is interested in contemporary realist fiction and enjoys authors like Flannery O'Connor and Julie Orringer.

**Christina Tremill** is a native West Virginian recently transplanted to Southern California. She has a BA in English from Houghton College. She also has a Master of Divinity from Duke University but somehow still isn't a god. She's worked as a receptionist, a writing tutor, a diner waitress, a nonprofit worker, and a probation office secretary, but her best job has probably been pizza delivery lady. Her favorite animal is the lemur.

(A friendly welcome as well to **Emma Boyce, Will Green, Amanda Hickock, and Sarah Murray** who could not be reached for the column)

# CREATIVE WRITING: GRAD & UNDERGRAD AWARDS

## Diana Lynn Bogart Prize for Fiction

1st Place  
Cristina Fries

2nd Place  
Ian Koller

3rd Place  
Jeffrey-Annguye Le

Honorable Mentions  
Angela Parnay

Emily Masuda

Seychelle Steiner

## Celeste Turner Wright Poetry Prize

1st Place  
Mary Kathryn Nielsen

## Ina Coolbrith Poetry Memorial Prize

*Finalists for the state & campus-wide contest*

Sergio Aguilar  
Wendah Alvarez  
Ester Yun

## Pamela Maus Contest in Creative Writing

FICTION: 1st Place  
Cristina Fries

FICTION: 2nd Place  
Joanna Ng

FICTION: HONORABLE MENTIONS ~ TIED  
Laurel Carney  
Isabel Moniz

POETRY: 1st Place  
Ester Yun

POETRY: 2nd Place  
Emily Nicol

POETRY: Honorable Mention  
Joanna Ng  
Isabel Moniz



The Diana Lynn Bogart Prize for Fiction recipients with Bruce Bogart. In order from left to right: Ian Koller, Bruce Bogart, Cristina Fries, Elizabeth Miller.

## Elliot Gilbert Memorial Prize

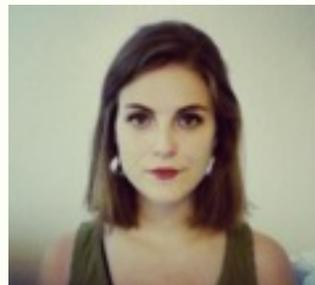
Fiction:

Lito Velazquez,  
"Sketches of Rooves"



Poetry:

Claire Pittman,  
"Soothing Behaviors"



# UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

## Undergraduate Lois Ann Lattin Rosenberg Departmental Awards



The Lois Ann Lattin Rosenberg award recipients with Lois Ann. This picture includes Annika Cunningham and Laurel Carney, both are winners of the Lois Ann Lattin Rosenberg Outstanding Graduating Senior Award with Annika also winning 1st place in the Lois Ann Lattin Rosenberg Essay Prize. In order from left to right: Lois Ann Lattin Rosenberg, Annika Cunningham, Laurel Carney, and Elizabeth Miller.

### **Outstanding Graduating Senior Award**

Annika Cunningham  
Laurel Carney

### **English Department Essay Prize**

1st place: Annika Cunningham

2<sup>nd</sup> place: Ben Kelly

### **Elliot Gilbert Prize for Best Honors Critical Thesis**

Katelan Bowden

### **Elliot Gilbert Prize for Best Honors Creative Project**

Cristina Fries

## UNDERGRADUATE SPOTLIGHT



Newsletter Co-Editor Sarah Haertig sat down with Laurel Carney and Annika Cunningham to discuss the research that helped them both win the Lois Ann Lattin Rosenberg Outstanding Graduating Senior Award. Annika also won the Lois Ann Lattin Rosenberg Essay Prize, while Laurel received honorable mention in the fiction category of the Pamela Maus Contest in Creative Writing.

**I am speaking to Laurel Carney about the research that led to her co-winning the Outstanding Graduating Senior Award. Could you tell us about your work and how you got started on this topic?**

I'm an English major, but I'm a double emphasis in creative writing and literature, so I wanted to create a

project that would allow me to do both. I started in the Mentorship for Undergraduate Research program, which allowed me to work with Professor Dolan. She helped me come up with this project that allowed me to focus on both literary criticism and creative writing. I looked at early-modern execution law and how it applied to pregnant women, specifically a law known as "pleading the belly." *continued on page 24*

*continued from page 23*

“Pleading the belly,” basically said that if you were convicted of a crime for which you would be executed, if you could convince the court that you were pregnant you would be awarded a temporary stay of execution until you had given birth. There were no pregnancy tests in this time period; what we knew about pregnant women’s bodies was inaccurate and varied depending on the source. A lot of it came down to how good a story a woman could tell, both in her testimony and also in the way that her body was read.



The woman would be taken to a room where she’d be examined by a jury of “matrons,” which were just randomly selected women, and they would look for signs of pregnancy on her body, sort

of reading her like a book, but they often had no idea what they were looking for. Their findings weren’t so much fact, but fiction influenced by early-modern science.

In terms of the creative portion, I wrote a series of short stories exploring those findings. My stories looked at both early modern and modern cases because I noticed while doing research that there were a lot of contemporary news stories about the crimes of women who were pregnant or had just given birth and the way that their stories were told and commented on was very similar to the way that women were read in the early-modern period. For example, there was a young woman convicted for shoplifting at a Victoria’s Secret who had a fetus in her shopping bag, which she claimed was the result of a miscarriage, but everyone assumed that it was infanticide. There was not a lot of information given to the public, but people analyzed and commented on her Facebook profile photos to try and diagnose what had happened. It seemed very similar to a lot of the pamphlets that were published about women in the early modern period.

**Same question for you, Annika. Could you describe your process and project?**

My research was for the Provost Undergraduate Fellowship and I received a grant to look at original fifteenth-century manuscripts of Chaucer’s “Book of the Duchess” poem (there are three of those) and that part involved getting access to special collections at the Bodleian Library at Oxford, so that, in itself, was way

more difficult than I thought it would be, but with the help from my mentor, Professor Chaganti, everything worked out really smoothly.



The second part of that project involved looking at medieval chess sets (that’s anywhere from the 11th to the 15th century). I looked mainly at the Lewis Chessmen, which was a 12th century chess set that they have at the Scottish Museum of National Antiquities and the British Museum. I also looked at Medieval chess sets in Sweden. Ultimately, I took all of that information, did a lot of reading and wrote a thesis project arguing that instead of interpreting the chess metaphor in Chaucer’s “Book of the Duchess” as a problematic metaphor that misplaces and misuses the rules of chess, we can look at the visual and three dimensional qualities of chess in the Middle Ages to see how a medieval reader might have approached reading the poem. A lot of the research involved, not only looking at the actual text of the manuscript, but also its visual qualities like how the font looked and if there was marginalia.

Both Laurel and Annika are considering applying to graduate school in the upcoming year. Annika is interested in studying Latin and continuing her research in the field of Medieval Studies, while Laurel is interested in the ever-illusory “writing gig” that tempts all English majors in the great beyond after college.

# UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

## Citations for Outstanding Performance

Each year, the Department of English awards citations for excellence to undergraduates in the major program. In order to qualify for this citation, the student must maintain a GPA of 3.7 or above in upper-division coursework in the major, and/or participate in the English Department Honors Program. The English Department congratulates the following students for meeting these criteria during 2012-2013:

### 2014 Undergraduate Program Citation Winners



Jordan Russell Blough  
 Brittany Lee Ann Bogan  
 Katelan Emmaline Bowden  
 Natalie Ann Kaiulani Boyd  
 Molly Polstra Burke  
 Amanda D. Burnett  
 Lucas Simoes Cardoso  
 Laurel Anne Carney  
 Thomas Theodore Carruthers  
 Annika Joyce Cunningham  
 Anna Jo Curry  
 Falon Marie Darville  
 Manasa Kumari Davuluri  
 Vanessa Lizveth Diaz  
 Cristina Fries  
 Molly Joye Grames  
 Katherine Michelle Green  
 My-Linh Mylene Caroline Ha  
 Andrea Nicolaou Hadjiyianni  
 Rebekah Marie Hartford  
 Robert Christopher Hoile  
 Hanna Ju  
 Stephen Jason Jungco  
 Benjamin Paul Kelly

Jillian Laurel Kern  
 Alyssa Brianne Kuhlman  
 Ellen Nicole Labitzke  
 Albert Eric Lehman  
 Zoie Christine Lopez  
 Kevin Thomas McCormick  
 Felicia Rose Megowan  
 Naomi Catherine Nishihara  
 Neha Palacherla  
 Brinton Megan Parker  
 Hope Louise Pedersen  
 James Telford Pierce  
 Reza David Pourmikail  
 Kimberly Jean Procida  
 Jimmy Recinos  
 Hannah Noel Sharafian  
 Lauren Taylor Sintou  
 Seychelle Christine Steiner  
 Tony Tang  
 Jenny Lee Taylor  
 Erik Michael Turner  
 Marisa Tyler Wohlschlaeger  
 Evan Lance Young  
 Alyssa Marie Ziegenhorn

## A FOND FAREWELL TO JANIE AND LEVADA!



The department said goodbye to two of its most beloved faces this year as Janie Guhin and Levada McDowell retired to enjoy life outside the academic calendar! Click [here](#) to see Janie's bombastic musical sendoff!



### *English Newsletter 2013-2014*

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and **Sarah Haertig**

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**John Marx, and Ryan Page**

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**John Marx, Margaret Ferguson,**  
**Kathleen Frederickson, Yiyun**

**Lee, Laurel Carney, and Annika**  
**Cunningham**

Photos: **Gina Bloom, Sarah**  
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