LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

As George Eliot writes in *Middlemarch,* “The bias of human nature to be slow in correspondence triumphs even over the present quickening in the general pace of things.” And so I submit this year’s “Letter from the Chair” a few days past my deadline, even as I summarize a year that seemed to pass more quickly and eventfully than the last.

This was my second year as Chair, a busy year during which I taught a new class (“Children's Literature”), worked with a new dean (Interim Dean Susan Kaiser), and welcomed three wonderful new faculty members to the English Department (Professors Tobias Menley, Katie Peterson, and Margaret Ronda). We also bid farewell to two valued colleagues, Professors Don Abbott and Lynn Freed, both of whom retired at the end of the academic year (profiled on pages 5 and 19). And we hired a new faculty member, Professor Stephanie Boluk, a specialist in critical video games studies who will be joining us in the fall after leaving her current position as an Assistant Professor at Pratt Institute in New York. On the first floor of Voorhies Hall, we welcomed two fantastic new staff members, Robin Alexander and Vicki Highy Sweeney.

As Chair, I am grateful every day to work with such a superb staff, and offer particular thanks to those with whom I have worked most closely this past year: Lynda Jones, our peerless Undergraduate Adviser; Darla Tafoya, Chief Administrative Officer extraordinaire; and Mary White, Assistant to the Chair and Gamekeeper for the Voorhies Courtyard. (Our unofficial mascot, Tigerlily, is pictured below.) I have continued to work closely this year with those members of our faculty who share the administrative work of the department: Professor Lucy Corin, Director of Creative Writing; Professor Mark Jerng, Director of Graduate Studies; and Professor Matthew Stratton, Director of Undergraduate Studies. All of them undertook vital innovations in our programs this year, and all will continue serving in these important roles for the 2015-16 academic year.

2014-15 will go down as a banner year for English Department teaching awards, as several members of our department earned much-deserved recognition for outstanding contributions to teaching. Professor Margaret Ferguson received the 2015 Distinguished Teaching Award for Graduate and Professional Teaching from the Academic Senate, having been nominated by Professor Fran Dolan and by a group of former graduate students whose touching letter of nomination describes Ferguson as a model of “rigor, innovation, collegiality, and integrity.” As a testament, in part, to the excellent training our graduate students receive, I am proud to say that four out of fourteen of the Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Awards bestowed by UC Davis this past year went to Ph.D. candidates in English: Ian Afflerbach, Jordan Carroll, Jasmine Kitis, and Sara Petrosillo.

Department faculty members also won numerous awards this year in recognition of scholarship and creative activity. To offer a partial list: Fran Dolan was awarded the John Ben Snow Prize from the North American Conference for British Studies for her book, *True Relations: Reading, Literature, and Evidence in Seventeenth-Century England;* Lynn Freed's story “The Way Things Are Going” was awarded an O. Henry Prize and included in the volume *The O. Henry Prize Stories 2015;* Elizabeth Freeman won the Norman Foerster Prize for the best essay published in *American Literature* in 2014, as well as an ACLS Fellowship for 2015-16 in support of her new book-in-progress; Yiyan Li was awarded the Sunday Times EFG Short Story Award for “A Sheltered Woman,” which originally appeared in *The New Yorker,* and her new novel, *Kinder Than Solitude,* was also longlisted for the PEN/Open Book Award; Colin Milburn received a “New Directions Fellowship” from the Mellon Foundation, with which he will pursue additional training in computer science to extend his expertise in the emerging field of critical game studies, and was also honored with the Distinguished Scholarship Award from the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts; and finally, just this past week, Margaret Ronda was awarded $27,000 in support of her research from the UC Davis Hellman Fellowship.

At our annual year-end celebration, we had a chance to recognize our remarkable undergraduate majors, whose prizes and achievements are detailed later in this newsletter (pages 20-22). But let me take the opportunity here to recognize those who graduated with Highest Honors in the major, since we didn’t yet have this list determined at that event: Hannah Bright, Margaret Gonzalez, Thalia Holingue, Stephanie Hoogstad, Akira Kumamoto, Brian Leach, Mitchell Snyder, and Sara Wendel. I had the chance to meet the families of these and other graduating students at the department’s Graduation Brunch for English majors. The Brunch is a tradition that we happily revived this year after several years of dormancy, and I am grateful to the staff and faculty that helped make the event a success.

Let me close by thanking our two extraordinary newsletter editors, Tobias Wilson-Bates and Dyani Johns, both of whom are Ph.D. candidates in the department. Please enjoy!

Yours truly,

Elizabeth C. Miller
FACULTY INTERVIEW: MARGARET RONDA

Margaret Ronda specializes in American poetry from the nineteenth century to the present. Particular areas of interest include Marxist criticism, aesthetic and genre theory, ecological literary modes, and avant-garde poetics. Her current book project, *Remainders: Poetry at Nature’s End*, attends to the ways American poets and poems dramatize an ever-clearer sense of planetary environmental crisis by reimagining poetic genres such as georgic, pastoral, and elegy. She has held fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies and the Center for Cultural Analysis at Rutgers University.

Dyani Johns Tafl: How has your time at Davis been so far? When did you get here and what have you been up to since you arrived?

Margaret Ronda: We arrived in July, and I was on leave for fall and winter quarters. I was working on my own research and on a chapter for the forthcoming *Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century American Women Poets* (ed. Linda Kinnahan). The chapter will be titled “At the edge of what we know: Gender and Environment in American Poetry.” Now I’m teaching a Love and Desire in American Poetry class for undergraduate English majors, and a graduate course in poetics, and they are terrific! I love Davis so far. It’s very warm, welcoming, and rigorous, busy. It offers a nice combination of space and time for research and communal feeling.

DJT: What research are you working on currently and/or what is your next project about?


I’m working as well on an essay for a book of ecotheory called *Veer Ecology*, which is edited by Jeffrey Cohen. This book offers a keywords approach to contemporary ecological questions and ecological theory. My chapter is called “Obsolesce,” and it follows on part of the framework of my book project, which concerns obsolescence as a key topos for thinking about post-war poetics and post-war ecology. So it’s taking some of the ideas from the book and applying them more generally to ecological issues of the present.

DJT: What do you think of the state of the humanities?

MR: There are two answers, and they’re inextricably linked. Institutionally and economically, the humanities are in crisis, and they are radically underfunded and taken for granted within the larger conditions of the neoliberal university. We’re working under increasingly untenable conditions, and it is crucial to keep articulating a defense and a careful description of what we do in the humanities: what we teach, how we teach, how we ourselves undertake critical thinking in various ways, and how necessary that is. As we critique larger institutional structures, there’s also a kind of importance--an urgency--in needing to define what we do more clearly.

But it’s also true that terms of our discipline, there’s so much exciting and important work that is being done right now. It is a really interesting time to be studying English, because some of the dominant frameworks that structured our profession for a lot of years have waned, and there are many new intellectual possibilities emerging. And you could frame that as a declension narrative, but you could also see it as a moment of opening up and re-examining what we do, a kind of field-clearing.

DJT: What is an experience, hobby, or passion, outside of academia that’s important to you and why?

MR: It’s really important to me and my family to be in the outdoors, so part of the great joy of moving back to California is getting to be near the Sierras and the Yuba River area. We’ve been spending a lot of time hiking and bicycling, which is really wonderful.

We lived in the Berkeley / Oakland area for several years, and the Central Valley is so different--it’s just a different kind of ecological culture, this agrarian cultural landscape, and it’s really interesting to me--intellectually and personally--to become a central valley person, in a way: to get to know the land culture here. I think there are certain generalizations people make about Northern California, as though it’s all one kind of culture or place, but the central valley is really distinctive. So part of getting out and exploring, for us, is exploring the distinctiveness of this area and its culture in its complexities and unevenness and its politics.
Margaret Ferguson was awarded the 2015 Distinguished Teaching Award for Graduate and Professional Teaching. As the letter of announcement explains, "This award is one of the most prestigious granted on the UC Davis campus and recognizes outstanding teaching and commitment to student success."

Lynn Freed's story "The Way Things Are Going," published in Harper's Magazine in August 2013, has been awarded an O. Henry Prize and will be included in the volume The O. Henry Prize Stories (2015).

Beth Freeman has been awarded an ACLS Fellowship, one of the most prestigious awards available to faculty in the humanities. Beth will use her fellowship time on her book-in-progress, tentatively titled It Goes Without Saying: Sense-Methods in the United States's Very Long Nineteenth Century. Beth has also won the Norman B. Foerster Prize for the best essay published in American Literature in 2014. Her winning essay is titled "Sacra/mentality in Djuna Barnes's Nightwood." This is a major honor from one of the top journals in literary studies. Beth will receive a cash prize and the award will be officially presented at MLA in January 2015. Lastly, her essay "Connecticut Yankings: Mark Twain and the Masturbating Dude" came out in Dana Luciano and Ivy Wilson, eds., Unsettled States: Nineteenth Century American Literary Studies (NYU Press, 2014).

Danielle Heard held three fellowships in 2014-15: a Hellman Fellowship, a DHI Faculty Fellowship, and a Faculty Development Grant.


John Marx worked on a collaborative on-line publication that went live in the spring called Humanities / Work: https://humanitieswork.wordpress.com/. As of this May, he has joined the journal Novel: A Forum on Fiction, where he is one of four Senior Editors, along with Nancy Armstrong, Timothy Bewes, and Ellen Rooney.

Tobias Menely's essay "Anthropocene Air" appeared in the Minnesota Review in Fall 2014.

Colin Milburn was awarded the Distinguished Scholarship Award from the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts. This is a career award for a whole body of scholarship, and past recipients have included luminaries in the field. Colin has also been awarded a "New Directions Fellowship" from the Mellon Foundation. This highly prestigious fellowship is intended to support faculty members who engage in "serious interdisciplinary research" to acquire additional, systematic training in their fields of interdisciplinary engagement. Colin will pursue additional training in computer science to extend his expertise in the emerging field of critical game studies.

Margaret Ronda has been awarded a Hellman Fellowship for 2015-16. This fellowship is intended to support "the research of promising Assistant Professors who exhibit potential for great distinction in their research."

Scott Simmon edited the recently rediscovered 1938 Orson Welles film Too Much Johnson. Welles's unfinished movie—lost for 75 years—along with Scott's "reimaging" of how the film might have been put together had it been completed is now available online on the National Film Preservation Foundation's website: www.filmpreservation.org/preserved-films/lost-and-found-mercury-theater-films. Simmon's edit premiered at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles in May.

Yiyun Li's Kinder Than Solitude was long-listed for the 2015 PEN/Open Book Award. Her short story, "A Sheltered Woman," won the Sunday Times EFG Short Story Award, billed as "the world's richest prize for a single short story." She is the first woman to ever receive the £30,000 prize!

Fran Dolan has been awarded the John Ben Snow Prize for her book, True Relations: Reading, Literature, and Evidence in Seventeenth-Century England. The reviewers remarked on how Dolan “reminds us that our own contemporary reading practices are grounded in seventeenth-century innovations that paired the notion that the ‘real’ is constructed with a methodology that demanded multiple interpretive maneuvers.”

This year brought national recognition to several superlative publications by Davis faculty!
Tobias Menely’s *The Animal Claim* has received high praise from UC Berkeley’s Kevis Goodman, who writes that “Readers will come away from this remarkable book reconsidering many of their ideas about the eighteenth century. Among its many accomplishments, *The Animal Claim* demonstrates the centrality of poetry not only to the period’s literature but also to the history of political advocacy. With its emphasis on sound and metaphor, its ability to convey affective pressures in excess of word and idea, poetry remediates the unrecognized creaturely voice and represents it—in both the linguistic and political senses of representation—in the public sphere. Menely reminds us that criticism at its finest can be passionate work.”

Hsuan Hsu’s *Sitting in Darkness* was published by NYU Press in February of 2015. The book has netted significant praise, with Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Professor of English and Director of American Studies at Stanford University, calling it “A brilliant book that will add immeasurably to Mark Twain studies, American literary studies, and the field of comparative studies of race and ethnicity. Exciting, well-written, and filled with surprising, unexpected connections, *Sitting in Darkness* contributes to our understanding of the history of comparative racialization in America while deftly placing literature in legal and social contexts that are truly illuminating.”

Evan Watkins’ new book *Literacy Work in the Reign of Human Capital* comes out from Fordham University Press in July 2015. The book explores how literacy workers are subjected to the relations between new forms of labor and the concept of human capital as a dominant economic structure in the United States. It is about how literacies become forms of value producing labor in everyday life both within and beyond the workplace itself.

As Watkins shows, apprehending the meaning of literacy work requires an understanding of how literacies have changed in relation to not only technology but also to labor, capital, and economics. The emergence of new literacies has produced considerable debate over basic definitions as well as the complexities of gain and loss. At the same time, the visibility of these debates between advocates of old versus new literacies has obscured the development of more fundamental changes. Most significantly, Watkins argues, it is no longer possible to represent human capital solely as the kind of long-term resource that Gary Becker and other neoclassical economists have defined. Like corporate inventory and business management practices, human capital—labor—now also appears in a “just-in-time” form, as if a power of action on the occasion rather than a capital asset in reserve.
Professor **Alessa Johns** has published *Bluestocking Feminism and British Cultural Transfer, 1750-1837* with the University of Michigan Press. Her book examines the cultural transfer between Britain and Germany during the Personal Union, the period from 1714 to 1837 when the kings of England were simultaneously Electors of Hanover. Johns traces four cultural exchanges: the book trade, the rage for translation, the effect of revolution on travel and travel writing, and the impact of transatlantic journeys on visions of reform.

**Joshua Clover**'s new book of poems, *Red Epic*, is the first release of a partnership between Commune Editions and AK Press. Entertainment Weekly describes Clover as a trickster who “writes poems with quick bursts of beautiful images and prose-poems that mix different conversational voices—combining romance, politics, literary theory, and humor,” while Lana Turner remarks on how he “consciously dedicates himself and his poems to the present’s global wave of struggles.”

**Don Abbott** will retire from the English Department effective July 1. Don joined the faculty of the University of California Davis in 1982 as an Assistant Professor in what was then the Department of Rhetoric. When the College of Letters and Sciences was reorganized in 1996, he joined the English Department.


He regularly taught such courses as Renaissance Literature, Freedom of Expression, and Literary Censorship. He also taught an “Origins of Rhetoric” course for the Classics Program. From 1982-2010 he was the faculty director of the UC Davis Debate program.

Professor Abbott had extensive administrative duties while at Davis and served as the Director of Graduate Studies from 2000-2002. Other positions included Director, Pacific Regional Humanities Center (2006-07); Program Director, Nature and Culture (2006-07); Department Chair, East Asian Languages & Literatures (1999-2000 and 2003-2004); Director, Medieval and Early Modern Studies Program (2008-10); and Associate Dean of the College of Letters & Science, (2004-05).

Dyani Johns Taff: So how has your time at Davis been so far?

Tobias Menely: Really good. I had the first quarter off and I taught a graduate seminar on eighteenth-century georgic and locodescription, in the winter. Now I’m teaching two undergraduate classes, a lecture on the rise of the novel and a smaller class on end-time narrative. I’ve also been participating in a Davis Humanities Institute research cluster on “Temporality and its Limits,” chaired by Sudipta Sen (who, it happens, taught me African and Indian history when I was an undergraduate at Beloit College two decades ago).

DJT: What research are you working on currently and/or what is your next project about?

TM: I’ve been working for about five years on a project about climate change that I am calling “The Climatological Unconscious.” I’m thinking about three key categories: atmosphere and air, climate, and energy. For the past year, I’ve been writing about energy, about the ways in which natural philosophers and poets, before the science of thermodynamics, conceptualized the relation of energy to political economy, as Britain was transitioning to a coal-based energy regime.

What is energy? What is climate? We don’t really know. All three of the categories I’m studying describe phenomena to which we only have indirect access. Consider energy: you can’t see it, you can only see its effects, the “work” it accomplishes. Of these three phenomena, we have the most direct phenomenological access to air, but even this is limited. I just published an article in *The Minnesota Review* about the way in which historical materialists persistently use air or atmosphere to figure ideality and non-being. Yet air turns out to be the matter, the literal matter, that determines history, in the form of greenhouses gases (which are themselves a kind of energy converter, transforming solar radiation into the planetary climate).

Or consider climate: According to the World Meteorological Organization, a climate is a thirty-year duration of temperature and weather patterns, so, by definition, climate *change* is oxymoronic because climate is an abstraction that excludes change within a given period so that you can see a stable condition.

In this new project, I want to recover some of the eighteenth-century meanings of the term “unconscious.” Yes, I’m engaging with Lacan and the title is obviously an homage to Jameson—the book is very much about the way in which literary history and particularly literary form might “unconsciously” mediate a historicity that exceeds social relations—but I’m also working with a more simple and yet very useful definition of the unconscious: those things of which we are unaware.

DJT: What do you think of the state of the humanities?

TM: What’s complicated about this moment in the humanities is that we’re dealing with the restructuring of the university, and that’s probably an ongoing process, but after 2008 and the recession, the neoliberal imperatives became stronger, so that’s led to declining numbers of majors, and consequently declining numbers of academic jobs, which makes it more difficult for our graduate students to find jobs. This has led to a lot of internal reflection and questioning. So there’s that set of issues that has to do with the restructuring of the institution.

And then there’s another set of questions that have to do with the relevance of the humanities for the twenty-first century and the particular historical conditions that we’re grappling with. So for instance, literary studies: what’s the relevance of the literary tradition in a world in which printed literature is no longer a central connecting aesthetic form through which society reproduces itself, as it was in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries?

DJT: So how do you personally reconcile this issue?

TM: My professional life has been dedicated to writing about obscure eighteenth-century poetry. I do believe that this research has a value: that we can understand the predicaments of the present by our knowledge of the past. I believe that literature provides privileged insight into the symbolic domain, and that it is the symbolic that organizes our ways of knowing and acting in the world.
First off, thanks so much to John Marx for his service as Graduate Adviser last year. Among many other things, Marx worked with Molly McCarthy, Associate Director of the Davis Humanities Institute, in order to build a set of programs called “Ph.D. Unlimited.” In addition to building opportunities for PhD students to learn about how the PhD can be mobilized toward non-academic work, these events and programs have created much-needed conversations around the humanities Ph.D. Marx also helped usher in our new graduate program staff, Robin Alexander and Darolyn Striley, who have successfully managed the ins and outs of graduate program administration in order to serve our students. Big thanks go to them for their hard work.

I have very much enjoyed my first year as Graduate Adviser and feel extremely privileged to be working with such talented graduate students and faculty. I have learned first hand just how much the energy and intellectual vitality of the program relies on graduate students. To give a small sampling: the EGSA chairs, Annette Hulbert and Josef Nguyen, have done a tremendous job helping organize events such as the Graduate Scholar’s Symposium (the most recent one on the topic of “Crisis”), as well as various panels and workshops on the prospects and on others aspects of the graduate program; the EGSA Women’s Caucus Co-Chairs, Meagen Youngdahl and Megan Arkenberg, have put on important events such as a workshop on mental health; the Women’s Caucus worked with EGSA Grad Ally Representative Samantha Snively as well in order to put on events such as the recent Teaching Materials workshop. Graduate students Bonnie Roy and Angie Lewandowski have helped organize events for the Environmental Societies Mellon Initiative Colloquiums and host guest speakers. Whether it is in responding to a paper from a guest speaker, giving a paper at the Digital Premodern Symposium, or helping organize and contribute to DHI Research Clusters such as “Temporality and Its Limits,” the English Department graduate students provide the spark for the intellectual life of the department.

Our graduate students are thriving in many aspects of academic work. Just this past year, their work has been published and/or accepted in top journals such as American Literature, Modern Fiction Studies, and Contemporary Literature, among others. They are delivering papers and organizing panels at regional, national, and international conferences – I was heartened to see so many from our department delivering papers on prestigious panels at the Modern Language Association Annual Meeting. On campus, graduate students continue to earn recognition for their research and teaching. Sara Petrosillo won the David Noel Miller Award for outstanding essay in literary criticism. Her winning essay is titled, “To bear in her womb infinite weight and lightness: Mediating the Womb Across Medieval and Early Modern Drama.” She won a 2015-2016 Bilinski Fellowship in a campus-wide competition. Ian Afflerbach won a 2015-2016 Provost’s Dissertation Fellowship. And our graduate students represented the English Department extremely well by winning four of the fourteen Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Awards. These teaching award winners were: Ian Afflerbach, Jordan Carroll, Jasmine Kitses, and Sara Petrosillo.

Finally, I want to congratulate those students who have accepted jobs at both academic and non-academic positions. Kristen Aldebol has accepted a full-time Lecturer position at Clemson University. Pearl Chaozon-Bauer has just accepted a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of English at Notre Dame University. Nicole Kenley has accepted a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of American Literature at Simpson University. Sarah Klotz has accepted a tenure-track Assistant Professor position at Butte Community College. Kelly Neil has been working as a communications coordinator for a non-profit that focuses on mental health and abuse issues. Kelley Deane McKinney is Head of Operations and Marketing at Chromatik. During my first year as Graduate Adviser, I have been working hard with the Graduate Committee (Scott Simmon, Desirée Martin, Parama Roy, Claire Waters, Michael Ziser) to think holistically about all the major phases of the graduate program: curriculum; exams; dissertation writing. Specifically, we wanted to address students’ concerns about the job market and address students’ needs across academic and non-academic employment prospects. We also wanted to make the qualifying exam and prospectus work better for students and make sure there was more continuity in the program across the difficult transitions from preliminary exam to qualifying exam and from qualifying exam to dissertation writing. The changes to the graduate program that have been approved include: 1) incorporating a set of courses in the curriculum built around specific “research practices.” These may include everything from workshops on digital methods to courses on doing cultural studies methodologies within literary argumentation; 2) changing the tenor of the prospectus and qualifying exam so that a student is not so much tested on an argument that they have not written yet and more on the viability of the research questions and approaches to those questions that the student has developed; 3) creating a first-chapter meeting for the student so that there is more continuity in advising across the gap between the end of the qualifying exam and dissertation writing. I am excited about these changes and the ways that they help address particular needs in the training of our graduate students. I will be sending out more information on this as we begin to implement these changes.

Finally, I want to thank the graduate students for all the work they do in helping recruit our outstanding incoming first year class of PhD students. These students represent a variety of fields from early modern to romanticism, ecocriticism, poetics, U.S. ethnic literatures, and digital humanities. I am excited for the year to come.
Ph.D.s Conferred 2014-2015


**Ph.D. Program News & Awards**

**Ph.D.s Conferred 2014-2015**

**Pearl Chaozon-Bauer**, Performatve Subversions: the Epithalamium, Sappho, and the Victorians

**William Elliot**, ‘Losing Alaska to the Name Itself’: Elegy and Futurity in a Changing North

**Jasmine Kitses**, Simple Marks: Moments of Punctuation in Twentieth-Century Poetry

**Nicole Kenley**, Detecting Globalization: America’s Emerging Genre of Global Detective Fiction

**Bryan Wallis**, The Greatest Light is the Greatest Shade: Wendell Berry and the Darkness of Coexistence

**Martin Weis**, Bio-Gaming: the Real Biopolitics of Virtual Bodies

**Peter Weise**, Voice beyond Language: Rethinking Sound Studies for British Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century

**M.A., English Literature**

**Zachary Kissinger**, The Consequences of Paradox: Gravitating Bodies and Spatiotemporality in Mark Z. Danielewski’s House of Leaves

**Emma Krosschell**, Native Traces and an “ethereal northern sort” of Maine Ideology in Jewett’s The Country of the Pointed Firs

**Kim Swanberg**, Imagined Spaces and the Limits of Sympathy: Sensibility, Race, and Illness in the Colonial West Indies

**George Vela**, Cast Down Your Bullets Where You Are: Nat Love Works the Western

**Melissa Wang**, An Indictment of Whiteness: Zora Neale Hurston’s *Seraph on the Suwanee*

**Simon Abramowitsch** presented his research on independent multi-ethnic newspapers, journals, and magazines in the Bay Area in the 1960s and 1970s entitled: “‘Counter-Institutions Are the Answer, Man!’: Multi-Ethnic Publishing in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1970s” at the Bancroft Library Roundtable Talk. At this year’s MLA convention he spoke on a roundtable panel dedicated to Amiri Baraka’s essays, “Amiri Baraka and the African American Essay Tradition.” The title of his paper was: “‘An Operational Framework’: Amiri Baraka’s ‘Communications Project,’ the Black Arts Essay, and the Praxis of the Black Arts Movement.” Finally, this spring, he was selected to serve on the Graduate Student Advisory Committee for Humanists@Work for 2015-2016. “Humanists@Work is a UC-wide initiative geared towards UC Humanities and humanistic Social Science MAs and PhDs interested in careers outside/alongside the academy.” The project is housed at the UC Humanities Research Institute and is also partnered with the Modern Language Association’s "Connected Academics: Preparing Doctoral Students of Language and Literature for a Variety of Careers."
PH.D. PROGRAM NEWS & AWARDS

2014-2015 Awards and Announcements

The Provost Fellowship for continuing Ph.D. students for 2015-2016 was awarded to Ian Afflerbach.

The Bilinski Fellowship for research in the humanities has been awarded to Sara Petrosillo for 2015-2016.

Elizabeth Crachiolo and Jordan Carroll have been awarded Professors for the Future Fellowships for 2015-16.

English Department Distinguished Dissertation Fellowships have been awarded to Katie Leveling, Michael Martel, and Sara Petrosillo.

The David Noel Miller Scholarship Essay Prize for the best English graduate-student essay of the previous academic year was awarded to Sara Petrosillo for her essay titled "'To bear in her womb infinite weight and lightness': Mediating the Womb Across Medieval and Early Modern Drama."

George Thomas has been awarded the department’s exchange position with Johannes Gutenberg Universitat in Mainz, Germany for 2015-2016.

Elizabeth Crachiolo and Michael Martel have been awarded HArCS Dean's Summer Fellowships.

Recent Placement News

Academic:
Kristen Aldebol, Clemson University, (Full-Time Lecturer)

Valerie Billing, Knox College, (Assistant Professor)

Pearl Chaozon-Bauer, Notre Dame de Namur University, (Assistant Professor)

Matt Franks, University of West Georgia, (Assistant Professor)

Nicole Kenley, Simpson University, (Assistant Professor)

Sarah Klotz, Butte College, (Assistant Professor)

Kelly Neil, Spartanburg Methodist College, (Assistant Professor)

Vanessa Rapatz, Ball State University, (Assistant Professor)

Non-Academic:
Kelley Deane McKinney, Head of Operations & Marketing at Chromatik, working to make the world's largest community of practicing musicians. Chromatik was recently voted onto Inc. Magazine's 30 Under 30 Entrepreneurs.

Kim Swanberg, Communications Coordinator for the Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS) in Santa Rosa, a nonprofit that works on issues related to mental health, substance abuse, and suicide prevention.
This year yielded an incredible four Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Awards for the English Department. We approached the pedagogues for some insight into what makes an outstanding undergraduate course!

Ian Afflerbach
On the day Alessa visited my English 3 class, we had just begun reading Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Sign of the Four*. After opening remarks on the popularity and influence of Sherlock Holmes, I screened a brief clip from the BBC’s current series *Sherlock*, in which Holmes applies his Science of Deduction to Watson’s cell phone—formerly a pocket watch. Having grasped Sherlock’s method, we then stepped back to consider the ways that *The Sign’s* plot both enrolls and limits our participation in its mystery. Finally, I asked students to reconstruct the network of clues littered throughout the story. From these, we discussed what makes a clue stand out as such; as markers of difference, these aberrations from social norms prepared us for our discussion of Orientalism and Victorian Culture in the next class.

Jasmine Kitses
Writing about poetry can be intimidating to students. In English 3, we did an assignment called the “poetry dissection,” in which students chose a poem from our course reader and pulled it apart, line by line, down to the parts of speech, sound structures, patterns of rhyme, rhythm, and imagery, before writing an essay based on their findings. In the memos they attached to their essays many students discussed how time-consuming and frustrating this process could be, but nearly all of them wrote about how the activity was ultimately rewarding—it helped them uncover something about the poem that wasn’t initially evident; helped deepen their analysis and support their claims with real evidence; helped them find their voice in the paper, or begin the process of writing. For many students, this was the moment when they discovered what literary analysis looked like. And the essays were great!

Sara Petrosillo
Teaching “ENL 10A: Literatures in English I: to 1700” meant that I was ecstatic about the material, but initially my students were intimidated. The notion of anonymous scribes penning anonymous stories in a language that looks and sounds foreign was something we embraced through hands-on and ears-on experiences. Working with Shields Special Collections, I arranged a private exhibit in our library’s special collections so that students could see, smell, and nearly touch the calfskin parchment of real medieval manuscripts. Even more memorable were the weekly reading groups in which we practiced Middle English pronunciation towards the goal of a memorized recitation—which was, of course, how I first fell in love with medieval poetry as an undergraduate myself!

Jordan Carroll
I believe that the primary goal of teaching literature is to show students that things could be otherwise. Putting this idea into practice in ENL 3, I encouraged students to read closely by asking them, “What if the author had written this differently?” By providing alternative versions of the text and asking them to explain how the revisions made a difference, I helped students see that slight variations in language can result in significant changes in meaning. By demonstrating this point, I hoped to lead students to see that there is nothing inevitable about the way we use language.
PH.D. PROGRAM

Incoming Ph.D. Class in Their Own Words

David Barrera received a B.A. in English and Rhetoric from UC Berkeley and a M.A. in English from CSU Long Beach. Following graduation, he participated in a research project at UCLA that examined the role of 19th century cartography in the reimagining of borders across the Americas and the production of writings by Latinas/os. At UC Davis, he hopes to continue his research and studies in late 19th and early 20th century American literature, Chicana/o and Latina/o literature, visual culture, and critical race theory. When the books are on the shelf, he enjoys playing guitar, exploring the outdoors, and meeting new people.

Ben Blackman did his undergraduate studies at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, getting degrees in English and Communication Arts. There, his interests in technology and anatomy led to the production of a thesis that explored posthumanism as a consequence of fragmented corporeality. In graduate school, he hopes to build on the term ‘posthumanism’ and elucidate the future of human-machine imbroglios by integrating literary analysis with questions surrounding artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and cyborgs. He is looking forward to a winter without the polar vortex.

Rachael DeWitt received her BA from Colorado College where she majored in philosophy and wrote a thesis comparing the writings of Jacques Derrida and the paintings of Anselm Kiefer. After two years of working as a journalist in Washington, DC, and Portland, Oregon covering the arts and environmental beats, Rachael returned to the Mountain West for her MA in Environmental Humanities. At Utah she focused on literary studies and the overlapping experiences of inhabiting landscape and text. She has returned to her native Bay Area to continue her ecocritical interests in 19th century American and contemporary west African literatures.

Ranjodh Singh Dhaliwal did his undergraduate degree in Computer Science and Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology Indore, India, where an encounter with Gabo’s prose led him into a love affair with all things literary. He then attended The University of Chicago as a Graduate Student-at-Large, taking courses in English, Comparative Literature, and Creative Writing. His current interests revolve around contemporary literature (especially, the properties of electronic literature - like ephemerality) and the digital methodologies presently used for literary analysis. When he is not planning his next month-long backpacking trip, he can be found ruminating over the awkwardness of writing a third-person bio about oneself.

Kristin George-Bagdanov earned her BA from Westmont College in Santa Barbara, CA, and her MFA in poetry from Colorado State University, where she was a Lilly Graduate Fellow. Her research interests include contemporary ecopoetics, the American lyric, the Anthropocene, and ecofeminism. Kristin’s poetry can be found in The Cincinnati Review, Juked, Mid-American Review, Berkeley Poetry Review, and other journals; her work can also be found at www.kristingeorgebagdanov.com. In her spare time she likes being outside and cooking, preferably at the same time and near some large body of water. She is the poetry editor of Ruminate Magazine.

Elizabeth Giardina earned her B.A. at Rutgers University, focusing on Romantic and ecocritical literature and thought. Having grown up near a toxic Superfund site affecting the Ramapo Nation, she acquired a specific interest in slow violence as well as environmental degradation’s disproportional effect on minority cultures in general. During her gap year in Chiang Mai, Thailand, this point was further emphasized in comparison with the two local cultures - the minority hill tribes and the majority Thai population - different uses and definitions of nature. Elizabeth enjoys traveling, her pets, and outdoor activities, including hiking and climbing.
Incoming Ph.D. Class in Their Own Words

Yasmine Hachimi received her BA in English with a minor in Medieval and Renaissance Studies from the University of San Diego in May. While completing her undergraduate degree, Yasmine’s love of British literature led her to Oxford, England where she studied at the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. She is interested in the ways Early Modern writing undermines or reinforces the oppression of women and wrote her senior thesis on Henry VIII's performance of power in his love letters to Anne Boleyn. Yasmine is also interested in digital humanities, erotic literature, and 18th century novels.

Kristen Hanley Cardozo started as an illustration major at the Maryland Institute, College of Art in 1997 but left in 1999 to start a family. Three children later, she returned to her undergraduate education, this time as an English major at Mills College, where she graduated in May 2014 with the Reinhardt Graduate Purse. She is interested in the intersections of identity in Victorian literature, as well as crime in fiction. Outside of academia, she writes knitting patterns, humor pieces, and personal essays. She is very excited to take on this next twist in the road.

Jackson Hodge received his BA in English this past spring from Yale University. He spent one of his years as an undergraduate at Balliol College in Oxford, where his studies of early medieval and premodern English lyric fed a more coherent interest in narrative folk music, the American ballad and the modern genre of folk opera. Having served his time in Englands both Old and New, he looks forward to coming home to Northern California for good. In the habit of working where he plays, he enjoys singing and songwriting, gaming and game industry journalism, carpentry, cooking, and working with animals.

Michael Hazel Mlekoday is the author of a book of poems, The Dead Eat Everything (Kent State University Press, 2014), and is a National Poetry Slam champion. In high school, Mlekoday and a friend “invented” a “new” philosophy called Neo-Marxist-Tolkienism, and not much has changed since then. Mlekoday holds a B.A. from the University of Minnesota, an M.A. from Kansas State University, and an M.F.A. in creative writing / poetry from Indiana University. In addition to poetics, Mlekoday’s research interests include queer and transgender studies, black studies, ecocriticism, Pokémon, riots, and revolutionary theory.

Wilson Taylor pursued an interdisciplinary course of study at Bowdoin College, where a double-major in history and religion with a minor in English ignited his passion for literary and theoretical investigation of modernity. Wilson is inspired by critical theory and continental philosophy, which has invited him to theorize literature as a counter-modern discourse; he is specifically interested in interrogating how literature articulates or imagines a critical stance within or against modernity. Particularly drawn to nineteenth and twentieth century American literature, in 2013 he developed an online project dedicated to invigorating critical conversations surrounding Kurt Vonnegut, and he has presented Vonnegut-related work at conferences in New York City and Washington, D.C. Additionally, Wilson is interested in hiking, wandering through museums, and making (and eating) ice-cream.
Our graduating Creative Writing Masters have various plans for the future. Congratulations to all, and we wish you much success in letters.

A.J. Fitzgerald completed “Ablutions” and will stay in Davis for the summer to teach in the Extension’s English for Science & Technology program. In September, he will drive through Canada to New York where he will apply for teaching and science writing jobs, MFA programs, fellowships, and an Italian passport.

Sarah Haughn finished her project “Cauling,” and now departs and departs not: she’ll be a Ph.D. in Performance Studies here at UC Davis this fall and looks forward to continued labor in the interstices of poetry, scholarship, and birthing practices.

Victor Luo wrapped up “Third Wheels: Stories” and will return to his native Los Angeles where he’ll continue to write and work on his novel.

Emily Meehan put the finishing touches on “The Momhunt” and will spend the summer in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where she will finish work on her fiction project, Saving Anna Karenina and Other Stories, as well as developing two feature scripts for production in Canada and Luxembourg through her production banner with three female writers, FEMME, and revise the memoir that is her thesis.

Lissa Miller presented her thesis “A Windless Tide” and now plans to keep writing until her mind starts to go. After that, she’ll probably spend more time with her family.

Julia Neal completed “The House on Ellen Street: Stories” and will spend the summer exploring both coasts, and, whether she settles by the Atlantic or Pacific, there will be writing involved.

Mary-Kathryn Nielsen finished work on “House of Cedar,” and will be moving to Emeryville and working at a tech startup in downtown Berkeley where she’ll be telling stories and spreading the word as a Copywriter.

Claire Lewis Pittman gained her degree with “What Will I Do When I Feel Better” and now plans to load all her belongings into her car and drive around the country until she finds someplace to settle down, poetically.

Lito Velázquez compiled this list of future plans after finishing his “Immediate Beings” and will remain in Davis to write, publish, celebrate, work, and adventure.

Meagen Youngdahl wrapped up work on her concisely titled “Room: Poems” and will be moving to Lawrence, Kansas where she will pursue a Ph.D. in creative writing and literature at the University of Kansas.

Robin Schramm’s “Graduate Thesis of Awesome Awesomeness” speaks for itself.

Congratulations to the winners of this year’s Elliot Gilbert Memorial Prize:

Poetry:
Claire Pittman
Fiction:
Christina Turner

Celeste Turner Wright Poetry Prize

1st Place
Lissa Miller ($100)

Lissa will receive her award prize from The Academy of American Poets, and a one-year membership to the Academy, a subscription to the Academy's journal American Poet and her name listed in the Academy's Annual Report

Judge: Greg Glazner

Emily Meehan was so impressed by some of her students’ short responses to writing prompts in her ENL 5F (introduction to writing fiction) class fall quarter, that she put together a literary journal of their polished final drafts of these responses.

The journal is called Prompts and launched online on May 31st as an annual publication alongside a reading (pictured below). She is opening up submissions to any young people under 24 without a Master’s Degree, but they must respond to one of the writing prompts listed on the journal.

The journal is intended as a celebration of young writers’ use of writing prompts to hone their craft. The results are very impressive!

The website of the journal is promptlist.net
Dyani Johns Taff: How has your time at Davis been so far?

Katie Peterson: It’s been great! I actually only taught one class in the winter, and that was an undergraduate poetry workshop. And I found the students to be generous and interesting and crazy and I feel as if, when they come into a small class like a workshop, they are so grateful for the dignity of the environment, because they are in so many large classes. Very little that we do in class is truly “on the internet.” Nothing we do in class involves web-based maneuvers. And I actually think that they are grateful for that, for the apparent simplicity of that, when they’re looking at the primary technologies of poetry.

DJT: Anything else about your initial experiences?

KP: One hallmark of my experience is that I feel as if I’m always walking past that frat on the corner, and they’re always playing beer pong, or something like that, and I’m always going in to do some brainy thing or coming out to do some brainy thing, and they are consistently playing some form of beer pong. And it feels a bit like a Wes Anderson movie.

DJT: What research are you currently working on?

KP: I have a manuscript that is called Two Americans that I’m trying to bring to completion, and it’s a little bit about American dreams and American nightmares together, and it’s a little bit about traveling in Europe, a little bit about traveling in Alaska, a little bit about the desert. So it’s about these landscapes on the extreme edges of America and these places outside of America, but the scale of the poems is actually very small, and they are mainly poems about two people in some context having some experience together, and they’re about the difficulty of having an experience at all. The other thing I’m working on is a set of poems that I hope to become a book length narrative project about Woodland, California, where I lived for a bit in the summers in the last two years and then for the first half of the winter. It’s based on two characters and their lives and it has a lot to do, I think, with a totally fictional imaginative history of those parts and those people. I’ve just added a third character who’s a painter, and I’m excited about exploring the brain and life of this slightly sleazy persona, who is also interested in aesthetics and paint and all of these things on the surface.

DJT: Do you have any pie-in-the-sky projects that are on the horizon?

KP: My partner, Youngsoo Suh, is the chair of the studio art program here, and we’ve made an artist’s book together called A Piece of Good News about climate change. We’re making some other books now. We’re also collaborating on a new video project. We are interested in how the tone of talking about the environment has become so dour and lacking in any sense of laconic tone. I was just sitting in a colloquium with the brilliant Margaret Ronda, who described how people in ecocriticism are thinking about the tone of comedy. Looking at climate change tragically is almost to be in love with our sorrow that we’ve brought to the planet. But if you think of it as a comic endeavor, you start thinking of it as a form of social critique, in the way that Shakespeare’s comedies are all social critiques of a way of building civilization. So our new video project is really a continuation of this tone from A Piece of Good News, and it has a lot to do with struggle within experience and with the comic aspect of that, and the beautiful aspects. It involves things like someone trying to do something very ordinary and difficult in a ridiculous place, like making a steaming hot cup of tea, in a perfect cup, in the middle of the desert, or someone embracing a donkey with authentic and genuine love. We’re interested in contrasts. We’re interested in the beautiful aspects of survival, in what the best possible day might look like in a world that sometimes feels like the worst possible world.

DJT: What do you think of the state of the humanities?

KP: I’ll tell you what I feel the humanities preserves and what I think it should preserve. I think the reason why I chose to write lyric poetry is because to me, more than any other genre, it seemed to preserve this on-one-on relationship between the poem and the person. I know other people have different ideas, but that’s my idea. And it’s a no-growth industry, lyric poetry, a human-scale institution. It has something to teach us about learning from each other in this regard. Novels are a growth industry. One wishes a larger readership. With poetry, maybe you wish for the right readership. By this I think I mean, you wish sometimes just for one reader, for the right reader, to pick up a poem, just as you wish for the right poem to come your way. And in a sense, when I think of the humanities, I think that people who find their way into these classrooms are people who have a notion that there is an interior, that they’re interested in thinking critically about how they hit their environment, and about how their environment judges and hits them back. And because of that, in terms of the state of the humanities, I admire everything in the humanities that wishes to preserve that, like small class sizes, like the introduction of students to the book and the idea of the book, and like the ways in which we make texts relevant to people now in a way we didn’t used to, and like the way we offer up interpretations and strategies that bring us closer to each other, even if that closeness is uncomfortable, especially when that closeness is uncomfortable.

DJT: What is an experience, hobby, or passion, outside of academia that’s important to you and why?

KP: Something outside of academia. Well, I hope I can keep poetry outside of academia! If that’s possible, even if only in my mind. I spend a fair amount of time in the wilderness, and wilderness landscapes have been a pretty important and formative part of my life. I’m not a consumer of film, but I’m a kind of studied watcher of certain lush and gorgeous filmmakers like Chris Marker, Andrei Tarkovsky, and Terrence Malick, and Chantal Akerman—people who can make the image beautiful and still while still having it move, people who slow down the world. And you’ve come by at exactly the time in the afternoon when I generally get distracted looking at the New York Times website of recipes for dinner. I love cooking, but I’m not a gourmet cook, neither am I that interested in being a gourmet cook. I’m a minimalist, California cook, but I love thinking about how to put something together on a plate that’s simple and delicious and that people will enjoy.
The Maurice Prize

Winner of the 2014 Maurice Prize for Fiction:

Poor as You Are, My Heart, Don’t Grieve Here on Earth

Kiik Araki-Kawaguchi

The UC Davis English Department and novelist John Lescroart are pleased to announce that Kiik Araki-Kawaguchi is the winner of the 10th annual Maurice Prize in Fiction contest. Kiik will receive the $5,000 prize for his winning entry, Poor as You Are, My Heart, Don’t Grieve Here on Earth, selected from novels submitted this year.

The text 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.

Amerikai by Johnny Huscher was selected as runner-up.

Judge Manuel Muñoz writes, “Bold and extravagant, this novel crisscrosses the perspectives of an imprisoned, but not always broken, population of a Japanese internment camp in Arizona. Here, the fantastic emerges as a natural—maybe the only—response to the harshness of the real. This is a fine example of an underwritten historical moment reexamined with the compassion of the artistic gaze. The result is as beautiful and diaphanous as the work of Yasunari Kawabata.”

He passed along his congratulations to all the writers who submitted their work, saying: “It is no easy feat to have a manuscript of this size ready for outside eyes and there was such polish and attention in all of the work. It’s an enviably talented group.”

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 seven winners in the history of the Maurice Prize, five have gone on to achieve that goal of publication.

John’s most recent novel, The Ophelia Cut, was published by Atria Books in May 2013.
The Maurice Prize

Previous recipients of this award include:

**Naomi Williams**, 2013 winner (M.A. 2007), *Landfalls*

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

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


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

Incoming Creative Writers in Their Own Words

Chelsea H. Bryan: A fiction writer who has pretended for three years to be an aerospace journalist by writing about what Boeing did and quoting one CEO or another repeatedly; Chelsea H. Bryan, who keeps that damned H. in her name because she's white and has white-people ideas, but also isn't, because she's Osage -- another one of those first generation off-the-reservation kids who wants the family name to live on after marriage, hence H.; Chelsea H. Bryan, who loves California primarily for the strange kinds of plants she finds there, which inspire endless folk songs for her band; Chelsea H. Bryan, who writes her best sentences in un-punctuated emails sent to both loved ones and strangers.

Diana Chan is a native Californian with transpacific family roots concentrated in Hong Kong. She graduated from UC Davis with dual BA degrees in English and Asian American Studies; she is excited to return for her MA in Creative Writing. Between the then and the now, she worked as an editor in education publishing and called the SF Bay Area her home. She participates in art activism. She is allergic to cats, dust, and stereotypes. Although this paragraph is nonfiction, Diana is a fiction writer.

My name is Jamil Kochai. I was born in 1992 in Peshawar, Pakistan, though my family originally hails from Logar, Afghanistan. I've lived for the past fifteen years in West Sacramento. I speak Pakhto and English and a butchered version of Farsi. I'm a practicing Muslim, a graduate of the English department at Sacramento State, and a big fan of Iranian film, postcolonial literature, boxing, basketball, It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, Kabuli Palow, and the 49ers.

Ryan Horner can most often be found alone at the wedding receptions of friends, hovering around the desserts table, shooting what he believes are confident glances at each passing potential conversation partner. The glances are largely unsuccessful. At this particular reception he's shooting you a death glare (he imagines icicles forming beneath his eyes). He's a little peeved that you've got the gall to show at all, honestly. He had so many things to discuss with you, once, so many things under the sun to show you. Long ago. You could have at least called, maybe. Ryan hails from Indiana and writes fiction.
Incoming Creative Writers in Their Own Words

Zach Kennedy-Lopez is kinda like a hedgehog in that he can initially give off the impression of being prickly, but that’s probably more a reflection of being introverted and a bit on the shy side than anything else. Since graduating from Southern Oregon University, he’s worked for the largest independent audiobook company in the US and as a wordslinger and occasionally truthbender for a corporation specializing in overpriced food gifts. He’s lived just a little too long in a pretentious little mountain town where deer use the crosswalks (no joke; it’s weird) and tourists make life hell for the better part of the year (#firstworldproblems). He likes fuzzy critters, cooking, and big books, and is prone to irreverence, cursing, and generally being a dork.

Cody Stetzel pushes through the brush to peer at the watering hole. He licks his lips. The nalgene bottle is empty. After spending time, he has often wondered as to why. And while the experiences he's garnered so far are important, there's always something else to explore, isn't there? He's taken up doing cartwheels to cure the boredom of standing around (and perhaps to gain control over those situations which 'flip your world upside down'). Isn't as much of a drinker as one would expect of a poor poet. And will occasionally break into song after hours of silence.

All of the people who know Emma Train well will tell you that she has no “filter.” To Emma, this means that she is an open and honest individual, but to all others, this means that Emma can be a bit indiscreet, at times. For example, on a camping trip, Emma has (accidentally) told her friend, Kerri, that her ass is “wide.” For example, on a sunny beach, Emma has (accidentally) told a stranger, whose four year old was curiously looking at her bikini body, that her son is exhibiting misogynistic tendencies. Furthermore, due to an acute deafness caused by her middle school heavy metal phase, Emma often loud-talks when she thinks she is whispering. While driving, this has caused her to insult pedestrians and other drivers because she forgot the window was down. This has also caused Emma to drop the F-bomb multiple times a day at her place of work, which also happens to be a school. Despite these incidents—and many more—those that meet Emma Train find her positively charming.

A warm welcome to Mia Carli and Nick Yingling whom we were unable to contact in time for the newsletter.
Pam Houston on Lynn Freed’s Retirement

Exacting, formidable, hilarious, and precise, Lynn Freed was born in Durban, South Africa, and first came to America to attend graduate school at Columbia, where she received both an MA and a PHD in English Literature. She is the author of six novels, including The Mirror, House of Women, and The Servants Quarters; a collection of short stories called The Curse of the Appropriate Man; and a memoir called Reading, Writing, and Leaving Home. She publishes regularly in The New Yorker, The Atlantic Monthly and Harper’s as well as many other publications around the country and the world. In 2002 she was the inaugural winner of the Katherine Anne Porter Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and in recent years she had received both Pen and O. Henry Prizes for the stories “The Way Things Are Going” and “Sunshine.”

What I love most about Lynn’s work is that—it like Lynn herself—pulls no punches. She aims that steady, slightly sardonic gaze at a thing and refuses to look away, no matter how dark, no matter how unpalatable, no matter how polite the company. Her narrative scalpel is always sharpened so it works fast and quiet, like the teeth of a cheetah. The prose so elegant, so dignified; the content so disquieting and yet familiar; the tension ratcheted higher on every page. By story’s end, the reader is left content so disquieting and yet familiar; the tension ratcheted higher on every page. By story’s end, the reader is left

In the New York Times, reviewer William Boyd said “Freed’s great strength as a writer—like Anne Tyler and Muriel Spark, to name but two—is that she realizes ‘normal’ is a word that barely, if ever applies to human beings in real life, let alone in serious fiction.” And Lynn’s life is anything but normal. She taught at Davis only two quarters per year, and when we couldn’t reach her by email it was because she’d taken the only passenger berth on a container ship going round the horn of Africa, or had retreated to a Franciscan monastery deep in the Céscassone.

In the classroom, Lynn did not suffer fools, nor whiners, nor sloppy grammarians, nor those who wrote stories that lacked a narrative thread. When she first arrived at Davis she had a red stamp that said “Where’s the story?” that the newly arrived graduate students whispered about and feared. A lights out reader and editor, Lynn’s policy ran somewhere along the lines of “writing is serious business, if you take yourself and your work seriously, I will take it seriously with you.” She called her students “darling.” I guess she called all of us “darling.” Beneath Lynn’s exacting exterior beats a giant generous heart and a wicked wicked sense of humor. Making Lynn laugh—and she has a wonderful laugh—is one of the most satisfying things in the world.

We were, quite literally, graced with Lynn Freed’s talent, teaching prowess and life force these last sixteen years, and though we will miss her, we like imagining her on an Icebreaker, or a goat path, or the Orient Express, her keen eye and ear always gathering more stories.

-Pam Houston

Selection from Freed’s essay: When Enough Is Enough:

Age and the Creative Experience

The place was full of well-heeled European couples—men in signet rings and expensive loafers, their ample women bronzed and bejeweled. There were Germans, Swiss, French; some Italians. Except for the noise of a few raucous children, the talk was, on the whole, unanimated, desultory, conjugal. Clearly this was the sort of place to which men brought their wives.

“A table for one, please,” I said.

“Ah!” He hesitated for some seconds, and then headed off to a small table between the serving station and a bush. “Please,” he said, pulling out a chair.

But I had not come halfway around the world to sit at a table behind a bush. Being chosen to dance is one thing; being chosen by the fat boy quite another. “No,” I said. “I can see nothing from here.”

Folkloric dancing was included in the so-called dining experience, and even though I might have wished to sit that out behind a bush—not being at all keen on folkloric dancing, especially the sort that promises to include members of the audience, Zorba-style—I would not, just because I was a woman alone, submit meekly to being placed out of sight.

I walked to an empty table that commanded a view not only of the dance floor but also of the sunset over the Mediterranean, the beach, a pod of Germans emerging from the water, and a yacht anchored out in the bay. “Here,” I said, sitting down. “I shall sit here.”

It occurred to me, as the wine steward rolled into his spiel, that ten years ago this man might have found a way to sound me out, make suggestions on the sly. Now he wouldn’t dare. It had been a magical transformation, happening so gradually as to be hardly noticeable in the process, like tooth decay. Still, there was real pleasure in the change. I could stroll into town without fielding flirtatious onslaughts from men. And I could sit now in solitary triumph at the premier table I had won for myself, and order food and wine like a dowager. I was content.
Undergraduate Departmental Awards

**Outstanding Graduating Senior Award**
Mitchell Snyder & Akira Kumamoto

**English Department Essay Prize**
1st place: Alannah Clark (110B), "This is OUR Time: Postmodernist Struggle in 1980's Teen Films"
2nd place (tie): Brian Wright (113A), "The Black Knight's Veiled Death in Chaucer's Book of Duchess" Rebecca Fong (117), "Mortimer in Henry IV, Part I: The Lover as an Unfit Leader"

**Elliot Gilbert Memorial Prize for the Best Honors Critical Thesis**
Margaret Gonzalez
Thesis title: Feigning Ophelia: Performed Madness and Female Authority

**Elliot Gilbert Memorial Prize for Best Honors Creative Project**
Emily Nicol
Title: Trust Me, I am Okay

**Pamela Maus Contest in Creative Writing**

**POETRY: 1st Place**
Akira Kumamoto ($700)

**POETRY: 2nd Place**
Nawid Ahray ($100)
Sydney Choi ($200)

**POETRY: 3rd Place**
Don Abbott was contest chair/coordinator for the year.

**Diana Lynn Bogart Prize for Fiction**
1st Place—Co-winners
Anita Yu ($1,000)
Emily Masuda ($1,000)

2nd Place
Nicholas Troughton ($800)

3rd Place
Iris Bloomfield ($700)

Honorable Mentions
Mason Harper ($250)
Julia Baker ($250)

Judges: Emma Boyce, Jacob Garber, Will Greene, Pam Houston, Rebecca Mandelbaum, and Seychelle Steiner

**Ina Coolbrith Poetry Memorial Prize**
Finalists for the state & campus-wide contest
~Antony Fangary, Honorable Mention ($100)
~Iris Bloomfield
~Akira Kumamoto

Judge: Joshua Clover judged the entire contest system wide this year for UC Davis.
Mitchell Snyder

I got bitten by the Steinbeck bug spring quarter of last year, after taking Professor Jack Hicks’ Steinbeck and California Literature classes. This fall, I began research in earnest, looking into texts that interested me and trying to find an angle that was viable yet unexplored. Eventually, I settled on what was to be my honors thesis: the collaborative elements of Steinbeck and his bon ami, Edward Ricketts in The Log from the Sea of Cortez. Winter quarter saw me attending an honors seminar, workshopping and refining my thesis with a wonderful and supportive group of amazing scholars, under the supervision of Margaret Ferguson. From that foundation, I was able to emerge with a thesis that I feel is a testament to the work I’ve put into it, albeit after many, many drafts. Overall, I attribute my success to the fact that the hours of writing and re-writing shone through the pages of my thesis. This allowed my scholarship to be recognized by the Lois Ann Lattin Rosenberg Outstanding Graduating Senior panel.

I expect to begin my full-time job the middle of June, which will first and foremost involve my pursuing any meaningful career out there. Eventually, I hope to return to academia older (and therefore wiser) and pursue a professorial position.

Akira Kumamoto

I worked on both a critical honors thesis and a creative honors thesis over the past school year. My critical honors thesis was titled “Self-Medicating in San Francisco: A Critical Examination of Heterotopic Spaces and the Placebic Reclamation of Space in the Film Medicine for Melancholy.” Under the mentorship of professor Hsuan Hsu, I examined how Michel Foucault’s theory of the heterotopic space manifested itself in urban gentrified cities and how marginalized individuals, specifically people of color, placebicly used these areas to alleviate their shrinking physical and cultural spaces. I used Barry Jenkins’ film Medicine for Melancholy as my case study because I’m interested highlighting and studying alternative and independent work by marginalized individuals – I believe university English programs in the U.S. have yet to emphasize the importance of “non-essentialist” English texts by marginalized individuals, and this is exactly why I focused my thesis on this topic (plus I am extremely concerned with the grueling effects of gentrification).

My creative thesis was a collection of 48 poems titled “When you get here [and other poems about 400 mile commutes].” Under the mentorship of professor Joe Wenderoth, I wrote about my experiences of growing up in the Long Beach/L.A./San Pedro area, the contrast of that to my life in Davis, and touched on personal experiences regarding my Japanese-Mexican heritage, my family, city life vs. small towns, and dealing with debilitating mental illness, amongst many other things.

After I graduate, I will be moving to Berkeley to attend graduate school. I have accepted an offer from the University of California, Berkeley’s Journalism Graduate Program (Class of 2017) with an emphasis on narrative journalism and a focus on art criticism and culture. I will be attending the program with my tuition covered by the Dean’s Merit Scholarship and I have also accepted The Johnathan Rodgers Fellowship for diversity in journalism. Getting to attend this UC Berkeley’s J-School is a dream-come-true and it would not have happened if I did not have the support of UC Davis’ amazing English faculty and my awesome English-major peers.
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 2014-2015:

2015 Undergraduate Program Citation Winners

Sergio Baruc Aguilar
Victoria Elise Augusto
Beneel Babaei
Hannah Star Bright
Eleanor Ione Jones Cardell
Toshi Nicole Casey
Benjamin L. Chang
Rachel Denise Chase
Anna Louise Cheek
Caitlin June Glassman
Margaret Meyers Gonzalez
Brittney Yvonne Gregory
Kiaya Rachelle Heise
Hayley Victoria Hill
Thalia Louise Holiungue
Stephanie Marie Hoogstad
Grayson Timothy Hough
Molly Katherine Jones
Isaiah Jurado
Stephanie Elizabeth Keider
Benjamin Paul Kelly

Ryan Gannon King
Akira Olivia Kumamoto
Brian David Leach
Michelle Claudia Lee
Megan Elizabeth Liska
Justin Tyler Lucero
Sarah Margaret Luibel
Kylina Jordan Matteoli
Amber Nichole McIntyre
Stefanie Kazue Molina
Monica Linh Caoile Nguyen
Emily Marie Nicol
Natalie Neils Parke
Jamie Raquel Petersen
Samantha Katalin Rados
Kimberly Ho Sims
Mitchell Patrick Snyder
Owen Zachary Somerfeld
Savannah Stender
Daniel Minoru Hiraga Stephens
Sarah Elise Wendel
**ALUMNI NEWS & PUBLICATIONS SPOTLIGHT**

**Andrew Gross** has been named chair of North American Studies at the University of Goettingen, Germany.

**Clarke W. Owens** has a new novel about climate change scheduled for a July 31, 2015 publish date. Pre-order is available on amazon.com.

**Elise Winn Pollard** has been awarded a 2015 emerging writer grant for $19,400.00. The Elizabeth George Foundation awards grants to help emerging writers, poets and playwrights complete a work-in-progress. The foundation also awards grants to youth organizations that help in the same area.

**Maria Kuznetsova** has been accepted to the Iowa Writer’s Workshop starting in the Fall of 2015!

**Marit MacArthur**, who is currently Associate Professor of English at CSU Bakersfield, has been awarded an ACLS Digital Innovations Fellowship for her project Poetry Performance and Pitch Tracking: Tools for Sound Studies. She will be hosted by the ModLab at UC Davis for the term of her fellowship.

You can read more about Marit’s project [here](#).

**Chris Schaberg’s** new book *Deconstructing Brad Pitt* just came out: it’s an interdisciplinary study of the actor and celebrity. You can find more about it at [here](#).
Peter Hays had an extremely prodigious year. In November of 2014 he published *Fifty Years of Hemingway Criticism* with Scarecrow Press. His article “Hemingway as Political Writer” appeared in the Spring 2015 issue of *The Hemingway Review*, and his chapter “Hemingway, PTSD, and Clinical Depression” was published in *Teaching Hemingway and War* from Kent State University Press. He penned a performance review of *All My Sons* for the Spring and Fall 2014 issue of *The Arthur Miller Journal*, and he will be attending and giving papers at Coloquio Ernest Hemingway 15 in Havana, Cuba as well as The Arthur Miller Centennial in Brooklyn, New York. He continues as the secretary of the Executive Board of the UCD Emeriti Association.

Linda Morris published an article in the *Mark Twain Annual* in 2014, Vol 12, entitled “Twice-Told Tales: Aunt Sally Phelps and the ‘Evasion’ in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.” She also published an article in *Women and Comedy* entitled “Domestic Manners of the Americans: A Transatlantic Phenomenon.” The publication date is officially 2013, but the book came out more recently with Fairleigh Dickinson University Press and was edited by Peter Dickinson, Anne Higgins, Paul St. Pierre, Diana Solomon, and Sean Zwagerman.