Fall Faculty Lecture

Professor Frances E. Dolan was the featured speaker for the 2005 Fall Faculty Lecture. Professor Dolan specializes in Early Modern literature and culture.


My current project, “Marriage and Violence: Our Early Modern Legacy,” builds on the research I’ve been conducting for years into the complexities of early modern English culture (1550-1700). But it is as informed by my own experience living in the world today as it is by my reading of early modern pamphlets, diaries, ballads, plays, trials, and legal statutes. I am attempting to respond to my students, who consistently bring me newspaper clippings, advise me to watch Desperate Housewives, and tell me that I have to see JLo in Enough—immediately. I don’t think that they are trying to divert me from the rigors of historical study by luring me into a discussion of the familiar, the popular. Instead, I have come to see that they find the present disturbing and bewildering and they are wondering if the past can help them understand it. They perceive deep continuities between present and past and they want to explore them. So do I.

My particular focus in this project is marriage. Today, marriage is celebrated as the enduring foundation on which the rest of society builds. For instance, in his 2004 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush described marriage as “one of the most fundamental, enduring institutions of our civilization.” Yet this claim that marriage is a foundation often precedes the claim that it needs to be shored up. Marriage requires “defense” and “protection” in the form of educational programs and financial incentives that would promote “healthy marriage” and bans on same-sex marriage. Even the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996, the first to define marriage at a federal level, is not enough.

James Dobson, for instance, argues that we need a Federal Marriage Amendment to the Constitution in order “to define this historic institution exclusively as being between one man and one woman.” Dobson urges his readers to “find the wisdom and strength to defend the legacy of marriage,” through political action and personal choice. But what precisely is that legacy? My book offers an assessment of one particular origin of our ideas about marriage, arguing that we need to understand the provenance and content of this legacy before we can assess its value. As I show, to the extent that marriage is a legacy it is a burdensome one. Marriage is certainly “historic,” as Dobson describes it, but its history is one of constant, constitutive crisis and conflict.

What do we even mean by “marriage”? This question is at the center of recent debates. While debate usually focuses on who can or should marry, the most basic question remains: what does it mean to be married? What is the shape of the intimate relationship that marriage sanctions? Our fundamental definitions of this fundamental institution are contradictory. On the one hand, marriage is defined as a loving, erotic bond between two equal individuals. On the other hand, it is construed as a hierarchy in which one loses oneself. The conflicts among different models of marriage are often taken as evidence that marriage is in unprecedented crisis. I argue, instead, that these conflicts are the history of marriage. They are thus manifestations of continuity rather than rupture. We have inherited these models, and the irreconcilable differences among them, from early modern England.

In that time and place, a radically visionary model of marriage as a loving partnership between equals emerged into prominent visibility, in part because of the Protestant Reformation. While this ideal was not wholly new, it first found stable institutionalization, full articulation, and broad dissemination in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Its promise remains unfulfilled because it never replaced a model of marriage as a hierarchy in which the husband must take the lead and the wife must obey. Similarly, the ideal of marriage as a contract coexists uneasily with the ideal of marriage as a near-mystical fusion in which one loses oneself. The tensions among these models lodge the potential for violent conflict at the very core of marriage.

In my book, I am especially interested in a legacy that does violence to spouses by suggesting that marriage only has room for one of them. Early modern religious, legal,
From the Chair

Next year should be a very exciting one for the English Department. It will have a new chair, Margaret Ferguson; the University Writing Program will have a new director, Christopher Thaiss; and the Division of Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies will have a new dean, Jessie Ann Owens.

In addition the department will have three new faculty members, Mark Jerng in Asian American Studies, Parama Roy in Postcolonial Literature and Theory, and John Marx, also in Postcolonial Literature and Theory. (Professor Marx will not actually be on campus until the fall of 2007.)

I confess that I have some regret that I won’t be in the thick of all these changes, but I am ready to have Margie occupy the chair I have leaned back in for the past three years, and I am ready to retire after teaching at Davis for 35 years. So next fall I will be an avid fan sitting in the stands watching the plays develop. Jeannette and I plan to stay in Davis. (I find it interesting that the typical questions I am asked by people who learn I am retiring are, Are you going to move? Any travel plans? What will you do now? The most common comment is, Congratulations?) The biggest change in our lives may be going camping in the middle of the week instead of on weekends. I plan to continue photographing and writing.

I have no trouble whatsoever saying what is most rewarding about being chair. It is working with the people in the department. This goes especially for the staff. They are the ones I see most and work with most closely on a day-to-day basis, and, thank goodness, they know what is going on on campus and know how to negotiate a complex and sometimes cumbersome institution. Many thanks to them and to faculty and students!

When I think of what the department has accomplished in the past three years, the six faculty we have hired come immediately to mind (Lucy Corin, Desiree Martin, Colin Milburn, Mark Jerng, Parama Roy, and John Marx) as well as the Tomales Bay Workshops, so ably initiated and run by Pam Houston. When I think of what I wanted to accomplish and have not, memory serves up frustrations with matters digital on a big platter.

Overall, however, frustrations have played a decidedly minor role in my tenure as chair. I have genuinely enjoyed the job and leave it with very many good feelings.

David Robertson
and popular discourses assume that once spouses confront one another as equals, only one can win the resulting battles. This is the case, I argue, because the notion of marriage first fully elaborated in the early modern period insists that marriage weds two into one, but raises questions as to which one that will be. The crucial figuration of Christian marriage as the creation of "one flesh" at once powerfully expresses theological, emotional, and erotic union and upholds an ideal that is technically impossible. The common law offered a parallel formulation, suggesting that, through a legal fiction called coverture, husband and wife should become one legal agent by means of the husband’s subsumption of his wife into himself. While common law did not wholly define married women’s legal status, the fiction that husband and wife achieved “unity of person” had wide-ranging influence in the early modern period and beyond. Finally, a comic tradition, including plays, ballads, and jokes, assigned husband and wife equal claims on wit, desire, authority, and material resources. Yet it depicted this equality as a source of conflict because husband and wife war for mastery within their marriage and household, mastery figured as a single pair of pants only one can wear.

The conceptual similarity underpinning these familiar figures only stands out when one compares all three, as my study is the first to do. Taken together, the scriptural figure of “one flesh,” the legal fiction of “unity of person,” and popular debates about who wears the pants all suggest that marriage is an economy of scarcity in which there is only room for one full person. What happens when both spouses assert their distinct and potentially opposed wills and interests? Many representations of marital conflict locate violence of one kind or another in just such moments. They then present further violence as the only way to resolve the problem of two fractious persons within the union of marriage. This distinctive violence can take the form of spiritual struggles for salvation or damnation, battering and murder, or “taming.” In each chapter of my book, I show how the early modern apprehension of marriage as an economy of scarcity haunts the present as a conceptual structure or plot that concentrates entitlements and capacities in one spouse, and achieves resolution only when that spouse absorbs, subordinates, or eliminates the other.

While many historians such as Stephanie Coontz, Nancy Cott, David Cressy, Hendrick Hartog, and Lawrence Stone have documented the complexities of early modern marriage and the development of modern marriage, none has focused on the precise relationship between the early modern and modern. This relationship is obscured by the many changes that have intervened, including reliable birth control, the wider availability of divorce, married women’s changing legal status and access to paid work, the criminalization of domestic violence, and the greater visibility and acceptance of same-sex and cohabiting couples. These changes have utterly transformed the experience of marriage and domestic life. But if we focus on them we cannot see the continuities that persist despite them. These continuities stand out more clearly if the present and the early modern period are viewed side by side. Rather than myself undertake another comprehensive history of marriage, then, I have chosen to contrast the long twentieth century to the early modern period in order to emphasize the ways in which our current problems are embedded in an early modern construction of what marriage is and requires.

The book has four main chapters. The first two chapters focus on spouses locked in one-on-one struggles with high stakes: salvation or damnation, life or death. The third chapter considers what happens when spouses share their household— and their conflicts—with other dependents, particularly servants and slaves. This was the chapter I presented as my lecture. I show that early modern and twentieth-century accounts of household government warn that equality between husband and wife creates fruitless struggles for the breeches. The husband can ameliorate these conflicts, however, by granting his wife equal power over their dependents, and thus deflecting violence away from the couple and onto their subordinates. I explore how such a compromise might play out in Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew (1592) and in diaries by Samuel Pepys, William Byrd, and others. As I argue, this compensatory strategy, by which the exploitation of servants shores up the apparent equilibrium between husband and wife, persists in subtler forms in twentieth-century assessments of the relationship between marriage and domestic work such as Arlie Hochschild’s The Second Shift (1989), a ground-breaking analysis of marriage and domestic work, and Barbara Ehrenreich’s bestselling Nickel and Dimed. Seeing the connection between the nameless employees of big cleaning services and the brutalized slaves in colonial households is extremely disquieting.

It is not comfortable to entertain the possibility that marital equality is supplemented by the labor, even the exploitation, of domestic workers. Promoting that kind of discomfort is my goal. Many historians of marriage and the family stress the dangers of dwelling on continuity; making connections between now and then, they warn, obscures the crucial otherness of the past, turning it into a mirror in which we can see only reflections of ourselves and our own concerns. I am mindful of E. P. Thompson’s scathing put-down of Lawrence Stone’s The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England: “The prospective purchaser is supposed to squeal excitedly: ‘Darling, look, the history of us!’” The recognition I hope to make possible is considerably less pleasurable. I seek to estrange the present rather than to domesticate the past.

UCD/Globe Theatre Initiative

UCD has embarked on a partnership with Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London. In July 2005, a deputation from Davis visited the Globe to work out the details for a two-year pilot program. During each year of this pilot, Davis will send two Ph.D. students to London for a quarter of independent research. These UCD/Globe Exchange Scholars will have access to the programs and archives at the Globe. In fall 2006, the first two UCD/Globe Exchange Scholars will be Tara Pedersen and Andrea Lawson, both from the English Department. Pedersen and Lawson both focus on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama and its relation to the visual arts, material culture, and social history. Pedersen will be researching mermaids and Lawson will look at lovers’ parting gifts.

During the exchange, Davis will send faculty members over to the Globe to present their research. UCD will also host the visits of Globe experts (actors, directors, costume designers, and researchers) to the Davis campus. The partnership will also allow Davis to tap into the Globe’s expertise on K-12 outreach. Eventually, we hope that UCD’s involvement in the exchange will extend to the whole UC system, with Davis as the hub for these expanding connections.

The partnership is already raising the visibility

Continued on page 4
The creative writing side of the department had many things to be proud of this year. Eight fiction writers and five poets will receive their M.A. degrees in June. We admitted six new fiction writers and eight new poets whom we look forward to welcoming in the fall. Last fall I taught the very first two-quarter honors class (194H) designed especially for undergraduate creative writers. Eleven seniors created a set of very diverse honors projects, including fiction, poetry, a play, and a narrated animated film.

Our faculty published several books this year including: Reading, Writing and Leaving Home, by Lynn Freed; The Totality for Kids, by Joshua Clover; The Holy Spirit of Life: Essays Written for John Ashcroft’s Secret Self, by Joe Wenderoth; and Westernness: A Meditation (Under the Sign of Nature), by Alan Williamson.

The highlight of the year was our first annual Tomales Bay Workshop in October. Attendees included our 13 second-year creative writing graduate students, several UCD faculty, and 50 non-UCD affiliates, enjoyed the great beauty of the Marconi Center, the hands-on instruction from our exceptional Tomales Bay faculty, and what is undoubtedly the best food of any writers’ conference nationwide. Registration is in full swing for next October’s conference, which will include T.C. Boyle, Ron Carlson, Judith Ortez Cofir, Nick Flynn, Tayari Jones, Dorianne Laux, and Gary Short.

Pam Houston

Creative Writing Contest Winners

INA COOLBRITH POETRY PRIZE Finalists from UCD
Taylor McHolm and Katharine Lu

PAMELA MAUS CONTEST IN CREATIVE WRITING: POETRY
First Place: Michael Giardina
Second Place: Patricia Killelea
Honorable Mentions: Uyen Hua and Gus Caravalho

PAMELA MAUS CONTEST IN CREATIVE WRITING: FICTION
First Place: James Xiao
Second Place: Sam Spieller
Honorable Mentions: Marie Burcham and Emily Conner

POET LAUREATE AWARD
Fourth Place: Kate Asche
State Finalist: Phoebe Wayne

CELESTE TURNER WRIGHT POETRY PRIZE
First Place: Anne Manuel
Honorable Mentions: Katharine Lu, Michelle Jackson and Patricia Killelea

DIANA LYNN BOGART PRIZE FOR FICTION
First Place: Carmen Lau
Second Place: James Xiao
Third Place: Emily Conner

2006 MAURICE PRIZE IN FICTION
First Place: Shawna Ryan (M.A. 2001) for her novel, Locke 1928
Honorable Mention: Kate Swoboda (M.A. 2004) for her novel, Leaving Normal

2006 ELLIOT GILBERT PRIZE CONTEST
First Place in Poetry: Kate Ashe
First Place in Fiction: Ben Jahn

June 2006 Creative Writing M.A.s Conferred

Bonnie Roy, Speed At Which You Go (poetry)
Oreste Belletto, A God Less Powerful (poetry)
Kate Asche, Slantroof, Mandolin, Nightwalk (poetry)
Phoebe Wayne, Into Scale (poetry)
Yvonne Gando, Shiva Swept into Debris (poetry)
Melinda Moustakis, Hunting the Kenai (fiction)
Benjamin Kamper, The Boss’s Son (fiction)
Carola Strassburg, A Small, Impenetrable Universe (fiction)
Elizabeth Chamberlin, These People, They Crawl All Over The Place (fiction)
Julialicia Case, Shelter and Keep (fiction)
Adam Scott, The Somnambulist and Other Stories (fiction)
Melanie Thorne, I Come From That Place (fiction)
Aimee Whitenack, The Vacationers (fiction)
2005-2006 PLACEMENT NEWS

Karen Burchett, American River College (tenure track)
Brad Busbee, Florida Gulf Coast University (tenure track)
Daniel Cook, Saginaw Valley State University (tenure track)
Aaron DiFranco, Napa Valley College (tenure track)
Helena Feder, East Carolina University (tenure track)
Janice Hawes, University of Wisconsin, Superior (visiting assistant professor)
Katie Kalpin, University of South Carolina, Aiken (tenure track)
Roy Kamada, Emerson College, Boston (tenure track)
Tiffany MacBain, University of Puget Sound (tenure track)
Elaine Musgrave, Blackwell Publishing, Boston (editorial coordinator)
Jodi Schorb, University of Florida, Gainesville (tenure track)
Cheryl Shell, University College, Bangor, Maine (tenure track)
Kella Svetich, Foothill College, Los Altos (tenure track)
Dominick Tracy, California College of the Arts, Oakland (humanities and sciences program manager)

Kristian Jensen had four encyclopedic entries published in The Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Poetry. He has been the Bordeaux, France exchange lecturer this year and will teach in Mainz, Germany for the 2006-7 academic year.

Anett Jessop was awarded an Ethel O. Gardner P.E.O. Scholarship for the next academic year.


Christian Kiefer will release four separate full-length albums this year on four different record labels. His first ’06 release, The Black Dove, is out on the Tompkins Square (Fontana/Universal) label. Christian and his wife, Macie, celebrated the arrival of their new baby boy, Hudson Jefferson Mattson Kiefer, on April 27, 2006.

Lynn Langmade presented “Stealing into the Sublime: Origin, Ownership, and Criminal Intent in the Construction of Plagiarism in Longinus and Martial” at the Originality, Imitation & Plagiarism: A Cross-Disciplinary Conference on Writing, Ann Arbor, MI, September 2005. Lynn was awarded a UCD GSA Travel and Research Award.

Colleen Pauzu participated in the Dickens Universe last summer and she presented a paper on George Eliot and mysticism in February at the Dickens Graduate Conference at UCLA. This May, Colleen presented a paper at the Artful Strategies and Necessary Risks: Negotiating Gender and Identity conference, California State University, Sacramento.

Genevieve Pearson presented two papers this year: at the 4th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities and the Northern California Renaissance Conference.


Katie Rodger’s second book, Breaking Through: Essays, Journals, and Travelogues of Edward F. Ricketts, was published this spring by the University of California Press.


Melissa Strong presented a paper on the Edith Wharton Society Panel at the American Literature Association’s conference. She received the Friends of English Outstanding Graduate Student Research Award.

2005-2006 Ph.D.s AWARDED

Mark Bradshaw Busbee: “N.F.S. Grundtvig’s Interpretation of Beowulf as a Living Heroic Poem for the People”
Daniel Cook: “Orthodoxy and Aporia in the Victorian Narrative of Unconversion”
Aaron DiFranco: “Available Ground: Ecocultural Materialism and the Bildungsroman”
Helena Feder: “Coming into Culture: English Masculinity and the Literature of Bodies on Display”
Kathleen Kalpin: “Charming Tongues: Representations of Women’s Speech in Early Modern England”
Jodi Schorb: “From Sodomy to Indian Death: Sexuality, Race, and Structures of Feeling in Early American Execution Narratives”
Kella Svetich: “Flesh and Blood: Colonial Trauma and Abjection in Contemporary Filipino American Fiction”
Jodi Angel (M.A. 2003) published her first collection, The History of Las Vegas: Stories (Chronicle, 2005). Her story “Portions” was published in Zoetrope: All Story and is currently being made into a feature film starring Billy Zane and Christina Ricci.


Lewis DeSimone (M.A. 1993) is employed as Director of New Business Development at United Behavioral Health in San Francisco. In March 2006, he published his debut novel, Chemistry, with Hawthorn Press.


Thomas Heise (M.A. 1997) received his Ph.D. from New York University (2005) and was hired as a tenure-track assistant professor of 20th century American literature at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. His first book, Horror Vacui: Poems (Sarabande) was just released. His work can also be found in the new anthology Legitimate Dangers: American Poets of the New Century (Sarabande, 2006).

Nicole Henares (B.A. 1998) is in her third year of teaching English at Lowell High School in San Francisco. She has published two chapbooks: Lush and Duende. In October 2005, she participated in the 50th Anniversary of the Six Gallery Reading, alongside Ntozake Shange, Herb Gold, Latif Harris, Daisy Zamora, and Sharon Dubiago.


Chris Markus (M.A. 1996) and Steve McFeely (M.A. 1996) accepted a 2005 Emmy award for “outstanding writing for a movie or miniseries” for HBO’s The Life and Death of Peter Sellers. They also wrote the screenplay for the movie The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Markus and McFeely met in 1994 as students in the creative writing program.


Andrew Ramos (B.A. 2004) works as a field representative for assemblywoman Lois Wolk.


Barry K. Shuster (B.A. 1980) lives in Cary, North Carolina and is a practicing attorney. He is also an editor and part-owner of Restaurant Startup & Growth magazine, an award-winning, national trade journal for restaurant owners and managers (50,000 reader circulation). Barry was an award recipient in the 2004 North Carolina State Bar Fiction Writing Contest for his short story “Alice Buckthorne Misses Her Target.”


James Van Pelt (M.A. 1990) will have a second collection, The Last of the O-Forms and Other Stories, released this summer. The title story was a finalist for the Nebula Award, the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America’s highest literary award. Other stories in the collection were reprinted in editions of Gardner Dozois’s Year’s Best Science Fiction, David Hartwell’s Year’s Best Fantasy and Stephen Jones’s Mammoth Book of Best New Horror. James’s first collection, Strangers and Beggars, came out in 2002; the American Library Association named it a Best Book for Young Adults and it was a finalist for the Colorado Blue Spruce Young Adult Book Award. In the meantime, Jim continues to teach at Fruitman Monument High School and Mesa State College in Colorado. This year the high school recognized him with a Teacher of the Year award.
Faculty News

Joshua Clover's second collection of poems, The Totality for Kids, was published by the University of California Press this April, 2006.

Lucy Corin published stories in Conjunctions, The Southern Review, Fiction International, The Cincinnati Review, The Notre Dame Review, and online at Diagram and Double Room. She was selected to be a Walter E. Dakin Fellow at the Sewanee Writers’ Conference (summer 2006).

Frances Dolan just completed her tenure as president of the Shakespeare Association of America.

Margaret Ferguson published a chapter from her current book project, "Conning the 'Overseers': Women's Illicit Work in Behn's 'The Adventure of the Black Lady,'" in the electronic journal Early Modern Culture (http://eserver.org/emc). She is co-editing, with Susannah Brierz-Monta, a collection of essays on early modern English prose—for which she wrote the introduction and also a chapter called "The Prose Style of Thomas Nashe." Margie has a review of The Victorian Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity. ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicolas Watson, forthcoming in Modern Philology. She gave the following lectures: "A Shady Story," DHI Early Modern Cluster; "Women and Literacy: A Discussion of Dido's Daughters," University of Edinburgh; "The Illicit I/Eye: Aphra Behn's Theory and Practice of Translation," University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; "Aphra Behn's Eccentric English Styles," Sacramento State University; University of California at Santa Cruz; "Reading 'Bifocally': Revisiting Bakhtin's Rabelais," Whitney Humanities Center, Yale University.

Lynn Freed published Reading, Writing & Leaving Home: Life on the Page (Harcourt, Inc, 2005), which appeared on The San Francisco Chronicle "Best Books" of the year list, and on Jonathan Yardley's end of year "critic's favorites" list. The Milwaukee Post. An essay, "Happy Birthday to Me," appeared in Kiss Tomorrow Hello: Notes from the Midlife Underground by Twenty-Five Women Over Forty, ed. Kim Barnes and Claire Davis (Double-day, 2006). Lynn will travel this summer to give invited talks at the Sydney Writers’ Festival in Australia and at the Prague Summer Conference.

Elizabeth Freeman was awarded the UC President's Research in the Humanities Fellowship for 2006-07 to work on her book Time Binds: Essays on Queer Temporality. She published the article "Time Binds, or, Eroto-historicality" in a special issue of Social Text on National Days. She gave a paper at the University of Illinois, Chicago, in February, and gave papers at Renais-

Professor Emeritus Peter Hays was instrumental in bringing the new PBS documentary series, "The Victorian Age," to UC Davis, and the series won the Emmy Award. Hays has been working on a book, The Victorian Age, The Norton Anthology of English Literature. 8th ed. (2005). He is a member of the Board of Advisors of The Shakespeare Review, an editorial board member of The Victorian Review, and is working on a book, "A Shady Story," DHI Early Modern Cluster; "Women and Literacy: A Discussion of Dido's Daughters," University of Edinburgh; "The Illicit I/Eye: Aphra Behn's Theory and Practice of Translation," University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; "Aphra Behn's Eccentric English Styles," Sacramento State University; University of California at Santa Cruz; "Reading 'Bifocally': Revisiting Bakhtin's Rabelais," Whitney Humanities Center, Yale University.

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A Tribute to LINDA MORRIS
on the Occasion of her Retirement

What a delight to write in honor of Linda! Our connection stretches back to my very first day in grad school when she introduced herself as I battled with the copy machine, trying desperately to act like I belonged in a Ph.D.-program. Linda's warm welcome put me at ease immediately. I knew, then, that I had made the right decision to attend Davis, and since that lucky meeting, I have continued to be the beneficiary of Linda's legendary generosity.

My fondest memory of Linda? There are simply too many from which to choose. But a recent favorite is the time we spent together last year at a conference in Boston. We presented our respective papers and then played hooky for the rest of the weekend by exploring the city. I've never had such a fun time at a conference—and the ease with which I make that claim (after all, what academic event is ever “fun”?) certainly doesn't diminish its truth. How better to spend a few days than prowling through old graveyards, chatting about their inhabitants, and then hoisting back a few of Boston's famous libations?

Teacher, mentor, confidante, and friend, Linda has played all these roles for me at one time or another (and often simultaneously), all with her inimitable Linda-esque grace and aplomb. Few people have had a greater impact on my career—or, indeed, on my life. I am continually thankful to know her.

~ Michael Borgstrom (Ph.D. 2002)

Linda, you've been an outstanding mentor and model for leadership. I'll miss your presence in the department. Fortunately, there are many things I won't forget, but one of them is that you and Kay treked up to Davis on that rainy Saturday night of my campus visit to have dinner with me, quietly letting me know that if I came to Davis I would not be alone. Another is those junior faculty lunches where we all traded studies focused on literature by women (hats off here, too, to Professor Emerita Sandra Gilbert)! Within a few weeks, Linda had, in her inimitable way, turned me into a budding Twin scholar. Her blend of erudition, rigor, open-mindedness and—yes—humor felt like a cool drink in those days of dry critical studies. I wanted then, as I do now, to be just like her as a teacher, writer, and scholar. And I know I was not alone.

So here's to you, Linda Morris! May your days after Davis be as glorious as the Mississippi River; may your words keep flowing with the power of its waters; and may you have as many adventures as the boy who rode so famously down it on a raft.

~ Paula Harrington (Ph.D. 2002)

When I came to UC Davis as an exchange lecturer from Mainz in 1998, I attended one of Linda Morris's African American Literature surveys, simply to see how African American literature was taught at Davis. With her engaging manner and the radiant warmth that is so unique to her, she engaged the students immediately and though she thematized it, she simultaneously made the students forget that she, a “white woman,” was teaching the course, and from then on the focus was on what it ought to be on: the literature. I so enjoyed her teaching style and personality that, once in the Ph.D. program, I took seminars from her and she became one of my dissertation advisors and, several years later, one of the specialist readers for a book (on African American and Jewish American literatures) I published with University of Iowa Press. And, lo and behold, I too came to teach African American Studies. That is the outline of my encounter with Linda Morris; however, it does not convey what I have always secretly suspected: that she is really an angel who has somehow, in an eccentric turn of events, become incarnated as an English professor. There is a consistent glow about her, and one cannot help but feel uplifted by her presence—so Linda, you can admit it now, and after all these years, you don't have to hide those wings any more! That should be one of the benefits of retirement. I wish that you enjoy it as much as you have enjoyed teaching, and that in the many travels I suspect you will embark on you visit many of us admirers, especially me. All the best and much happiness!

~ Martin Japokt (Ph.D. 1995)

One of the last times I visited Professor Morris in her office, after working with her in a class and on two research projects, we talked about the state of politics, Mark Twain, Jon Stewart, and South Park. It was my last quarter and I told her, I was going to miss further examining the work of David Sedaris—the subject of most of my research. The only book of his I had yet to read was Naked, but out of Independent Research units, I would just read it on my own, probably in lieu of something boring I was required to read for another class. We said we'd keep in touch. I left. Out in the busy corridor of Voorhies Hall it was finals week and students flocked around office doors. Haggard students and professors talked loudly about final papers and grades. Ten paces down the hall I turned back to Professor Morris, her head poking out of the doorway, and I shouted, “Yeah, I'll talk to you later—oh and maybe we'll read Naked together over the break!” Heads turned. I giggled.

Through our work together, Professor Morris taught me to explore the meaning of the literature I was reading and to use it as a credible tool a sense of humor is. I learned how to ask why something works—what makes it funny and what it means. After I received a B on my first essay in her class, Professor Morris approved my second essay idea, focusing on an offensive story from David Sedaris's first book Barrel Fever. The subject was a fourteen-year-old homosexual boy. It was disturbing and hilarious. But I didn't understand why it was funny—how did he keep my attention with such appalling content? Why was I laughing at such a sad story? I felt comfortable going to Professor Morris and saying, “I already laughed at this, but I'm not sure I understand it”—the academic equivalent of laughing at a joke and then saying, “I don't get it” in a room full of peers. Linda encouraged my curiosity and her encouragement, in turn, compelled me to write the essays I am most proud of from my time at Davis. I don't want to give the impression that she was an easy professor. Very much to the contrary, she challenged me tremendously. After the American Literary Humor course, I was compelled to do two research projects with her because I felt that I had been laughing at jokes and missing the points for twenty years. Working with Professor Morris was both humbling and empowering.

Although I realize that the title professor carries a lot of weight around here, Linda Morris is an outstanding teacher and an extraordinary friend. I'm sure that the faculty of the UC Davis English department will get by without her. But I am sorry for future graduates of this school, as they will never know what a joy it is to be under the wing of such a woman.

~ Theresa Walsh (B.A. 2005)
He was the rock of reality in the whirlwind that is graduate school. While I celebrate the freedom he has more than earned, I feel sorry for all those future Davis students who won’t see David smile when someone makes a comment that sparks his abundant curiosity.

— Rod Romesburg (Ph.D. 1999)

In the mid-80’s, I was a doctoral candidate at UC-Davis, and whenever I spoke to fellow graduate students about writing my dissertation on the work of Lew Welch, I would hear, “You should meet David Robertson.” I don’t know how everyone else met him first, but when I finally did, I worked to make up for lost time. Once he agreed to be my dissertation director, we met regularly at the old Café Roma on the corner of A and Third Street. We sat as I flipped through the pages of Welch’s Ring of Bone, blathering on enthusiastically about what I intended to write. One November day, David listened for what must have been an hour and a half, sipping coffee and finishing his muffin (isn’t it always a muffin or a cookie with this guy?) When I finally stopped, he grinned at me and said, “Sounds like you know what you’re talking about.” When I left Davis, moved to Okinawa, and then to Maui, he continued his support and encouragement, cheering loudly as each of my five books of poems has appeared. As a teacher and as an artist—his photography is his own expanding genre—he is an inspiration, and I have never met a kinder man, a more generous man, a more gracious man. Over a second helping of dessert or on a Sierra peak, David Robertson is a man I admire more all the time. Looking back over the decades, I recall that pesky question with which adults harangue children: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” At fifty, I have my answer: “When I grow up, I want to be just like David Robertson.”

— Eric Paul Shaffer (Ph.D. 1991)

David Robertson is a scholar who truly cares about students. I first met David in the summer of ‘93 when I drove into Davis on a tour of California universities for grad school. Though I’d given him no advance notice, David came from his house to discuss the department’s support of the fledgling field of ecocriticism. A few months later, he again gave of his time to attend a conference session in Utah, where I was presenting a paper. After that I knew, more than anywhere, I wanted to go to grad school at UC-Davis. Over the next six years, David taught my favorite classes, chaired my dissertation, took me to see Gary Snyder’s zendo, connected me with fellow eccentrics, and, most importantly, showed me I could be academic without being too academic.

Dawn often finds David Robertson walking along Goldberry Lane, stopping occasionally in front of my house or nearby, to look down at a small piece of electronic equipment he carries in his hand. When I ask what it is, he tells me it is a Garmin GPS locator, and he is measuring his daily constitutional walks. Secretly, I suspect him of blatant technophilia. Although it may look like he doesn’t, the esteemed professor knows exactly where he is in all respects... he merely plays games with the instrument and his position in the neighborhood to introduce the necessary trademark Robertsonian element of chaos into his place on earth.

David loves the edges of order and disorder, just as the human soul loves the intersection of sacred and profane, and the human stomach seeks fullness when empty, and vice versa. I, on the other hand, seek order from chaos—a boring one way street compared to Dr. Robertson’s lively two-way boulevard. This is probably why he was a successful department chair who was invited back for more by the English Department, while I limped out my own brief department chairmanship directly into the psychoanalyst’s office.

How does one find that delicate balance over triple-plus decades as a compatriot “academia nut”? David Robertson, more than any colleague I know, has demonstrated that particular talent. He bends with the academic political winds, yet is firmly rooted in place. He finds challenge in the unforeseen dimensions of problems, instead of breaking under their weight. He seeks fullness when empty, and vice versa. I, on the other hand, seek order from chaos—a boring one way street compared to Dr. Robertson’s lively two-way boulevard. This is probably why he was a successful department chair who was invited back for more by the English Department, while I limped out my own brief department chairmanship directly into the psychoanalyst’s office.

Most of all, David Robertson is a remarkably creative person. Perhaps not everyone realizes this. That creativity has propelled him successfully past barriers that might have thwarted the less imaginative amongst us. Because he is so successful, interestingly, creatively (and only slightly) crazed, he is more sane and solid than the rest of us battered old academics. No doubt his retirement from UC Davis, although it will result in a conspicuous absence, will just propel David Robertson into fascinating new dimensions of his life. Just you wait... he ain’t done yet!

Thanks for the inspiration, example, and friendship, David!
In Memoriam

William E. Baker

The Department of English honors the memory of Professor Emeritus William E. “Will” Baker, who died on August 27, 2005 at his ranch home in Guinda in the Capay Valley. At UC Davis for 26 years (1969–1995), Will taught courses in 19th century English poetry, 19th and 20th century British novels, cinema history, filmmaking and creative writing. Before coming to Davis, he taught for four years at Reed College in Portland, Oregon.

Born May 10, 1935, in Idaho, Will grew up in the western United States. He earned his B.A. (English) at the University of Washington, M.A. (English) from the University of Hawaii, and Ph.D. (English) at UC Berkeley. Before coming to academia, Will worked as a reporter for the Idaho Free Press, a farm laborer, construction worker, sawmill and iron worker, seaman and teamster. Will’s education and broad experience of life served him well: he authored two critical studies and eleven books of fiction, science fiction/fantasy, and non-fiction. He was recognized with a Rockefeller humanities grant, a Fulbright for research in Peru, an Associated Writing Programs award for creative nonfiction, and a Silver Spur Award from the Western Writers of America.

An environmentalist and community activist, Will was committed to preserving the Capay Valley. This May, a benefit was held to raise funds for the commemorative Will Baker Native Plant Garden, an educational display of native plants found in the Capay Valley. The garden is a project of community members both in and out of the valley as well as the Western Yolo Grange, Yolo County RCD, and Cache Creek Watershed Stakeholders Group. The garden will be located in the Vernon A. Nichols Park, Guinda, Capay Valley, and will be open to all.

Will is survived by his wife Malinda Penn-Baker, and three children Cole, Montana, and Willa.

Steve Howard Cassal

Steve Cassal’s unexpected passing on December 21, 2005 of a heart attack, at the age of 52, is a great loss to the Department of English and the University Writing Program. In his decade-long affiliation with UC Davis, Steve earned his M.A. in creative writing (1997), his Ph.D. (2003), and went on to serve as a postdoctoral fellow and a lecturer in the English department and the University Writing Program. Shakespeare’s plays were Steve’s passion and the focus of his dissertation, as well as the subject for his many freelance reviews. In 2000, Steve was awarded an Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award. In Chair David Robertson’s words, Steve “was a remarkable teacher, with a deep and abiding concern for his students, one who approached teaching with energy and imagination. We will sorely miss him.” A plaque in his memory will be placed in the Voorhies courtyard.

Steve is survived by his wife, Leslie Ballan.
Friends of English

The English Department at the University of California, Davis

Friends of English encourage alumni and community members to stay connected to the English Department and to the reading and study of literature. Friends will be invited to attend scholarly talks and readings by our own sterling creative writers, and will receive our annual departmental newsletter. In return, “Friends” will be helping the department continue to achieve distinction by supporting graduate and undergraduate fellowships and awards, supporting faculty and student research, and sponsoring public lectures and readings.

SUPPORTS: Friends of English Fall Lecture, Outstanding Graduate Student Research Award to a Ph.D. Student, Outstanding Graduate Student Research Award to a Creative Writing Student, Outstanding Undergraduate Student Research Award, Friends of English Outstanding Graduating Senior Award.

To become a Member, complete the membership form included in the attached envelope, along with payment information or check. Thank you!

We are sincerely grateful to these individuals who have contributed to the English Department during the 2005-2006 academic year.

Susan Alarcon  Lenore Edelstein  Anne Lincoln  David Robertson
Martha Alvarez  Joseph William Engler  Francisco Lopez  Colleen Ronan
Christine Andranian-Sherry  Patty Enrado  Greg Louie  Kathryn Rutecki
Mica Bennett  Timothy Flynn  Michelle Snider Luna  Kristina Shepherd
Sally Bimrose  Susan L. Goldberg  Christina Marcon  Don W. Sieker
Karen Blankenburg-Winger  Beth Hamlet  Wendy Martin  Gary Snyder
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Jane Cohen  Jane Hopkins  Sabrina Montes  Susan Walsh
Lindsey Crittenden  M. Melanie Howell  Linda Morris  Christopher R. Webber
Julie Dalrymple  Soraya Jenkins  Kevin H. O’Connor  Daniel Wettstein
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Sally Day  Charles Kollerer, Ph.D.  Andrew Porter  Jose Zelidon-Zepeda
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Please share your good news with fellow graduates! The annual newsletter traces the professional lives of English department alumni, so tell us of your recent career accomplishments, promotions, professional awards, and publications. Email your news to Mary White (mjwhite@ucdavis.edu) and include your name, UC Davis degree, and year graduated. Please make the subject heading “Alumni News.” We look forward to hearing from you!