



# Annotations

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

ENGLISH  
IN ACTION



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## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Russ Castronovo

The *New York Times* recently published a list of schools that draw from the wealthiest 1% of families in the U.S. The University of Wisconsin is ranked #425. This number makes me proud because in comparison to a school like Washington University (#1), which enrolls a percentage of the elite (27.1%) higher than any other school, UW represents a broad experiment in which a liberal arts education acts as an engine of social change.

It's long been this way at UW-Madison.

Working on a book called *Beautiful*

*Democracy*, I ventured into the university archives, and when I got to the years 1910-1915, I discovered lesson plans, reading lists, and syllabi that were mailed to the hinterlands of the state. This trove included more than treatises on scientific approaches to dairy farming. Guides to studying Shakespeare or reading Greek philosophy were mailed to settlers in rural Wisconsin. But why?

Why should farmers care about art? Do loggers need to read *As You Like It*? The university answered these questions with a question of its own: Shouldn't hardworking men and women also experience the play and wit of Rosalind and Touchstone in the forest of Arden?

Implicit in this question was the radical belief that a world-class education should be available to more than the sons and daughters of bankers or well-to-do merchants. For the citizens of our state circa 1910, education was the great leveler.

And it remains the case in the English Department today. We just started a group for students who are the first in their family to attend college. At the urging of high-school teachers, we're exploring ways of certifying teachers at small, rural high schools to teach AP classes in English Literature. We'll likely use computers instead of the mail, but the spirit of 1910 remains very much the same.

In brief, English at UW-Madison rests on the belief that literature and language, in all its variety, is an inheritance we all share. Scratch that! The English Department never rests but continually seeks new ways of democratizing education.

Feel free to reach me at [rcastronovo@wisc.edu](mailto:rcastronovo@wisc.edu).

*On, Wisconsin!*

Russ Castronovo

*Annotations* is the alumni newsletter of the Department of English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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# YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

I am always amazed by L&S alumni. Not only do you take your L&S experiences out into the world, becoming leaders and innovators and wonderful community members, but you also give back. The generous financial support from L&S alumni amplifies all that makes the college great. But what also touches me is your willingness to help our students.

To date, more than 300 L&S alumni are directly engaged in mentoring, networking, and opening doors for L&S students as part of the ever-growing L&S Career Initiative, launched in 2012. Many serve as mentors for our Taking Initiative course (Inter-LS 210), which teaches students how to identify their unique talents and articulate their skills to employers. L&S alumnus Steve Pogorzelski (former president of Monster.com) has been a Taking Initiative mentor since the course was launched in fall 2015. Why does he give back this way? Pogorzelski says he's had many mentors over the years and is committed to providing guidance for others, whether it's his two grown children, the boards on which he serves, his employees, or UW students.

"I believe that coaching is a gift and one should give it and receive it in that spirit," he has said. "I derive tremendous satisfaction from the whole process."

I get this question a lot: "Dean Scholz, what can I do to help students map their future path?"

Your financial support for the L&S Career Initiative is vitally important, of course. We are leading the way among public research universities with our focus on career success for liberal arts graduates, and the entire LSCI is funded



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John Karl Scholz, Dean, College of Letters & Science

by sponsors and donors. But there are so many ways to be involved! Here are just a few:

- Sign up for the new Badger Bridge online networking program, to connect with students exploring careers in your field ([badgerbridge.com](http://badgerbridge.com))
- Post an internship
- Offer job shadows
- Help students network

Visit [careers.ls.wisc.edu](http://careers.ls.wisc.edu) for more information on all of the above. And know that we are beyond grateful for your support.

*On, Wisconsin!*

Dean John Karl Scholz



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# THE PASSIONS AND PURSUITS OF UW–MADISON’S MEDIEVALISTS

## MARTIN FOYS

Much of Dr. Foys’ work focuses on digitizing the Middle Ages. His major publications include the *Bayeux Tapestry Digital Edition*, *Virtually Anglo-Saxon: Old Media, New Media, and Early Medieval Studies in the Late Age of Print*, and *Bayeux Tapestry: New Interpretations*. He also co-directs the DM Project, a digital resource for the open annotation of medieval images and texts. At UW–Madison, Dr. Foys’ course, *Beowulf*, Tolkien, and the Birth of Modern Fantasy, draws 200–300 students each term.

For the past eleven years, I’ve been a skating official for Women’s Flat Track Roller Derby (WFTDA). The work is similar to being an ice hockey referee: gameplay is constantly on the move, and so are you. As the opposing teams skate against each other on a circular track, I and six other



officials skate on the inside and outside of the track, tallying points scored and calling penalties. And just to get this out up front: this isn’t your father’s roller derby. Modern women’s roller derby (and the men’s derby that followed it) started in 2003, and is a fully competitive, legitimate athletic sport. You should go see a roller derby bout sometime if you haven’t already.

I started training to be an official after finishing my first book, *Virtually Anglo-Saxon*. I was physically exhausted from sitting all summer in my study revising the manuscript. I don’t enjoy most forms of exercise, but had become a fan of roller derby during its first season in Baltimore. Hearing they needed referees, I decided to try it. I’ve since officiated almost 250 games, including



## LISA COOPER

During her fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Dr. Cooper is writing a book titled *Ars Vivendi: The Poetics of Practicality in Late Medieval England*. This study examines works like agricultural manuals, astronomical treatises, and recipe collections alongside more canonical literary work, such as the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer.

I’m a potter, though it’s something I’m just returning to after quite a long hiatus (during which I finished my first book and had a child). I took a pottery class or two as a teenager,



but I got serious about what is called “throwing on the wheel” in graduate school, which I’m not sure I would have survived without the many, many hours I spent in the studio. I principally make bowls, vases, mugs, and—not on the wheel—tiles, including some of animals and one designed after the rose window of a medieval cathedral. It’s a messy, physically tiring, and mesmerizing activity. I know it seems as if there are obvious connections between my work in clay and my intellectual interests, and I suppose there are, but in fact pottery

The English Department's medievalist scholars are performing cutting-edge work in digital media, winning fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and publishing on everything from Anglo-Saxon letters to Chaucer's scientific work. On top of this, they teach courses on Beowulf and Old English, instructing hundreds of undergraduates and advising graduate dissertations each semester. How are they so incredibly prolific and productive? Read on to see how pursuing activities beyond intellectual work can support scholarly energy.

one championship tournament. Along the way I also became a very, very good skater—I was pretty terrible on skates when I started out.

Since joining the UW–Madison faculty a few years ago, I've scaled back my involvement to local officiating, but I'm lucky that I now work with Madison's league, The Mad Rollin' Dolls. It's fantastic to work with strong, driven women who are redefining what it means to be a female athlete. I'm also fortunate that Madison has a robust officiating culture that has provided an instant community for me. Officiating requires an integration of mind and body that is a wholly different activity from academic work. During a game or practice I will typically skate five to ten miles, my mental and physical reflexes have to be sharp, and my brain can think about nothing but the action right in front of me. It helps keep the rest of my life in balance.



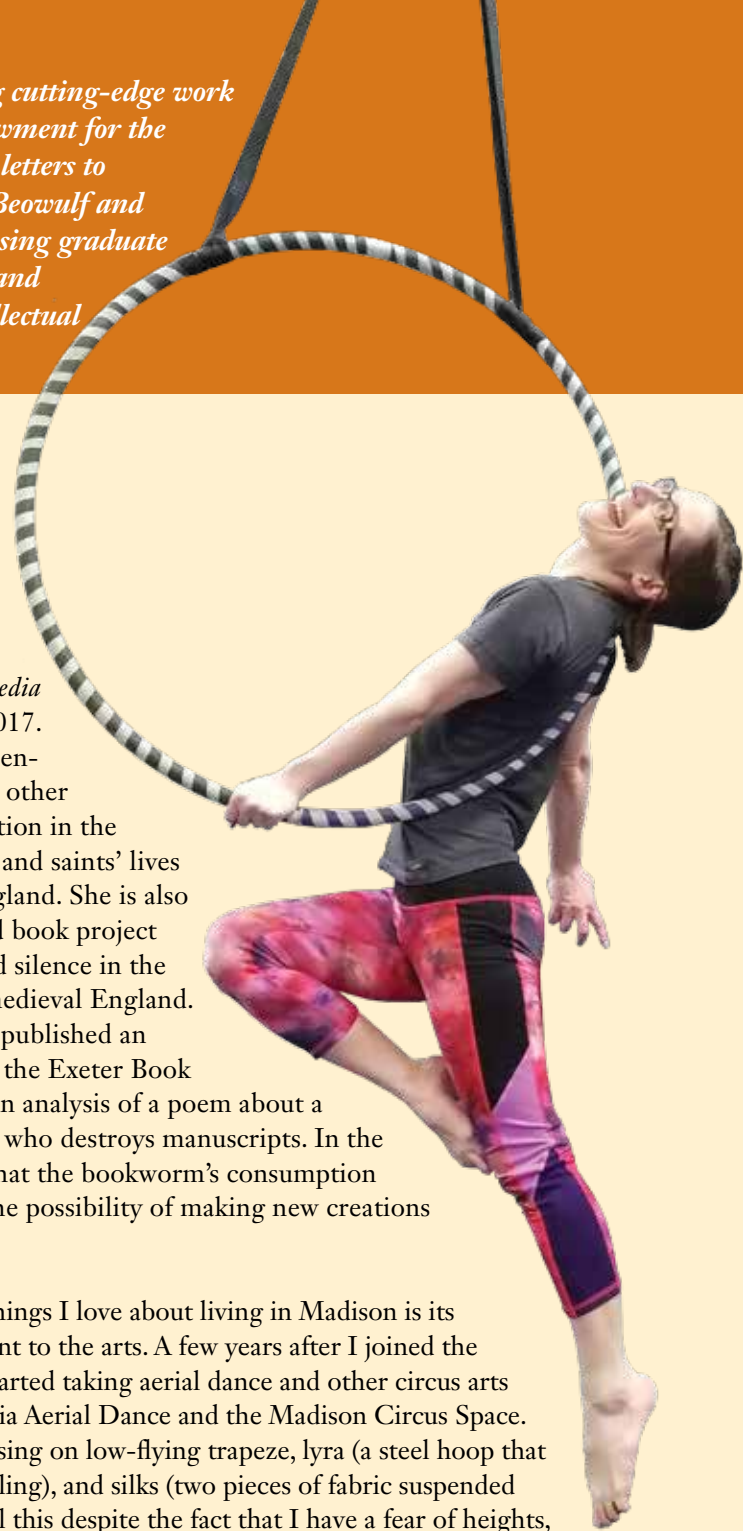
is for me a world away from my books, which is one reason I love it; when I'm fully engaged in it, I'm thinking with my hands, not my intellect. It's also for me very much about process rather than product. I love knowing that the things I've made have found places in other peoples' homes (certainly many more people have used my bowls than have read my scholarly work!), but it's the Zen-like phenomenon of the spinning wheel—as well as the camaraderie I find in the community studio where I work—that pulls me back again and again.

## JORDAN ZWECK

Jordan Zweck's book *Epistolary Acts: Anglo-Saxon Letters and Early English Media* is forthcoming in 2017. It studies the representation of letters and other written communication in the literature, sermons, and saints' lives of Anglo-Saxon England. She is also developing a second book project on sound, noise, and silence in the literature of early medieval England. Dr. Zweck recently published an article on silence in the Exeter Book Riddles, including an analysis of a poem about a naughty bookworm who destroys manuscripts. In the article, she argues that the bookworm's consumption of text introduces the possibility of making new creations out of loss.

One of the things I love about living in Madison is its commitment to the arts. A few years after I joined the faculty, I started taking aerial dance and other circus arts classes from Cyropia Aerial Dance and the Madison Circus Space. Right now, I'm focusing on low-flying trapeze, lyra (a steel hoop that is hung from the ceiling), and silks (two pieces of fabric suspended from the ceiling). All this despite the fact that I have a fear of heights, a complete lack of coordination, and no background in dance, gymnastics, or other movement arts! When I first started taking classes, I could barely figure out how to get on the trapeze. In one memorable early class, we spent about 10 minutes doing a spatial awareness exercise, immediately after which I tripped over a mat when approaching the trapeze. But I was also immediately hooked. Since then, I've been lucky enough to perform in a few local shows, and to keep taking classes with the amazing instructors we have in Madison.

I like to think that taking aerial classes has made me more creative in my thinking outside the circus as well, and that it's made me more willing to take risks in my own writing and teaching. It's also really reinforced the value of incremental progress, of trusting your body, and of allowing yourself to fail as long as you're having fun in the process.





## DESHAWN MCKINNEY '17 WINS THE MARSHALL SCHOLARSHIP

*Deshaun McKinney, a creative writing major originally from Milwaukee, WI, was awarded a Marshall Scholarship to pursue graduate study in the United Kingdom.*

### As a creative writing major, what's the most important thing you've learned?

The power and necessity of art. I've used my writing as a means to educate, challenge, and push for equity over the years, and the creative writing professors I've encountered at UW engage in similar ways. Creative writing is a much more universal language than numbers or policy details, and it can open people up, just as it can fire them up to get out and do something.

### What experiences at UW–Madison shaped you as a thinker and citizen?

As a Black man, I found my political voice navigating this university. There aren't many of me here, and that reality is connected to the national and



global contexts of systemic oppression, brutality at the hands of police, the rise and legitimization of white nationalism, and so many more ugly phenomena. I've seen racism play out on a micro scale on campus and in the Madison community, both explicitly and implicitly. I cannot be silent, and I know that I will always be fighting for the liberation of minoritized and marginalized identities, particularly all intersections of Black identity.

### What will you be doing next year as a Marshall Scholar?

The plan is to attend the London School of Economics and to pursue a Master of Science degree in Public Policy and Administration.

### What comes after the Marshall?

After the Marshall, I want to begin public service work. I will be interning in DC over the summer through the Truman Scholarship; I think that will clarify how certain sectors operate and where I might want to work. I also want to maintain the other pieces of myself—like the artist and the performer—because those are huge factors in my joy and passion. They are part of how I process, challenge, and advocate for equity. I'm a huge advocate of multiplicities of self and seeking a life wherein you can keep your multitudes.



### Tweeting @Aly Pavela

**Aly Pavela '14** now works as a communications manager at Twitter. In 140-character tweets, Aly reports on being a Badger in Silicon Valley:

#### What fascinates you about social media right now?

I think it's amazing how much I can learn every day by just opening Twitter. Everything that's happening right now in the world is there!

#### How has your English degree come in handy at Twitter?

My English degree @UWMadison helped me learn how to be analytical and write good ;) – which has been very helpful in post-grad work and life

#### Do you notice any trends in how people are using language on Twitter?

Personally, I love using emojis and GIFs on Twitter, since they help me get my point across in a fun and visual way 🥰👍

#### What's the Badger community like in Silicon Valley?

The Badger community in SF is stellar. UW grads have a true sense of camaraderie and pride for our amazing alma mater

#### If you could return to Madison for one day, what would be on your list of things to do?

Walk up Bascom Hill, sit on the Terrace by the lake, visit the Historical Society (I spent many hours studying there), eat by the Capitol

## THE POWER OF ALUMNI GIVING: LITERATI 2017

Each year, the Madison Undergraduate Society for English (MUSE) organizes Literati, one of the most prominent showcases of undergraduate writing in the nation. Nearly 30 undergraduates present at MUSE each year, including English majors from UW–Madison and students from across the country.

Collaborating with members of the department's first generation student organization and LGBTQ communities on campus, MUSE co-presidents Shannon Murphy and Abby Nilsson drew a more diverse pool of participants and attendees to the 2017 conference. With the MUSE executive team, they spent weeks reading proposals,



Shannon Murphy and Abby Nilsson, MUSE co-presidents

corresponding with applicants, and compiling the schedule of speakers and panel respondents.

Through fundraising, continuous grant writing, and donations, MUSE hopes to keep the annual Literati conference open to the public and accessible for all students. Alumni donations make this event possible. Even small donations have a large impact on Literati:

\$15: One lunch for a panel respondent

\$50: Conference programs for all attendees

\$85: Facility rental at Union South

\$1,000: A MUSE fund to expand and improve programming

### Robert B. Barnett and Rita Braver Win Distinguished Alumni Award

The Board of Visitors, an organization of English alumni and friends, honors distinguished alumni for modeling a variety of career paths available to English majors.

Bob graduated in 1968 with a B.A. in English and History. Today, Bob is a senior partner of Williams & Connolly, LLP. He represents authors, news correspondents, producers, and government officials transitioning to the private sector. His clients include Barack and Michelle Obama, George and Laura Bush, Bill and Hillary Clinton, Brian Williams, Bob Woodward, and Rita Braver. Bob has worked on debate preparation for ten presidential campaigns.

Rita graduated in 1970 with a B.A. in English and Political Science. Today she is a correspondent for the CBS News broadcast *Sunday Morning*. She has reported for the *CBS Evening News*, *48 Hours*, *Face the Nation*, *CBS News This Morning*, *Street Stories* and *Public Eye*. Rita also has served as the CBS News Chief White House Correspondent, and the Chief Law Correspondent for CBS News. She has won seven Emmy Awards.



Robert B. Barnett



Rita Braver

### Honoring Great Teaching

Congratulations to Rachel Herzl-Betz and Brandee Easter, winners of campus-wide TA teaching awards. Rachel won a Capstone Ph.D. Teaching Award, given to TAs who perform as outstanding teachers throughout their UW–Madison careers. Brandee won the Innovation in Teaching Award, given to TAs who bring extraordinary creativity and innovation to their teaching methods.

English faculty regard Rachel as a deeply informed resource on writing instruction and accessible pedagogy. By mentoring undergrad tutors, training TAs, or presenting at conferences for instructors, Rachel demonstrates an enduring commitment to ensuring teaching excellence for herself and new instructors.

Brandee's work in digital pedagogies culminated in her designing and leading the department's first online lecture course in summer 2016. She piloted an online, eight-week introductory literature lecture course—among the first of its kind. Brandee's bold pedagogical and administrative experiment was extremely successful, enrolling to capacity within 24 hours.



Rachel Herzl-Betz



Brandee Easter

## Find Us Online!

Visit and explore the English department website:

[english.wisc.edu](http://english.wisc.edu)

Follow us on Twitter:

@EnglishUW

and Facebook:

UW-Madison

English Department

## Alumni Publications

Do you have a recent work of fiction, non-fiction, or poetry that you would like to share with the English Department community? Tell us all about it at [webadmin@english.wisc.edu](mailto:webadmin@english.wisc.edu) and we will feature it on our alumni bookshelf.



## Department of English

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# Your life, your plan.



## You've made choices and you've reaped the rewards.

Being in charge of your own legacy is part of who you are. If there's a plan, you're going to be the one to make it.

To discuss your goals, and ways to give back to the UW, contact the Office of Gift Planning at the University of Wisconsin Foundation.

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