



Annotations

Department of English • College of Letters & Sciences • University of Wisconsin–Madison

Senior English Major Alexis Brown Wins Rhodes Scholarship

This past fall, Senior Alexis Brown was awarded a 2012 Rhodes Scholarship, one of the most coveted honors for a U.S. undergraduate. Alexis, a double-major in English and History from Algonquin, Ill., is the first UW student to receive the Rhodes since 2000.

During her undergraduate career at UW–Madison, Alexis has managed to excel academically while also founding and editing an undergraduate academic journal, *The Madison Journal of Literary Criticism*; working as a

peer tutor through the Writing Fellows Program; and serving as a volunteer teacher at the Bayview International Community Center. Currently, Alexis is completing a senior thesis on the British modernist Dorothy Richardson under Prof. Cyrena Pondrom.

In the midst of a busy final semester, Alexis took a few moments to talk about what made her last four years memorable, meaningful, and challenging, and where she's headed from here:

What attracted you to studying English in the first place?

It's funny, I was torn for a while between studying literature and history. My freshman year, I remember my favorite history professor telling me my writing style was very "literary." And I began to notice how all my history papers were turning into literary analysis ones in spite of myself. I always seemed inevitably drawn to rhetoric and how individual words were working in a text. I think that's what eventually made me decide on studying literature: I love the complexity of language.

When did you know you were hooked?

I wrote this paper on Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" for English 216 my freshman year. It must've been something like two in the morning the night before it was due, and I remember sitting in my dorm room's den, panicking. I thought I had no idea what I was doing. But then, as I kept reading the poem over and over again, I suddenly began to realize that the Lady's mental unraveling in the poem was reflected in its formal dissolution of meter and stanza length – that form reflected content in this really clever, intricate way. That realization was just the coolest thing I had ever seen, read, or heard about. My favorite moments in writing have always been like that, I guess. I'll just be sitting at the library or at home and suddenly everything about a paper or a poem will suddenly click and fall into place.

What faculty members made the past few years special for you?

Wow, that's a hard one. So many of the faculty members here have been so amazing and generous with me. Cyrena



Pondrom has an indefatigable dedication to undergraduate students, and she's also served as my advisor for the journal I run. I owe her a lot. Watching her read and lecture on the "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is also one of my favorite memories. Richard Begam has been an excellent professor and advisor, too, and his classes, along with Cyrena's, sparked a lot of my interest in modernism. I'll especially miss his sense of humor: it's profoundly dark and dry, but I don't think I've ever laughed harder than I have in a class with him.

What are the most important out-of-classroom experiences you've had in your time at UW?

Oh, this is easy: the summer after my freshman year, I taught a creative writing class at Bayview. It exposed me to a part of Madison I don't think I ever would've seen otherwise, and the kids there were just great. You wouldn't believe some of the stuff they came up with. I had this one student, Roy, who started the summer writing the same story about Bob Marley over and over again. As the summer wore on he began to rewrite these biblical

Continued on page 8

Staying on Course in Turbulent Times

Theresa Kelley, Chair
Department of English

As chair, I hope that alumni who read this newsletter will long remain part of our far-flung community. In fundamental ways, you and the students we now teach are essential to our future. Higher education at the great public universities is under enormous stress from failing state budgets and this situation will not reverse itself. More than ever, we ask you, our alumni community, to support the public education we give.

That support can take many forms. Giving to this department is one important way that you can help. Without English alumni support we would not have the funds to support either faculty development and research or our students, many of whom work to fund their educations. But it is also critical that you support English at UW-Madison to the wider public, where knowledge of the strengths of public education, its faculty, and its students will help to insure public recognition of the contribu-

tion of this and other public universities to the future of this republic.

In spite of these recent upheavals in public education, our department has managed to work, expand, and evolve. We have revised our undergraduate major to create more opportunities for students to work with faculty in small, writing

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intensive courses, and we have been moving ahead with plans for a network of internships specifically for English majors. We are happy to welcome our new undergraduate advisor, Karen Redfield, who holds a Ph.D. in composition and rhetoric from this department and has taught and advised college students for many years. And we are delighted to celebrate as a group the accomplishments of Alexis

Brown, our first Rhodes Scholar and an outstanding member of our community.

Our faculty has widened and deepened our collective range of expertise, thanks in part to Mellon support for new digital humanities projects, archival and critical analyses of Renaissance and American literatures, and the study of modern British and global cultures. We have just completed searches for new faculty members in Composition & Rhetoric and Eighteenth Century studies, as well as for a Mellon Foundation-funded position in early modern print culture. We aspire to be the best public university English department in the nation, and recent National Research Council survey data suggest that we are well on our way.

Please keep in touch. You are part of who we are and who we will become. ■

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

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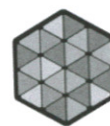
Our faculty and students are at the forefront of some exciting digital studies initiatives, bringing emerging technologies and methods to bear on the fields of composition, design, and literary studies. Check out their work!



The Humanities Research Bridge is an ambitious new project that offers UW humanities scholars a suite of services and space for digital research, workshops, and collaboration. Enterprising English professor **Robin Valenza**, the Faculty Head of the HRB, has been hard at work developing both an extensive website (<http://bridge.library.wisc.edu>) and new workspaces in Memorial Library,

in partnership with DoIT and UW Libraries.

The brainchild of Composition & Rhetoric professor and digital design guru **Jon McKenzie**, DesignLab is a digital design consultancy that helps UW students work effectively in "smart media" such as video essays, podcasts, theory comix, and, yes, PowerPoint! Located in College Library, DesignLab's interdisciplinary T.A. consultants focus on conceptual and aesthetic issues and also connect students to resources across campus. It is funded by the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates.



DesignLab

Telling Slow Stories: Rob Nixon and the Struggle of "Slow Violence"

Environmentalists are often forced to confront a narrative problem: How do you tell a story that unfolds over years, or decades, or centuries? How do you identify a cast when the main players are millions of people spread across vast distances, or when the villains are invisible toxins, buried waste, or atmospheric changes? And, most important of all, how do you make that story persuasive, engaging, and worthy of attention, especially to audiences that are increasingly distracted?

In his new award-winning book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Professor Rob Nixon makes the compelling case that, contrary to news cycles that are dominated by novelty and spectacle, many of the most serious ecological threats of our time are the result of slow-moving, incremental forces that are difficult to recognize and even more difficult to turn into a compelling story. But a generation of activists from around the globe have risen to this challenge

remarked that writers who believe in 'the transformation of society are always seeking ways of doing so that their societies could never imagine, let alone demand,' he said in a recent interview. "In undertaking the research for my book, I was astonished by the creativity, tenacity, and strategic energy that writers and other artists have brought to these representational challenges." In the stories they tell through historical novels, environmental picaresques, collective memoirs, and even the occasional Twitter post, these authors reveal the often invisible outcomes of ecological degradation, the effects of which disproportionately affect poor populations in the Southern Hemisphere.

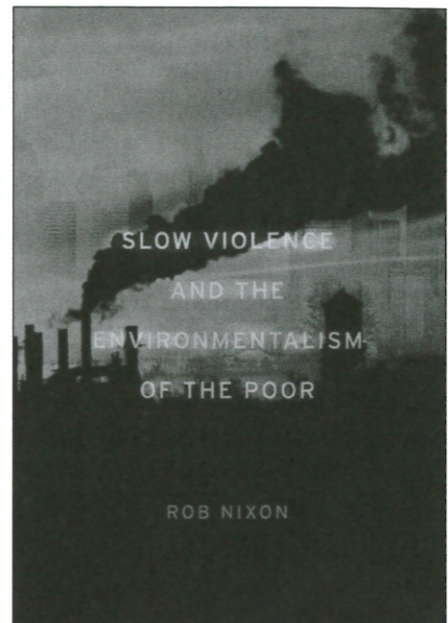
The acres of landmine-infested farmland in Laos, the massive agro-chemical dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, the widespread deforestation across Africa – these are the kinds of slow-burning problems, Prof. Nixon argues, that force us to reconsider what we call "violence" and who it

"Our cultural moment is in thrall to speed and spectacle, which has the effect of distorting our perception of what counts as violence."

through their writing, turning the long-term effects of environmental crises – oil spills, radiological contamination, deforestation, post-war fallout – into narratives that demand attention. From Ken Saro-Wiwa in Nigeria and Wangari Maathai in Kenya to Jamaica Kincaid in Antigua and Arundhati Roy in India, these authors have shown what he calls a "boundless creativity" in adapting both fictional and non-fictional forms to tell their stories.

For Prof. Nixon, that ability to create and transform has been particularly impressive. "Nadine Gordimer once

affects. Instead of thinking about violence as "explosive" or "spectacular," these cases of environmental degradation suggest that violence might also be "slow" – in other words, that it might have repercussions that may be postponed for decades or centuries but that are no less damaging, alarming, or catastrophic to those who feel its effects. As such, we need to take not just a broader perspective of our place in the world but, equally important, a long view of our place in history; we need to understand how our decisions affect not only *our* grandchildren but *all* grandchildren.



Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Harvard University Press, 2011). Available from Harvard University Press (www.hup.harvard.edu) and via Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and other booksellers.

Though he knows it is an uphill battle, Prof. Nixon hopes this change in thinking will provide an important step. "Our cultural moment is in thrall to speed and spectacle, which has the effect of distorting our perception of what counts as violence," he says. "But I hope that the idea of 'slow violence' can help activists put their finger on these critical crises of our times and help them find the language – and the strategies – that strengthen their widespread struggles against such crises." ■

Further Reading

Interested in learning more about these authors? Check out one of these titles:

Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed: A Memoir* (Knopf, 2006)

Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria* (Saros International, 2000)

Indra Sinha, *Animal's People: A Novel* (Simon & Schuster, 2007)

Rob Nixon is the Rachel Carson Professor of English at UW-Madison. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* was recently awarded the International Studies Association Harold & Margaret Sprout Award and was named one of Choice's Top 25 Outstanding Academic Titles for 2011.

From Madison to Taiwan

Pin-chia Feng (Ph.D., '94) talks about learning in Madison, teaching in Taiwan, and working to find one's place in the world

When I arrived at the Madison airport in August 1985 after a circuitous trip from Taiwan, I was full of excitement and expectations. It was my first trip outside of Taiwan and, born and raised in Taipei, I had hardly even traveled outside of the city limits of my native town before. But the quiet and beauty in Madison eased my sense of dislocation.

In those early days, Helen C. White was a second home to me. I took a work-study position at the Library and Information Studies library on the fourth floor, and I logged plenty of hours in College Library on the first floor, where I met fellow Asian students to discuss linguistics assignments and where my fellow Master's students and I traded knowledge for our upcoming written exams. It was the place I went to get the community and comradeship that carried me through the pressures of academic study.

But getting through a doctoral degree is not always the straightest path. After completing my initial course requirements, I took a long leave of absence from the doctoral program with the birth of my elder son. By the time I returned to school, I had to decide on a topic for my dissertation. Given my background, I found myself drawn to Asian American literature, an interest that was sparked by a seminar on feminist literary criticism with Prof. Susan Friedman (who has been my professional mentor and role model ever since). She led me not just to a number of books that proved central to my own studies – Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Toni Morrison's *Sula* – but, more importantly, to my dissertation director, the late Prof. Amy Ling.

Amy was inspirational to me as both a scholar and an individual. I marveled at the persistence and patience with which she dealt with institutional prejudices while trying to set up Asian American studies programs on different U.S. campuses. Years later, when I was forced to confront similar

institutional problems in a science and technology-dominated university back home, I tried to deal with my own obstacles with the same kind of persistence and patience.

When I returned to Taiwan, it took me a long time to adjust to the teaching life. This difficulty has a lot to do with the particular perception of being an "English teacher" in Asia. As teachers of English in Asia, we are inevitably faced with a bilingual context – to non-native speakers like us, English is always a foreign language. In Taiwan, an English department is usually called a department of foreign languages and literatures, or *waiwenxi* in Mandarin. A *waiwenxi* basically teaches a combination of Anglo-American literature, comparative literature, cultural studies, linguistics and English proficiency skills. Such departments are designed to train a group of non-native speakers to have a better understanding of the English language and literature and to be able to think critically and analytically by the time of their graduation.

Yet since the primacy of English in Taiwan basically comes from a belief that it is the language of international trade, global communication, and technological development, it is highly valued for its instrumentality in bringing Taiwan into contact with the rest of the world, an importance which is heightened even further given the isolated political status of Taiwan on the world's stage. As a result, the general population oftentimes takes it for granted that a *waiwenxi* is there only to provide language proficiency classes and to develop specialized English language students. This overemphasis on the pragmatic function of English marginalizes not only the study of literature but also the importance of critical thinking, things which I have always valued.

I have to confess that I have not exactly found a way to get out of this socially-prescribed role as an English teacher in this context. To a certain degree, I have tried to cope by separating my research from the teaching of proficiency courses. Fortunately, though, things seem to be getting better. Starting in the 1990's, the study of minority



Pin-chia Feng Ph.D

literatures became increasingly important because of the influence of postcolonial studies and Taiwan's specific ethnic composition. Buoyed by achievements of some senior Taiwanese scholars, research on African American literature has been a popular subject. And thanks to connections between Asia and the U.S., Asian American studies – and the study of Chinese American literature in particular – is by far the most developed branch in multiethnic studies. Through all of this, my own work on Chinese American and African Caribbean women writers has found the right niche in Taiwan's academic world.

There is a Chinese saying which tells us to think of the source while drinking water. And Madison is truly of the fountain source of my literary scholarship. From Madison to Taiwan, I always carry the precious legacy of literature with me, and I could not be the scholar I am now without my years in Helen C. White. ■

Pin-chia Feng is Distinguished Professor of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at National Chiao Tung University and a Research Fellow at the Institute of European and American Studies. She writes on issues of gender, race, and representation in films as well as in Asian American, African American and Afro-Caribbean literatures.

"Only Reconnect"

Tom Pavela (B.A. '73; M.A. '75)

It seems like it was only yesterday when I was sitting in a Bascom Hall classroom as an English undergraduate listening to Prof. Alvin Whitley's lecture on E.M. Forster's wonderful masterpiece, *Howards End*. The novel's epigraph, "only connect," struck a resonating chord with me back in 1973, and it still does today in 2012. Even as the novel explores human connections and the epigraph suggests a positive imperative to connect, it also implies the challenge of making those connections.

And so it was for me in staying connected with Wisconsin and the English Department after graduation. My connection with the University for many years was limited. It mainly involved following the football team and sending a small check every year to the UW Foundation Annual Fund for the English Department. Although I had the most wonderful memories of my time in Madison – and, in particular, my English professors and classes – it was a challenge for me to stay connected.

That changed in 1999 when Tom Schaub, the English Chair at that time, visited me in California and spoke of his vision of creating an English Department Board of Visitors. Although I had absolutely no idea of what a Board of Visitors would do, I jumped at the opportunity to join and reconnect to the English Department. Over the past 12 years, our work has evolved while still maintaining its original charter to help the department

identify needs, make plans for the future, and develop fundraising strategies.

As a Board, we have a passionate interest and commitment to English literary, writing, and language studies. But we also have an abiding desire to foster greater communication and cooperation between past and future students, between faculty and alumni, and between the university and the larger communities within Wisconsin, the Midwest, and the nation in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world.

We believe that *Annotations* is one way for the Department and English alums to stay connected. Enjoy this latest issue, which is funded by the Board of Visitors. You can also read about our extraordinary English majors, learn more about faculty projects and teaching, and find out about exciting alumni events on a new English Department website, available early this summer. Stop in regularly for updates on our "Alumni & Friends" page, archives of past newsletters, and expanded article content.

We invite you to be an active part of our exceptional network of students, alumni, and teachers, and we hope you will, as we have, "reconnect." ■

Tom Pavela received both a B.A. and M.A. in English from UW-Madison. He is a founding and current member of the English Department Board of Visitors, serving as the Chair from 2007–2011. His oldest daughter, Aly, is currently a sophomore at UW, double-majoring in English and Journalism.

ALUMNI GIFT NOOK

Alumni gifts make possible the extra margin of excellence. We are most grateful for the many gifts, small and large, that alumni have made over the years. Your donations help us attract and keep top faculty, recruit the best graduate students, support undergraduates with scholarships and prizes, and play a leading role on the national scene with conferences, lectures, and symposia.

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For more information on making a gift to the Department of English or including the department in your estate plans, please visit our website at <http://www.english.wisc.edu/alumni-give.htm> or contact Toni Drake, UW Foundation, at toni.drake@supportuw.org

Got a Story to Tell? We Want to Hear from You!

Annotations is always looking to reconnect to alumni through their unique stories from their years at UW and beyond. Do you have a memory of a favorite professor or an exceptional classroom experience? What did you do with your degree? Any recent accomplishments you want to share with our alumni community? E-mail them to us at annotations@english.wisc.edu



Monique Allewaert (Ph.D., Duke University) specializes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American literature, colonial theory, and ecocriticism. In addition to teaching upper-level courses on American colonialism and Continental prophecies, she is busy researching personification and political theory. Her book, *Ariel's Ecology: Personhood and Colonialism in*

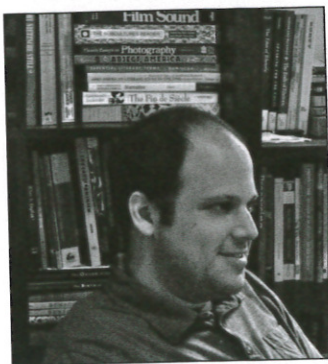
the American Tropics, 1760-1820, is due out from University of Minnesota Press later this year.

Q: What author would you pick as a roommate?

A: Emily Dickinson, because she wouldn't talk too much, but when she did it would be intelligent, intense, and completely original. And plus, she liked to bake bread, which I think would be a great habit in a roommate.

Q: Where do you go to get away from it all?

A: This past year, I've been visiting Wisconsin state parks when I have the time. It's a great way to take a short break from workaday life and to see different parts of the state.



Jim Brown, after working as a circuit designer at Worldcom for three years, earned an M.A. from Carnegie Mellon and a Ph.D. from the University of Texas. His research and teaching focus on rhetoric, composition, and new media studies, and he is currently at work on a book entitled *Ethical Programs* that examines the ethical and rhetorical dimensions of soft-

ware. He also has a piece on two DJ's, DJ Spooky and Girl Talk, that recently appeared in *Computers and Composition*.

Q: If you could keep any animal as a pet, what would it be?

A: I have two dogs and a cat, and we used to have a turtle. My house already feels like a petting zoo, so I think I'd probably pass on this opportunity.

Q: What's the most rewarding part of being a professor for you?

A: I get paid to think and to get other people to think. There's really no better job in the world, as far as I'm concerned.

Elizabeth Bearden comes to us from the University of Maryland, where she taught for five years. This spring semester, she is teaching undergraduate and graduate courses on the Sidney circle, disability studies, and early modern prose. Her recently-released book,

Emblematics of the Self: Ekphrasis and Identity in Renaissance Imitations of Greek Romance, looks at "verbal pictures" in the romances of authors like Sidney and Cervantes, and it brings together her interests in art, the "global Renaissance," and the reception of antiquity.

Q: What's been your favorite thing about Madison so far?

A: State Street Brats. Actually, I'm not entirely convinced that this wasn't a deciding factor in my decision to move to Madison from Maryland.

Q: What's one of the stranger things you've discovered while doing your research?

A: It's too indelicate for a public forum; remember, I am a scholar of early modern literature, and those folks didn't hold back.

Q: Where would you like to go to get away from it all?

A: I've always wanted to spend some time at the Chateau at Lake Louise in British Columbia...does the department have funding for that?



Nirvana Tanoukhi

joins the faculty after two years of post-doctoral work at the Harvard Humanities Center and the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and American Research. A graduate of Stanford University, she teaches on postcolonial literature and is currently writing a book on the geography of the postcolonial novel. Nirvana has

also translated two Arabic novels, *Passage to Dusk* by Rachid al-Daif and *Maryam of the Stories* by Alawiyya Subuh.

Q: What do you consider your best non-academic skill?

A: Probably cooking. It's certainly my favorite pastime. I'm lucky to have apprenticed with a line of aunts who take cooking very seriously – probably a little too seriously!

Q: What's the one book that you wish you had written?

A: When I began reading European novels (English, French, Russian) as a teenager, I would often wish I could've written one of them. But then I read Melville, and coveted his *Moby Dick* above all.

Welcome, Karen!

The department is pleased to welcome **Karen Redfield** as our new undergraduate advisor. A Ph.D. alumna of the department's Composition & Rhetoric program, Karen joins us after teaching for more than 20 years at Madison Area Technical College. She will be helping the department's nearly 600 enrolled majors to discover their interests, plan their classes, and build a thriving community. We're delighted to have her back!

Deborah Brandt

After 28 years in the Department of English, Deborah Brandt retired from teaching in 2010 but continues to remain an active scholar in the field of Composition and Rhetoric. Deb joined the department in 1983 after completing her Ph.D. at Indiana University. Perhaps best known as a scholar of literacy, Deb's three books and numerous articles have shaped the terms of contemporary literacy studies. Her second book, *Literacy in American Lives* (2001), has become one of the foundational studies of literacy and was recognized with the MLA's Mina P. Shaughnessy Prize, the CCCC Outstanding Book Award, and the Grawmeyer Award in Education. Additionally, Deb has received fellowships and grants from the NEH, National Research Council and American Council of Learned Societies. In 2011, she received a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship for her current book project, *Writing Now: New Directions in Mass Literacy*.

Just as Deb's scholarship has helped to shape understandings of literacy in the lives of people, her commitment to issues of equity and social justice have guided much of her own research and teaching. She has tutored in the Madison Public Schools and has been recognized with awards from the Madison chapters of the NAACP and Urban League. Her undergraduate teaching was recognized with the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching (1993) and her graduate teaching with English Graduate Student Association's Teaching Award (1998, 2010).

Perhaps Deb's most enduring legacy is in helping to shape the next generation of scholar-teachers. She has directed 26 dissertations and sat on another 31 dissertation committees. Her former students teach across the country and at a variety of institutions and seek to carry on her example of rigorous scholarship, committed teaching, and caring mentorship. We thank Deborah Brandt for her work with students, her service to the department and university, and her contributions to understanding literacy in our lives.

Jack Niles

John D. (Jack) Niles, Frederic G. Cassidy Professor of Humanities, joined the department in 2001 after teaching at UC-Berkeley, Brandeis, and UCLA. A specialist in Old English language and literature, Jack taught courses on everything from Old English to Chaucer to the Scottish Tradition and was always willing to offer directed readings on special topics to undergraduate and graduate students alike. Jack is an active poet and translator, skills he passed on to students both in the classroom and at Beowulf Club, an Old English sight-translation group. Through his teaching and mentorship, Jack has had a lasting effect on the intellectual lives of his students. At Jack's retirement party, one student spoke movingly of how Jack had taught him to translate, not simply by mechanically working through grammar and syntax, but by modeling how one thinks through the choices available in order to produce a translation that is itself a work of art.

A true comparatist with interests in material culture, oral poetry, folklore, and mythology, Jack is probably best known for his work on *Beowulf*. In addition to publishing several monographs on Anglo-Saxon literature, including work on orality, riddles, and heroic poetry, Jack is the co-editor of *The Beowulf Handbook* (1997) and the new standard edition of *Beowulf*, Klaeber's *Beowulf*, 4th ed. (2008); he also edited the illustrations accompanying Seamus Heaney's translation of the poem in *Beowulf: An Illustrated Edition* (2007). Most recently Jack has served as the president of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists (ISAS), under whose auspices he organized a major international conference at Madison in 2011 – the summer after his retirement! Jack will be fondly remembered by his students and colleagues for his passion for the field, his sense of humor, and his dedication to mentoring students and young scholars.

Howard Weinbrot

After more than forty years of unparalleled research, teaching, and service, Howard Weinbrot, the Ricardo Quintana Professor of English and William Freeman Vilas Research Professor, has assumed the mantle of "emeritus professor." Over the years, Howard's contribution to literary scholarship of the Restoration and eighteenth century has been profound, having written eight major books and edited eight more. His work includes hundreds of highly-regarded essays and reviews, in fields as wide-ranging as literary studies, political science, classics, history, and religion.

A seminal thinker and writer on a huge range of eighteenth-century authors and texts, Howard has more than once redefined the literary period he studies. For instance, his book *Augustus Caesar in Augustan England: The Decline of a Classical Norm* (1978) challenges the assumption that eighteenth-century writers considered themselves to be writing in the great tradition of the classical Augustan poets. Likewise, Howard was again ahead of his time in *Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian* (1993), showing that the formation of the British literary canon depended on the creation or rediscovery of a mixed heritage interlocked with a growing pride in the commercial and political prowess of Great Britain.

None of this is meant to ignore Howard's importance in the study of Samuel Johnson, nor the numerous awards, visiting professorships, and other high honors that he and his writings have garnered, including recognition as a Guggenheim Fellow, Mellon Fellow, and Clifford Lecturer in the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. Although Howard has completed his years teaching at UW-Madison, for him retirement is not an end but a beginning. He continues his scholarship at a breakneck pace, and no doubt he has at least one more paradigm-shifting book up his sleeves. Howard's ready wit and the passion he has imparted for eighteenth-century literature to generations of students will be sorely missed.

The Wisconsin Literary Magazine, 1903–1929

Student-run literary magazines have a lineage in the English Department that stretches back more than a century. The student-edited journal *The Madison Review* has been publishing poems, stories, and interviews with major writers since the early 1970s, while the general humanities-based *Illumination* continues to feature exceptional stories and poems from English majors every year. But from 1903 until 1929, the *Review's* and *Illumination's* forebear, *The Wisconsin Literary Magazine*, was the go-to publication for a wide variety of student writing.

Printed eight times a year, the initial editions split their space between literary endeavors – from translations of Horace's poetry to short stories from a dog's perspective – and opinion pieces on current events and university life. The early publications in particular offer a window to a different era at the university. Advertisements for tailors, milliners, and dry goods shops, like the now-defunct State Street Co-op, fill out early issues, and editorials harp on the decay of the moral character of "our university men." Elsewhere, one undergraduate writer advocates raising the profile of our somewhat obscure football team by expanding its schedule – from five games to seven – while another talks about teaching opportunities for Madison graduates in post-WWI France.

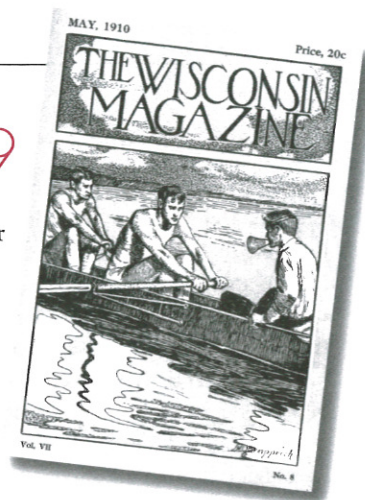
But it is often surprising what has *not* changed in the intervening one hundred years. A May 1912 article on "What Students Talk About" defends students against the age-old accusation from their teachers that "students do not take their work seriously, and that their minds are wrapped up with the lighter things of college life." A senior English major worries about what she will do when she graduates in a couple of months, not having yet made any plans. And, through the articles and the stories, you can catch glimpses of the perennial fixations of

college students – extracurricular life, dating woes, worries about coursework – that you might read from student writers today.

Over the years, though, the *Magazine* became a much more serious literary business and, as news or editorial pieces were pushed out in favor of more short stories and poetry, it served as a venue for a number of notable authors during their careers as English majors at UW. In its latter days, the magazine included not only female editors but significant numbers of women authors, such as the feminist author Margery Latimer and the literary historian (and Nazi Resistance fighter) Mildred Fish Harnack. The Pulitzer Prize winners Esther Forbes (author of *Johnny Tremain*) and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings (author of *The Yearling*) were frequent contributors during the mid-1910s, as was the author Eudora Welty, who attended the university from 1925 to 1927. Kenneth Fearing, one of the great poets of the Great Depression, both edited and wrote for the *WLM* during his time as a student, overlapping briefly with the noted Objectivist poet Carl Rakosi in the early 1920s.

By the end of the publication's run on the eve of the Great Depression, the *WLM's* editors and writers had produced more than 200 issues over three decades, all of them the product of Wisconsin students. And, thanks to the University Archives and the Digital Collections office, you can delve into the full online catalogue yourself at:

<http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/Literature/> ■



Alexis

Continued from Page 1

stories featuring himself as Jesus—his disciples sometimes other students, sometimes jellybeans, depending on the prompt. It's memories like that have really stuck with me and still make me smile. Watching them develop as writers and storytellers was a real treat.

Is there a moment that defined your experience in the English Department?

I was in a class with Richard Begam last year, and we were reading *Heart of Darkness*. Another student remarked that he had found the prose really stilted

and, when asked to provide an example, he read a random sentence from the text. Prof. Begam then proceeded to take apart the sentence bit by bit, identifying the rhetorical device at work – parataxis, or the lack of conjunctions between clauses. He showed how Conrad was purposefully eschewing conjunctions to demonstrate that the relationships between things were becoming unclear, that Conrad's world was descending into the chaos of unbounded relativism. From this random sentence, he drew out one of the major significances of the novel, and that close reading on the spot – really a kind of performance – was astounding to me. I think an excellent author has that kind of linguistic complexity at work in every

sentence, and an excellent reader will be able to reveal its importance to anyone. That's what I want to do.

So, what's next?

I'm excited to meet the other scholars and the other students at Oxford. I think the experience will be really stimulating but challenging, and I'm excited for that challenge. After that, I'd like to continue on to a Ph.D. somewhere in the U.S., and eventually become a professor. But if that doesn't work out, I'll still be incredibly grateful for all the opportunities I've had and for everything I've learned studying English. I think a lot of different things could make me happy, and I'm excited just to keep working with literature for as long as I can. ■

Reaching Zydeco: DARE Publishes Final Volume

"I hope this isn't a rantum scoot. Those roller birds have been scarce since that blue norther put a pogonip on the trees."

Lewis Carroll, perhaps? Not quite. But, fifty years ago, you would have to travel pretty widely to understand those lines. You would need an Alabaman to tell you that a "roller bird" is a blue jay, a Texan to tell you that a "blue norther" is a cold northerly wind, a Nevadan to tell you that a "pogonip" is a heavy frost, and, rarest of all, a Nantucketer to tell you that a "rantum scoot" is an outing without a destination. So, all in all, you would have to cover a couple thousand miles just to know that someone is griping about looking for blue jays driven off by an early frost.

Thankfully, you no longer need to wear out the soles on your shoes. With the publication of its most recent volume, the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (DARE) has finally reached the end of the alphabet, completing the massive task of tracing all the neologisms, regionalisms, localisms, and other verbal oddities that reflect the immense diversity of the United States, its people, and its places. Volume V, published by Harvard University Press this past winter, is the capstone for a talented team of linguists, editors, and full-time staffers that have long been a fixture in Helen C. White.

Stretching from "aa" (a Hawaiian lava flow) to "zydeco" (a kind of Creole dance music), the project has completed a long journey of its own. Though the idea for a complete dictionary of uniquely American words was pitched to the American Dialect Society as early as 1889, the project did not take shape until 1962, when English Department Prof. Frederic

Cassidy was appointed editor. He worked on the dictionary for almost 40 years, well into retirement and right up until his death in June 2000, along with a team of linguistic surveyors and researchers. Prof. Cassidy's successor as chief editor, Dr. Joan Houston Hall, continued her mentor's work and has kept the project going through budget cuts, technical problems, and the inevitable headaches of compiling more than 2 million separate responses on usage and pronunciation.

Unsurprisingly, DARE's work has had broad appeal, and Dr. Hall and her team are enjoying plenty of much-deserved press these days. With features in *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *USA*

Today, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, NPR, ABC, and numerous local, national, and even international papers, the publication of the fifth volume has been celebrated by scholars, writers, and logophiles as a landmark accomplishment.

But DARE will not be resting on its laurels. They are currently working on a supplementary sixth volume to be released in 2013, which will include an index, maps, and responses from the original field survey, as well as developing a new website and online research tools. And even though "zydeco" is safely in the books, American English continues to evolve, mutate, and grow. You can bet your bottom dollar on that. ■

Writing Centers, Unite! | The MWCA Conference, October 20-22



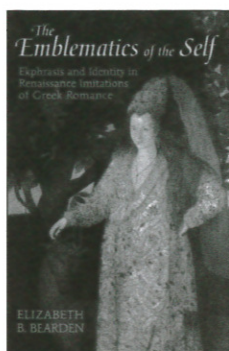
(Left): Writing Center instructors Kim Moreland and Anthony Black welcome participants to the conference; (Center) Prof. Deborah Brandt (Composition & Rhetoric, Emerita) delivers the keynote address; (Right) former and current instructors Brian Williams (Ph.D., '11), Mitch Nakaue (Ph.D., '10), and Stephanie White (back left) talk shop with other conference-goers.

This past fall, the Writing Center hosted the Midwest Writing Center Association's annual conference in partnership with Edgewood College and Madison Area Technical College. With a record-setting number of participants – more than 300 over three days – the conference featured workshops and panels by writing center faculty, directors, instructors, writing fellows, and scholars from all across the Midwest and beyond, including many English Department alums. The director of the UW Writing Center and conference co-chair, Brad Hughes, credits the conference as a unique opportunity for students, instructors, and administrators from a wide range of institutions to come together in an engaging, supportive environment to discuss the important work of writing tutoring and instruction.

More Online!

Read articles, watch interviews, see a map of sample communities, and try your hand at a dialect quiz at: <http://dare.news.wisc.edu>

Sign up for DARE's Word of the Day Twitter feed: @darewords



Elizabeth Bearden

The Emblematics of the Self: Ekphrasis and Identity in Renaissance Imitations of Greek Romance

University of Toronto Press, 2011

Deftly bridging the written and the visual, Elizabeth Bearden's new study shows how Renaissance romances, like their Greek models, used *ekphrasis*

– “verbal pictures” of visual representations – to enliven characterization. Engaging and rigorous, *The Emblematics of the Self* breaks new ground in understanding hegemonic and cosmopolitan European identities in an increasingly global Renaissance.



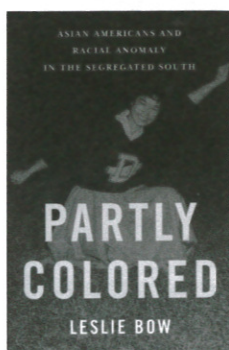
Richard Begam & Dieter Stein, editors

Text and Meaning: Literary Discourse and Beyond

Düsseldorf University Press, 2010

How do texts make meaning? Who makes it, and when? This expansive collection of essays draws on a wide range of European and American literature to interrogate the theory and

history of textual signification, from the Middle Ages through the contemporary moment. Contributors include many English department faculty members.



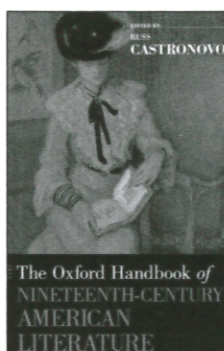
Leslie Bow

Partly Colored: Asian Americans and Racial Anomaly in the Segregated South

New York University Press, 2010

An Honorable Mention Book from the Association for Asian American Studies, Leslie Bow's book crafts a compelling history of interstitial ethnic groups –

Mexican, Asian, and Native American – in the U.S. South before and after segregation. In looking to these stories of “third race” individuals, she considers the multiracial panorama that constitutes American culture and history.



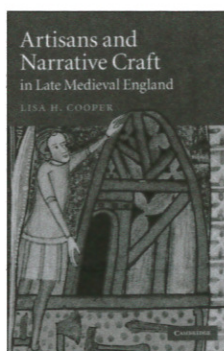
Russ Castronovo, editor

The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century American Literature

Oxford University Press, 2012

Russ Castronovo's landmark collection brings together twenty-three original essays by leading scholars in American literary studies to open up new horizons in the rich field of nineteenth-century

American literature. Both critically incisive and sharply practical, the volume offers forceful strategies for rethinking protest novels, women's writing, urban literature, slave narratives, and popular fiction, just to name a few of the wide array of topics and genres covered.



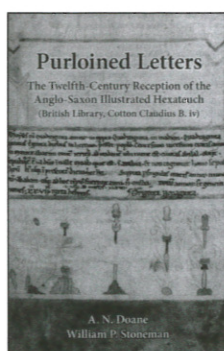
Lisa Cooper

Artisans and Narrative Craft in Late-Medieval England

Cambridge University Press, 2011

In genres as diverse as the school-text, comic poem, spiritual allegory, and mirror for princes, authors of the Middle Ages not only depicted artisans as increasingly legitimate members of the body politic but also deployed

images of craft labor and its products to confront other complex issues, including the nature of authorship, the fate of the soul, and the scope of princely power.



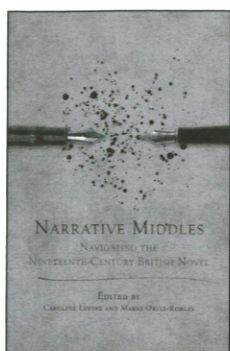
A.N. Doane & William P. Stoneman

Purloined Letters: The Twelfth-Century Reception of the Anglo-Saxon Illustrated Hexateuch

Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011

Purloined Letters documents the fascinating discovery and context of the

latest datable Old English writing in the famous illustrated Old English *Hexateuch* – a translation of the first six books of the Old Testament – copied in the mid-eleventh century. An indispensable tool for textual scholars of the period, the edition includes a translation of its Latin and English notes, a history of its study, and information on the book's context.

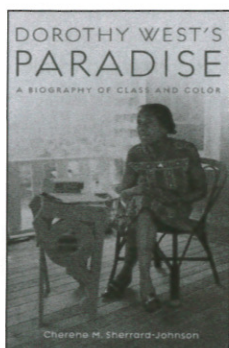


Caroline Levine & Mario Ortiz-Robles, editors

Narrative Middles: Navigating the Nineteenth-Century British Novel

Ohio State University Press, 2011

Narrative theorists have lavished attention on beginnings and endings, but they have too often neglected the capacious middle of narratives. In this groundbreaking collection of essays, nine literary scholars offer innovative approaches to the study of the underrepresented middle of the vast, bulky nineteenth-century multiplot novel and its role as a medium for capturing, consecrating, and cultivating the middle class and its middling, middlebrow tastes.

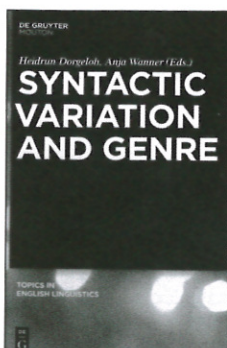


Cherene Sherrard-Johnson

Dorothy West's Paradise: A Biography of Class and Color

Rutgers University Press, 2012

Often read as a product of the urban aesthetics of the Harlem Renaissance, Dorothy West was also intimately rooted in a very different milieu – Oak Bluffs, an exclusive retreat for African Americans on Martha's Vineyard. *Dorothy West's Paradise* captures the scope of the author's long life and career, reading it alongside the unique cultural geography of Oak Bluffs, a place that West envisioned both as a separatist refuge and as a space for interracial contact.



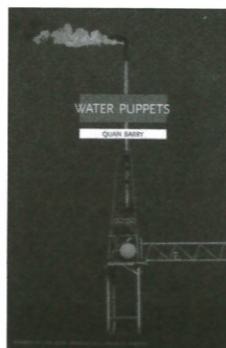
Anja Wanner & Heidrun Dorgeloh, editors

Syntactic Variation and Genre (Topics in English Language and Linguistics)

De Gruyter & Mouton, 2010

This volume explores the interplay of syntactic variation and genre. How do genres emerge and what is the role of syntax in constituting them? Why do certain constructions appear in certain types of text? The types of texts investigated cover spoken, highly interactive, and written forms of communication, including selected genres of computer-mediated communication.

Award-Winning Poetry



Amy Quan Barry
Water Puppets

University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011

Winner of the 2010 Donald Hall Prize in Poetry, Amy Quan Barry's newest poetry collection is a potent engagement with contemporary politics and identity. At once compelling and disconcerting in its unflinching exploration of the universal image of war – from Iraq to the Congo to Vietnam – Barry also returns to her signature lyricism in poems on the beauty of Peru and the paintings of Ana Fernandez.

CHECK OUT THESE AWARDS!

An exceptional scholar of early modern literature, **Karen Britland** was awarded a prestigious Romnes Faculty Fellowship for the upcoming year.

Russ Castronovo, Ellen Samuels, and Sean Teuton have each been awarded an Institute for Research in the Humanities (IRH) resident fellowship for 2012–13.

Todd Goddard, one of our dissertators in literary studies, was recognized as an outstanding T.A. with a campuswide Capstone Teaching Award, only five of which are given each year.

Creative Writing faculty **Jesse Lee Kercheval** has received the Emily Mead Baldwin Award from the UW Arts Institute, which recognizes "extraordinary artistic projects."

Anja Wanner, professor of linguistics, is the recipient of a Faculty Development Award. Congratulations, Anja!

Alumni Authors: Show Your Stuff

Many of our alumni are published authors. We'd like to show off your work. Send us the title and publication date of your book, along with a 50-60 word description or blurb, and we'll mention it in our e-issue later this year.

E-mail us at annotations@english.wisc.edu

The Kindness of Criticism

Nancy Reddy is a graduate of the English Department's MFA Program in poetry and is currently a Ph.D. student in Composition & Rhetoric. A long-time teacher in the Teach for America Program (where she still works as a trainer) and an instructor in the Creative Writing Program at UW, we asked Nancy to talk about the ins-and-outs of teaching creative writing to college students.

When I moved from Texas to Madison for my MFA in 2008, I was apprehensive about the Wisconsin winters and excited about the fabled Midwestern kindness. And my husband and I experienced that kindness in spades, from passers-by who pushed our Jetta out of the snow before we could even ask for help to our retired fireman neighbor who zooms his snow blower up and down our sidewalks in his fire boots. The one place where this exuberant friendliness was less than helpful was the creative writing workshop.

When the first round of poems came up for discussion, what followed was a round of the kindest but least helpful comments I'd ever heard in a workshop. "I think this is really relatable."

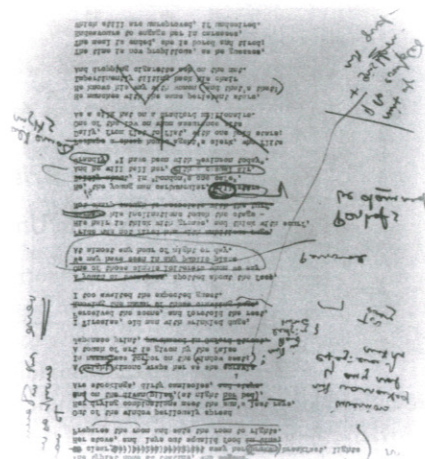
“Yeah, I feel like I really connect to the feelings.”

"I really like [insert random line]." Asked to provide constructive feedback, students shuffled their papers and looked down to their laps.

Once I started poking at the poem a bit, identifying places where I wanted to know more or where I wasn't sure what was going on, other students chimed in, adding questions of their own, or suggesting alternate readings for lines I'd discussed. There was a tangible sense of relief in the room: someone had said a critical thing, and it was fine.

That kind of criticism, I teach my students, is actually a form of kindness. Taking the time to read each others' work carefully, identifying specific places where things are going well, and asking questions or suggesting revisions shows that you're on the poem's side and want it to get better.

I don't actually think the difficulty in crafting constructive feedback stems from any trait unique to the Midwestern disposition. It's rare, I think, to find a college sophomore so confident of her reading of a classmate's poem that she's willing to give overt criticism. And even when a student



has a niggling feeling that something isn't quite right, she often lacks the technical language to articulate it precisely.

I find that students tend to imagine published writing as having emerged whole from an author-genius's brain, and such a perspective makes it difficult to understand the impact of choices of form, figurative language, and narrative technique. But the creative writing workshop teaches them that lines can be broken differently, that point of view can shift. By thinking of their own and their classmates' writing as a series of choices that could be reconsidered, they're also able to begin to see their way into more thoughtful analysis, not just of their own writing but of published texts as well. ■