



ANNOTATIONS

English Department Alumni Newsletter - Fall 2022



A Letter from the Chair

Dear alumni and friends of the English department,

As you may remember, Fall is an exciting time on campus. New students and faculty arrive, new initiatives take shape, new leaders take up their roles (hello!). The campus is gorgeous as late summer turns to fall, and the band and various sports teams can be seen (and heard) by anyone venturing along the beautiful Lakeshore path.

This Fall, the English department has our share of excitement and energy, and the pages of this newsletter will give you just a taste of what we're up to. The photograph on the previous page features our amazing undergraduate advisor, Erin Polnaszek Boyd, leading one of the walk-and-talk events that she's been hosting to help build community among English majors. I hope that as you walk your way through *Annotations* you will likewise feel part of this community. As you read, you'll meet graduate students who have taken on advising, publications, and editorial roles in the department as part of our burgeoning professional and career development program. You'll learn about how the new president of the Madison Undergraduate Society for English and her team are reinvigorating MUSE activities in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. You'll encounter many, many new faculty as well as some familiar faces in new roles. There is much to celebrate in these pages!

We are glad to have a robust and wide-ranging community of English department alumni and friends. Thank you for reading and for your investment in the department. Let us know if these stories resonate with your own experience, remind you of your time on campus, make you want to learn more, or even get you energized for your own Fall transitions. We would love to hear from you!



Professor Christa Olson
Chair of the English Department

Stay connected with the English Department!

We love hearing from alumni! If you have any questions or comments about this issue of *Annotations*, please contact us at webadmin@english.wisc.edu.

We would also love for you to follow us on social media for updates on department life. Click the icons below to visit our social media pages.



The Power of Alumni Giving



Professor Anja Wanner, the Enid H. Anderson Professor of English, pictured here with English language and linguistics PhD candidate, Lynn Zhang. Professor Wanner and Lynn collaborated on a project funded by alumni donations. Read below to learn about the impact these donations had on the completion of Professor Wanner's new textbook.

I am deeply grateful to English alum Dr. Erling A. Anderson, who funded two named professorships in honor of his parents, Charles Q. Anderson and Enid H. Anderson. A medical researcher and faculty member at the University of Iowa, Dr. Anderson always valued -- and often spoke about -- the importance of his liberal arts education as an English major. Sadly, Dr. Anderson passed away in 2018 and I never had the opportunity to thank him for his generosity towards the English Department

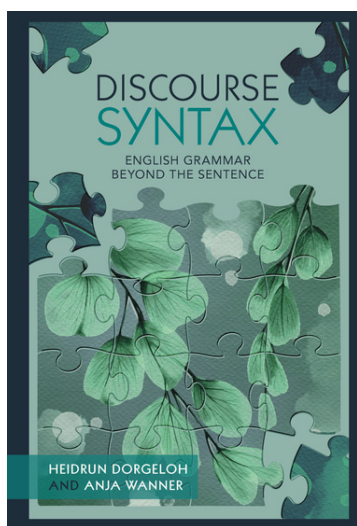
Funds from the Enid H. Anderson professorship have been instrumental for the completion of my new book, *Discourse Syntax -- English Grammar Beyond the Sentence*. I've published books before, but they were all critical studies. This is my first textbook, i.e. a book written to be used in the classroom. The book introduces advanced students of English linguistics to grammar phenomena that one can really only explain by looking "beyond the sentence," i.e. by paying attention to things like topic development, information flow, and the linguistic conventions of a genre. The book presents research from actual language use, taken from large electronic corpora, and discusses phenomena like word order variation, the language of digital discourse, and the acquisition of grammar by children.

For example, in order to find out if children can understand passive sentences (like "The horse was kicked by the cow"), one shows them images like the ones below and asks them to point to the picture that corresponds to the meaning of the sentence. For "The horse was kicked by the cow," young children will point to the picture depicting a horse kicking a cow, which shows that they haven't acquired the syntax of the passive construction yet and simply go by word order (horse-kick-cow) to construct a sentence's meaning.

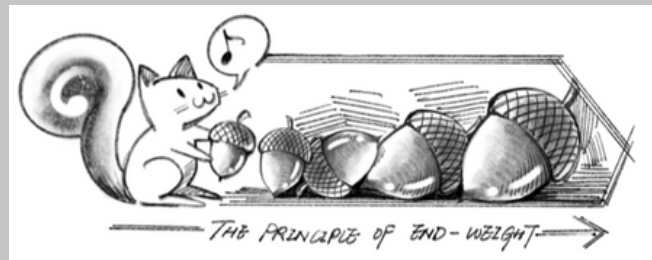


A linguistic textbook requires many more elements than just well-crafted text. It needs a chapter structure suitable for a semester-long course. It needs to articulate learning outcomes, define key terms, and provide guidance on research projects and choice of methodology. Students and instructors also expect carefully scaffolded exercises (ideally with model answers) and accessibly presented research data (think numbers, icons, charts, and graphs).

Thanks to support from the Enid H. Anderson professorship, I was able to travel to Germany for several work sessions with my co-author, Professor Heidrun Dorgeloh from the University of Düsseldorf. Even more importantly, I was able to offer a project assistantship to English Language & Linguistics dissertator and gifted graphic designer Lynn Zhang, who created all data visualizations and dozens of illustrations for the book (like the ones above), as well as the beautiful cover. I could not be more thrilled with the result!



All this was happening while I was chair of the English Department, in the middle of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Without access to research funds, the manuscript would still be far from finished. As it is, the book will be published by Cambridge University Press this fall and will be in the hands of students in the spring.



Another illustration completed by Lynn Zhang for Professor Wanner's book. Zhang explains: "when introducing 'the principle of end weight,' Professor Wanner and I brainstormed a lot of ideas for visualizing this concept, and after a lot of discussions, we finally decided to use the idea of how a squirrel organize its nut hoard (putting the larger ones into deeper space, see below) to illustrate the idea of 'putting larger chunks of information near the end of a sentence'.

The ultimate goal is to be able to present and introduce English syntax in a more approachable/interesting way to a wider range of audience, and I think using visuals, pictures, comics would be a great way to achieve this goal."

Our sincere thanks to the many alumni and friends who have generously supported the Department of English. Private gifts are critical to ensuring that the department maintains its stature as one of the nation's preeminent English programs. Your donations help us attract top faculty and graduate students, support promising undergraduate majors, and host a stimulating series of lectures, symposia, and other scholarly activities. Gifts of any size are most welcome and gratefully received. All our funds welcome contributions and bequests from alumni, friends, corporations, and foundations.

To give securely online, please visit supportuw.org/giveto/english.

Preparing for life post-PhD

To help students gain experience in fields outside of academia, the department has made a concerted effort to offer a variety of project assistantships to graduate students. Read below to get a sense of the variety of projects our graduate students have been working on.

Caroline Hensley

Internship and Career Advisor



What drew you to apply for this assistantship?

I think it's tremendously useful that our PhD program promotes professional exploration by creating positions for grads in addition to teaching. As I worked in a career center at my undergraduate institution and previously as a part-time academic advisor for L&S students here, I was eager to try my hand at tailoring this advising skillset for a particular student population.

What is something unexpected you have learned in your position?

I have learned such interesting and surprising things about an immense variety of industries/ career types through this position, from law, to publishing, to screenwriting, to teaching abroad, to museum curation, and beyond. I think one of the most affirmative things I've realized is just how well-equipped English majors are to succeed in many of these areas. Employers are eager to hire our students because they are strong communicators who neatly balance their creative and critical inclinations.

Has your PAship helped prepare you to think about future goals?

Absolutely I think this PAship has been pivotal for my own professional development and the knowledge I've gained about career pathways relevant to those of us in the humanities. In a general sense, this work enables me to better understand how employers seek out skills that English majors (and grad students) can perform, which I think boosts my future standing on the job market, whether academic or other.



Lynn Zhang

Editorial Assistant for
American Speech linguistics journal

What has been the most rewarding part of your PAship?

Being given the opportunities to attend editorial meetings and being able to see how the editing and publication processes work behind the scenes – they truly helped me to see the careful selection, revision, and publication processes of an academic article, and having the mindset of an editorial assistant also helps me to read my own abstracts/papers with a more critical perspective.

What does a day in your life look like while you're on the job?

I work on different things depending on the publication schedule – some common tasks that I have include: selecting and contacting reviewers to review newly submitted papers; conducting/writing initial reviews of submitted papers; editing the citation format for accepted papers to make sure they align with the publication guidelines. In addition, I also conduct lexicography/etymology research for Among the New Words – this special column introduces lexical items that are nominated for American Dialect Society's Word of the Year, and presents how these lexical items are used in different situations (such as in books, news report, on Twitter, in lyrics...etc.) with authentic linguistics contexts/evidences.



Emerald Rutledge

Former digital Content Manager at *Brittle Paper*, online literary magazine

What drew you to apply for this project assistantship?

I applied to the *Brittle Paper* project assistantship because I was interested in expanding my editorial experience. I had been working as an editorial assistant then assistant editor for Black Perspectives -- an academic blog associated with the African American Intellectual History Society -- since 2017, and working with *Brittle Paper* offered me the opportunity to shift toward a more literary editorial focus.

What was the most rewarding part of your experience?

The most rewarding part of the PAship was witnessing the way that *Brittle Paper* really centered up and coming writers from the Continent. One initiative in particular, the Brittle Paper Writer of the Month, was geared towards highlighting the work of emerging writers, and I found that to be a really beautiful and rewarding project.

Aaryn Smith

Project Assistant for *Old English Poetry in Facsimile*



What drew you to apply for this project assistantship?

One of the coolest things about being a medievalist is that the field sprawls across disciplines; evaluating literary texts can also include translating old languages and assessing manuscripts produced hundreds of years ago. I love that working on the Old English Poetry in Facsimile project demands all of the above. I was also intrigued by the opportunities to experiment with my own interest in editing, which could become an alt-ac career option. Essentially, I was really curious about how I would respond working in a different setting and mode.

What's been the most rewarding part of your PAship?

I've really appreciated getting to collaborate with the OEPPF team. Sharing this sort of work is a different way to connect, and I've enjoyed some valuable conversations with my colleagues, not only about the editing itself, but also about possible future directions, about how this kind of editing resonates with our current research, how it might affect our career decisions and ambitions. Professor Martin Foys is also a terrific mentor, and getting to work closely with him has really helped me find my sea legs in this program. He's not only direct about honing or developing skills, he's also been explicit about what I'm doing well. I've learned so much about my personal interests and proficiencies, about communication, organization, understanding administrative systems, a work/life balance, and so forth. The PAship has facilitated incredibly rewarding relationships.

In what ways you think your PAship helped prepare you for life post-phD?

My plans are up in the air at the moment, though I like the idea of teaching high school or venturing into UX writing. The PAship has definitely been invaluable, as it's challenged me to step outside the familiar; because of this assistantship, I've gained experience and confidence with different kinds of work and expectations. I think this experience has taught me to trust my abilities much more.



Addie Hopes

Former Editorial Assistant for Contemporary Literature journal

Can you describe your experience working at Contemporary Literature?

I am grateful for the opportunity to peek behind the scenes of *Contemporary Literature*. In this position, I gained valuable insight into what it takes to turn an essay draft into a published journal article-- from initial submission to peer review, revision, fact-checking, and proofing--and I benefited from the patient and generous mentorship of Eileen Ewing (Managing Editor). After a few months of seeing these processes in action, I felt much more comfortable submitting my own work to journals for consideration. I also gained a new appreciation for the entire editorial staff whose significant labors, attention, and care make a journal like CL--and the intellectual exchanges they foster--possible.



Thom Van Camp

Former advisor for Health and Humanities certificate

What is something unexpected you learned during your assistanship?

The experience opened my eyes to the incredible breadth of knowledge at UW. The HatH program is truly interdisciplinary, with students and faculty from dozens of departments. It was exciting to see these different approaches work together and it's a great example of what I think Humanities work should look like.

What does a day in your life look like while you're advising?

The job is primarily student facing, so most time is spent working directly with students to help them plan courses or address other questions. The other focus is promotion; I have spent many hours talking with administrators, faculty members, and other advisors about the program specifically, and the role of the humanities in general.

What's been the most rewarding part of your PAship?

It was rewarding to watch the program grow. In the past three years we doubled the number of students in the certificate. This was the result of a lot of hard work by our faculty and wouldn't have happened without the support of administrators and advisors across campus. Also, I've been having more and more conversations with students who plan to pursue advanced degrees in Health Humanities and use that knowledge in their future medical practice. That thought is incredibly rewarding.

WELCOME NEW FACULTY!

M. Ty



M. Ty joins UW English as an Assistant Professor of critical theory and literature. Ty's research exists at the intersection of continental philosophy, natural history, modern literature, and environmental thought. Most recently a VW-ICI Visiting Fellow at the Kulturlabor Institute for Cultural Inquiry in Berlin, Ty searches for a critical language for abiding with the remainders left behind by the production of Human supremacy. Ty's manuscript in progress thinks most closely with Walter Benjamin, Frantz Fanon, Beverly Buchanan, Sylvia Wynter, and Hortense Spillers; the study considers how race gets encoded in various conceptions of 'objecthood' and 'environment' and draws out practices of refusing domination that do not look toward being human as an aspirational horizon.

Erika Meitner

Erika Meitner joins the department as the Director of the MFA Program. Meitner, who received her MFA from the University of Virginia, is the author of six books of poems, including *Ideal Cities* (HarperCollins, 2010), which was a 2009 National Poetry series winner; *Copia* (BOA Editions, 2014); and *Holy Moly Carry Me* (BOA Editions, 2018), which won the 2018 National Jewish Book Award in Poetry and was a finalist for the Library of Virginia Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award in poetry. Meitner has held fellowships from MacDowell, the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the Hermitage Artist Retreat, Blue Mountain Center. She was the 2015 US-UK Fulbright Distinguished Scholar in Creative Writing at the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry at Queen's University Belfast, and is currently a 2022 Virginia Commission for the Arts Fellow. Her newest book of poems, *Useful Junk*, was published by BOA Editions in April of 2022.





Kirk B. Sides

Kirk B. Sides joins the department as an Assistant Professor specializing in African literature and the environment. Before joining UW English, Sides was a Lecturer in World Literatures at the University of Bristol and a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of the Witwatersrand's Institute for Social and Economic Research in Johannesburg, South Africa. His research argues for new approaches to thinking about race in relation to both climate change and to the environment in African literature and film. His current book manuscript, *African Anthropocene: The Ecological Imaginary in African Literatures*, explores the relationship between environmental thinking and anti-colonial politics in African literary and cultural production and argues for expanded historical timelines for thinking about the environment in African literature, film and artistic production.

Amadi Ozier

Amadi Ozier joins the department as an Assistant Professor in Global Black Literatures. Ozier, who earned her Ph.D. from Rutgers University, locates her research in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century African American literature, disability studies, and humor theory, and her work examines the intersections between humor and violence in American cultural production. A recipient of the Ford Foundation Fellowship, Ozier earned a BA from the University of West Georgia (2013) and has taught courses such as the “Black Body at War” and “Queer Harlem Renaissance.”



Paul Tran

Paul Tran joins the department as an assistant professor in poetry. They also hold a joint appointment with the Asian American Studies Program. Tran is the author of the poetry collection *All the Flowers Kneeling* (Penguin, 2022). Their work has also appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Nation*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Good Morning America*, *Best American Poetry*, and elsewhere. Before arriving at UW, Tran was a Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford University and earned an MFA from Washington University in St. Louis.



Nate Marshall

Nate Marshall joins the department as an assistant professor in poetry. His latest poetry collection, *Finna* (One World / Penguin Random House), was recognized as one of the best books of 2020 by NPR and the New York Public Library. Prior to teaching at UW, Marshall taught at institutions such as Northwestern University and the University of Michigan. He earned an MFA from the University of Michigan. His first book, *Wild Hundreds* (Pitt Poetry Series), was a finalist for the NAACP Image Award in poetry.



Raquel Kennon

Raquel Kennon joins the department as an associate professor of global black literatures. She is the author of *Afrodiasporic Forms: Slavery in Literature and Culture of the African Diaspora*, which explores the epistemological possibilities of the “Black world” paradigm and traces a literary and cultural cartography of the monde noir and its constitutive African diasporas across multiple poetic, visual, and cultural permutations. Kennon was formerly a professor at California State University, Northridge, where she taught courses in African American, Caribbean, and African literature, first-year writing, and cultural studies.





MADISON UNDERGRADUATE SOCIETY *for*

ENGLISH

When it came to extracurriculars like community service activities, clubs, student organizations, and academic societies, “virtual” was the recurring refrain during the pandemic.

But now that in-person instruction is back in full swing and extracurricular participation is returning to pre-pandemic levels, clubs across the University of Wisconsin are trying to improve opportunities for students to engage in university life, and MUSE is no exception.

MUSE, the Madison Undergraduate Society for English, is a collective of students majoring in English as well as students with an interest in English who seek community and collaboration during their time as undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin. For the new president of MUSE, Roshnie Rupnarain, the mission to foster a space to meet, collaborate, and share with others interested in and studying English has taken on new urgency and significance.

"COVID really put a damper on member attendance," says Rupnarain. "Our main short-term goal is to put together events that draw new members in, as well as provide current members with a fun and safe space to meet new people and enjoy themselves."

Working alongside Roshnie as the new MUSE leadership team are Brianna Foth, Maggie Riordan, Jack Snider, and Arielle Barber. For Riordan, the secretary and social media manager of MUSE, the effort to bolster participation has played out on social networking and in social media marketing, including on MUSE's Instagram, @museuw.

"Peer connections are so important!" says Riordan. "Even though English majors interact with each other in class, MUSE offers an environment where we can connect outside of class about personal and professional interests."

Striving to meet the social and professional goals of their undergraduate members is a huge priority for the MUSE leadership team. The organization's collaborations with the English Department's Career Advisor, Caroline Hensley, as well as their plans to host career workshops and alumni panels throughout the academic year demonstrate their commitment to ensuring their members gain practical experience in the professional sphere through close connections with advisors, professors, and alumni. Future plans for MUSE include hosting professional development events like alumni panels and information sessions with the Career Advisor and Undergraduate Advisor, sponsoring annual literary conferences and inviting guest speakers, and creating space for fun team-building activities like trivia nights and costume balls.

For the new MUSE leadership team, there are both tangible and intangible benefits to the study of literature and writing, and developing a sense of community among other English majors is not only perennially valuable, but particularly valuable in today's world.

"We now live in a knowledge economy," says Brianna Foth, MUSE treasurer. "Writing plays an essential role in making knowledge accessible by processing and packaging it into things like reports, papers, blogs, press releases, and articles, which allow people to freely share their knowledge with others. As UW-Madison professor emerita of English Deborah Brandt writes, "Writing is at the heart of the knowledge economy.'"



Community Service Chair Arielle Barber (left) and MUSE President Roshnie Rupnarain (right)

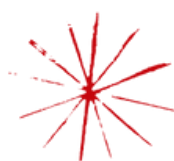
In keeping with MUSE's mission to build a community of scholars interested in literature, creative writing, composition and rhetoric, comparative literature, and more, MUSE is open to any current undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin regardless of declared or prospective major.

"It's a safe space for students with varied interests in English to come together, collaborate, make new friends, and explore new topics within the discipline," says Rupnarain.

As to their own interests in English literature, Roshni's favorite book of all time is *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls, while Brianna swears by *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys and Maggie loves the short story collection *Life Ceremonies* and the novel *Convenience Store Woman*, both by Sayaka Murata.



MUSE Treasurer Brianna Foth (left)



In Memoriam

Peter Straub



Peter Straub, an alumnus of the UW English department and an acclaimed author of horror, mystery and supernatural novels, passed away in September 2022. Straub's published works include *Ghost Story*, *The Hellfire Club* and *The Talisman*, co-written with Stephen King. He received numerous awards throughout his career, including multiple Bram Stoker Awards and World Fantasy Awards.

Straub was a longtime friend and supporter of the department. In 2016, he was presented with the department's Distinguished Alumni Award, alongside his wife and fellow alumna Susan Straub. He was a founding member of the English Department's Board of Visitors, demonstrating strong interest in the department's teaching and scholarship, and serving as an ambassador of the department.

Becky Alexander

Becky Alexander passed away in August 2022. She was a UW employee for 25 years, working in various positions from 1985 to 2011. She was an English Department employee for 6 years, beginning March 2005, before retiring in 2011. Becky worked in the front administrative office managing student advising appointments and was responsible for various administrative functions. She had strong and loving family connections and was always proud of the accomplishments of her grandchildren.

