

THE MIRROR & THE LAMP

The Department of English at Western Illinois University Issue 4 Spring 2017



A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR - A MAJOR THAT MATTERS

BY: MARK MOSSMAN



I have been thinking a lot this year about the courses our students take and what they learn when they come to Western.

I have concluded, maybe not surprisingly, that the English major is easily the most important major option on this campus and, indeed, on any college campus.

This is so because, when you really think about it, the intention or purpose of the English major is all-encompassing—so much so that I often wonder why anyone would major in anything else.

And yet, often I still hear questions like, “What can you do with an English major?” or, “What do you actually learn as an English major?”

These questions are still asked by parents, friends, and sometimes even English majors themselves.

But this is all wrong. These questions come from a basic confusion about what higher education actually is. Indeed, a critical reading of this circumstance tells me that we should not even ask, “what is the purpose of the English major?”

The correct question is, “what is the intent of the English major?”

Shifting the question shifts the entire

way of understanding higher education itself. We all must understand that a higher educational institution is not simply a job-training center. No, that is not what higher education is. Higher education is not about credentialing, acquiring skills sets, or something seemingly “useful,” which, by the way, is never an appropriate way to understand any kind of higher learning.

Higher education is about transformative learning, about developing and articulating critical perspectives on our world; it is about exploring the meaning and shape of the world, and it is about figuring out a deeper understanding of our individual and communal place in the universe. It is about the big and the important, about the deeply meaningful things.

In this context, the intention of the English major is to understand both the useful and the good, both the beautiful and the just. An English major reads books, analyzes poems, defines texts, writes essays, and in doing so the English major works on clarity in written communication, on taste in cultural production, on genius in poetic expression, and on truth in representation.

Thus in the terms above, an English major is at the very center of a higher education, and so the one single answer to both of the questions above is a simple, “everything.”

What can you do with an English major? Everything.

What do you learn as an English major? Everything.

In terms of value and use, there is no major that is more comprehensive and useful. Period.

Incredibly, I graduated from college 25 years ago this May. I was an English major. And, as I finished my undergraduate education in Spring of 1992 and quickly began my graduate edu-

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cation, I heard these same persistent questions.

But I was able to hear the more local, immediate, worldly worry behind them—worries about a job, a career, student loans to be paid, and so on.

Correctly, I dismissed all of these worries as nonsense and vaguely inappropriate for what I really wanted to do with my life.

In 1992 I wanted a major that mattered because I wanted a life that mattered.

Sure, I needed something that gave me the skill sets to make it in the world (which English does), but I wanted something that also gave me the insight and critical acumen to make sense of the world and to change the world for the better.

And like you, I found the English major.

And indeed, as this publication itself indicates, in majoring in English you have found a major that matters.

REBECCA GONNER, MANAGING EDITOR, SIGNING OFF

BY: REBECCA GONNER



Time has this annoying habit of constantly moving forward; and though it technically does so at a constant pace, I find the experience of it to be anything but constant. I'm finally finishing my four years at Western and I have no idea how time managed to push me through them so quickly. It feels like

just the other day I talked to Dr. Allison after getting my first paper handed back in ENG 201, and she explained to me that it's okay to have multiple paragraphs dedicated to one concept. I'd handed in a four page paper with multiple page-long paragraphs, high school having taught me to keep each point to one paragraph. I was stunned to hear that this was, in fact, not the case at all.

Now in my final semester with my Bachelors of Arts in English within reach, I like to think I'm no longer that doe-eyed freshman. I've learned some things in my time here. Things like there's no escape from Simpkins 14, so don't even try. And you never get used to the bathroom stalls. I can effectively present an argument, analyzing literature is practically second nature, and I've started to find my voice in my personal writing.

My time at Western has been nothing short of amazing.

I've received opportunities I know couldn't have happened at other universities, and I have close relationships with my professors. Working for the Writing Center was such a blessing, I couldn't have asked for better coworkers or a more supportive environment. I learned so much in my time helping students as a consultant, and I know my own writing practices benefited from the experience.

What I believe impacted me the most in my time at Western is the three years I've worked to define, grow, and promote *The Mirror & the Lamp*. I've grown from a sophomore, reluctantly accepting a position of authority I wasn't sure I was prepared for or deserved, to a senior who feels *The Mirror & the Lamp* is as much a part of my identity as my major. I was by no means the perfect manager. There are things I know I should've handled better. I learned and grew right along with the publication, which was only created the semester before it was handed into my questionably capable hands.

Thankfully, I haven't had to do it all by myself. I've had wonderful staff members supporting me each year and our adviser Dr. Banash has always been there for any question, comment, or complaint I had.

If I had to share advice for those of you who stay behind from what I've learned in my time as a college student, it would be this: take risks and know it's ok to be in a little over your head. College is a time for learning and growth, and that's exactly what happens when you take on challenges you don't feel prepared for. Your professors and peers are here to support you, so take that leadership position, sign up to present at a conference, volunteer to coordinate an event. Should you happen to fail at something or find yourself struggling, then reach out. I promise hands will be waiting to pull you back and lift you up.

THE COVER

Each year, *The Mirror & the Lamp* features a cover image from Simpkins Hall, the home of the Department of English.

This year, our cover image features a section of the frieze above the west entrance to Simpkins.



The image seems particularly appropriate for our cover as it features a lamp, book, and sun, suggesting the enlightenment we receive from reading widely.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS FOR OUR AMAZING STAFF

Ellen Poulter, the Academic Advisor for English, has recently been awarded the WIU Advisor of the Year Award! The award is given to one individual per year who has displayed an excellence in advising and has reflected the mission and goals of the Advising Unit at Western Illinois University. **Lynne Ward**, Staff Clerk in the Department of English for 5 years, was selected as the College of Arts and Sciences Civil Service Award winner for 2016. This award recognizes her endearing personality, on-going commitment to holding us all together, and astounding work ethic. Congratulations on a well-deserved award!



EA GAMES: THE REALITY OF GETTING A DREAM INTERNSHIP

BY: HALEY HELGESEN

It was September of last year that I was suffering a self-imposed crisis. I had suddenly decided that I was in desperate need of an internship for the summer if I had any hope of being gainfully employed after graduation. I spent hours frantically filling out applications for every type of internship imaginable. Paid, unpaid, virtual, abroad. I did not discriminate; it seemed like everywhere I was qualified to intern at received my resume. One night while searching for more internships, I stumbled across a listing for a paid internship at EA Games. I laughed at my odds, but figured it was worth a shot. I sent in everything required and felt confident that my resume would go unread amidst a pile of several hundred applications. Months went by, I had not heard back from them. Truth be told, I didn't think much about the application after a couple of weeks. I took their silence as a sign that I was not meant to work for the company. I laughed at myself for even applying, what would a video game publishing company want from an English major?

Two days into winter break, I woke from a luxurious night's rest to an email from EA. The message was brief: "we looked over your application and would like to speak to you further. Please call us at your earliest convenience." I had to scoop my jaw off of the floor and scream into my pillow before I felt composed enough to call them back. Five interviews later, I received a phone call offering me the paid twelve-week internship.

EA took care of everything for me,

provided me with the resources necessary to uproot my life for a summer in Orlando, and begin a challenging internship-turn-career with their company. Due to weird Orlando rental laws, I ended up living in a hotel for the entire summer (the experience merits its own



separate article), but I spent a majority of the time on EA's campus. I was placed at Tiburon Studios, which is the studio primarily focused on the Madden franchise. The campus itself was what you would expect from a tropical paradise: flowers, wildlife, and massive fountains abound. While it was a stunning campus, it was also Florida in the summer, so you couldn't really be outside for more than 20 minutes without exceeding heat index warnings for heat stroke.

This is probably where I should mention that working at a video game company is awesome. We had arcade units on every floor, free Starbucks coffee, video game memorabilia, a lax dress code, and conference rooms that were just giant ball pits. Much like the other technology companies, EA took pride in having a corporate culture that matched the creative pursuits they

pioneered. This meant frequent game tournaments, free games, and red carpet launch parties when new games released. We also had a guy who would come in every Wednesday and make fresh cookies to hand out to employees (that was my favorite perk).

I wish I could say that I was just allowed to play the whole summer, but the truth is I was so busy working that I didn't take advantage of everything available to me. As an intern with EA Games, I was actually employed by EA academy, which was a wholly different entity to my department. I had specific assignments, networking requirements, and projects just for academy that differed from my job. So not only was I responsible for my writing work, but also all of my intern academy work. My professional position was producing technical writing projects in the corporate team, but as a part of my intern academy duties, I would also assist in dialogue and narrative writing in studio. It was strange to be torn between two different worlds, but being in EA, where it really is an environment where science meets art, it wasn't as difficult or tedious as it sounds. It really was fascinating.

I could detail every challenge or success I had while at EA, but that would be boring. So instead, I am going to name the three most important things I learned while there:

1. Networking is the most important aspect of any internship/job you will have. It is these connections that will not only ensure employment, but it also provides you so many resources in times of need. It was anxiety inducing,



huge issue when I arrived at Tiburon, but nobody cared. Seriously, want to know how many people asked me where I am getting my degree? Zero. My competition for my position were from UPenn, Georgetown, MIT, and Cornell, yet I was the one most qualified for the position. While we at Western may be humble, we are just as capable and marketable as any other college graduate. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

but during my time there, I networked with the CTO, CFO, CCO, and even Andrew Wilson, CEO. When I made a book recommendation to him, it took him aback. These connections I made were instrumental to my success at the company, and were integral to my recommendation for hire. Networking is a necessary evil.

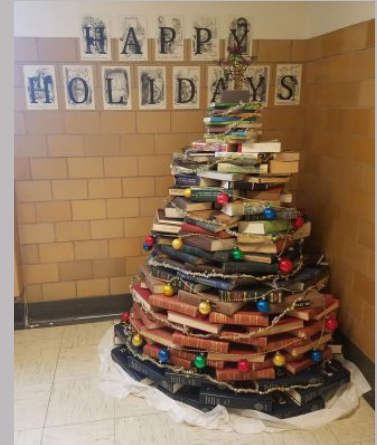
2. English is a useful degree, and those who say otherwise do not know the full capacity of your education. I was the only person in the Intern Academy who had a liberal arts degree, and I left with the most recommendations. English teaches you incredibly valuable skills for work settings. You made a perfectly wise career choice, do not fret.

3. Nobody cares where you got your degree. I thought this was going to be a

Sometimes I feel detached from the experience, like it didn't happen to me. I guess I am still in a state of shock that I was selected, moved to Florida, worked in a studio, was flown to other EA locations, got five recommendations for hire, and am now back in Macomb. All of the successes, failures, memories, and traumas still have yet to truly seep in. Overall, I consider the experience a triumph. I learned and experienced so much in such a short amount of time, I am not sure how I will replicate such a process in the future. From here, I don't know what happens, maybe I will end up working for EA, and maybe I won't. But the experience will stay with me and I will carry it to whatever career I decide for myself. In the end, I couldn't ask for a better internship experience, and I am forever grateful to the talent recruits at the EA Intern Academy who looked at my shoddy resume and said we should give this girl a call.



DECK THE HALLS WITH BOUGHS OF BOOKS



By: Tiffany Dimmick - Grad and Writing Program Secretary and Western Alumna

What the Dickens is that in the hallway?!?! That was a question on many people's minds Monday morning after a well-needed Thanksgiving break. The answer: on a day no students entered the English corridors and no phones rang in my office, I ventured up to the Simpkins' loft where overly squeaky doors and dreams of a collective library permeate out of the vaulted architecture and grandiose windows. It was in that spacious loft among drywall crumbles, empty chairs and desks, and dusty bookshelves that another dream unfolded in my head filled with dancing sugar-plums. After a few sneezes and some help from my fellow English secretary and the Mary Poppins/MacGyver of the English department, Lynne Ward, I got to work. I brushed off the ceiling-high stacks of old books that were merely collecting dust, hauled them several times on a tiny cart down the frightful elevator into a hallway begging for happiness that day, and made some Christmas cheer, English-style: a book tree.

Not only is this simple ornament and garland-covered book tree filled to the top with dictionaries, encyclopedias, poetry, writing guides, literary reviews, Norton Anthologies of Literature, film textbooks, and that smell of old paperback books we English nerds get high off of, but there are also books our faculty wrote stuck in the boughs to showcase the accomplishments, dedication, and love they have in the field. At the top of the tree is a star being held up by none other than a box of paper clips of course. Inspired even further, I created a Happy Holiday's banner made from art clippings of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

FROM ROLE-PLAYER TO WRITER

BY: MAX KEIL



“You’re a writer? When’s your novel coming out?”

“Never. I don’t write creatively.”

“Why not?”

“I prefer efficient language. I don’t waste time with flowery descriptions.”

Those have been the reasons I give for avoiding creative writing, but to be honest I avoid it because I’ve never been any good at it. That changed a few years ago when I was looking for a new hobby and decided to organize a role-playing game for some friends.

“What are role-playing games?”

The rabbit hole runs deep, my friend, but all you need to know is they’re basically Dungeons & Dragons. Most require a small group of players and a single game master. Each player invents a character they want to control, and the game master describes the fictional world they reside in as well as the results of the players’ actions. At its best, these games play out like an evening of collective storytelling not unlike long-form improvisational theater. My first attempt sounded a lot like this:

“You enter a cave.”

“What do we see?”

“Well it’s a cave... so basically darkness.”

Not the best, but that’s why I wasn’t writing fiction. What’s great is that I got better! Everyone puts a lot of work into the game, so most groups want to play for several hours. As game master, each role-playing session was essentially a four-hour exercise for me in describing a world that didn’t exist. Players, like readers, are an inquisitive bunch. They ask questions and expect to be told every minute detail. Game masters don’t get away with simply describing the ballroom of a manor, they have to describe every picturesque carving on the frame of every family portrait, and provide the historical context of made-up iconography and bloodlines. For me it was exceptionally trying. I was sure I had done a horrible job, but when my first session ended all the players wanted to know was:

“When are we playing next?”

I love how the hobbies we writers pick up can influence, improve, and expand our writing. I was only looking for a fun distraction, but in role-playing games I found an entryway into the world of creative writing. Now I spend evenings inventing all sorts of backgrounds for fictional characters and worlds, and while I still don’t have a novel coming out, I can confidently tell people:

“I am a creative writer.”



THESIS IN 200 CHARACTERS OR LESS

Interview by: Rebecca Gonner

Western’s English Department is rich with both undergraduate and graduate students crafting their theses, as well as accomplished faculty with their own completed theses. I asked around the English Department to see who would send me a simplified summation of their blood, sweat, and tears. Below are the results from professors, undergraduates, graduates, and an undergraduate alumnus.

Dr. Jacque Wilson-Jordan: Edith Wharton wrote some ghost stories. Reading them teaches us, after all, that people are more scary than ghosts.

Senior Max Keil: They told me I could make any thesis I wanted, so I made an RPG about robots.

Graduate student Kelly Schloss: Romantic and Victorian literature’s Byronic heroine: No, you didn’t misunderstand. Yes, she does exist. Now I will prove it.

Senior Haley Heglesen: Stories in games are cool because you play them, we should keep doing that. Also I wrote something.

Alumnus Justin Kim: America defines itself against evil brown people. To make sure brown people can’t argue otherwise, we exclude, exploit, and exterminate them.

Graduate student Klaira Strickland: Oftentimes when people like Dungeons and Dragons, they play Dungeons and Dragons, why is that?

Senior Dakota Carlson: My undergraduate thesis is about how crazy cool cinematic violence and modern movie bad guys like the Joker really are. I do this because I’m a madman.

Graduate student Sheldon Gaskell: Making sense of the post-modern and the absurd in the film Holy Motors and what this says about an actor and filmmaker’s identity in current society.

Dr. Neil Baird: Neil and Bradley conduct a bajillion interviews over half a decade to learn that students experience difficulty writing in the major.

RECREATING WHO I AM

BY: REBECCA GRAHAM

At 30 years old, I am in the middle of a great recreation of my life. Eleven years ago, while working my way through obtaining my associate's degree, I fell into a position in medical billing. I liked it well enough and I was good at it; it hardly occurred to me that it wasn't actually what I wanted to be doing with my life. One evening while watching *Wallstreet: Money Never Sleeps* with my husband, we began a conversation that would begin the process of recreating my life. My husband asked me that classic question: What would you do if money was no object? I responded immediately: I would open a bookstore. What could be better than spending my days around books? Buying them, selling them, recommending them, talking about them – it sounded heavenly. This, of course, is a huge risk in real life, considering the profitability of bookstores in the current market, not to mention your livelihood depends on authors writing good books that people want to buy, and that is completely out of your control. My husband suggested that I could be a librarian, then I could have all the joy of the bookstore without any of the financial risks.

This idea percolated in my mind over the subsequent months; each time I felt trapped at my desk doing a job that left me feeling unfulfilled and frustrated, I would hear my husband's voice suggesting I should be a librarian. I spent my free moments during those months researching what librarians actually did, the education requirements and job prospects. I quickly found that there was a lot more to it than making book recommendations; librarians run community programs, help with research projects, and teach a whole range of skills. There was one quote in particular that really sealed my fate:

To be a librarian is not to be neutral, or passive, or waiting for a question. It is to be a radical **positive change** agent within your community.

-R. David Lankes

Now, here I am, still working full-time in that same medical billing position, but also working toward completing my bachelor's in English, planning my honor's thesis, and looking at graduate schools with MLIS programs. I am, literally, counting the months (20 to go!) until I can leave my office for the final time,



pack my bags and head off toward a new future. This particular recreation is a long process, but it is leading to a whole new life, and I am very excited about the future.

JUDGE NOT

BY: CHRIS BELL

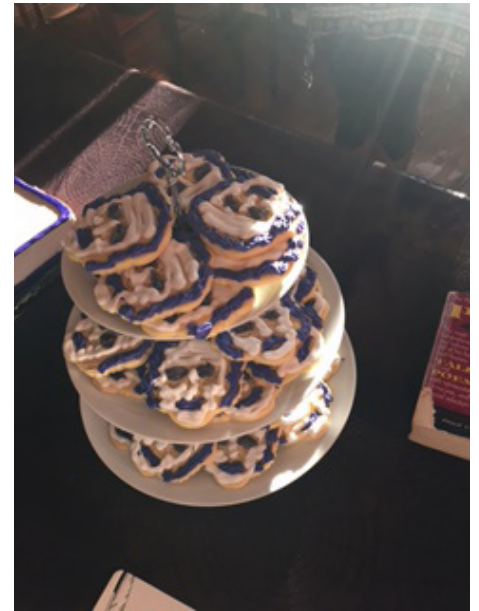
"I think you should burn it."

This was my first piece of literary criticism, delivered in the paperback section of Osco Drug by my disapproving grandmother. The aforementioned criticism was precipitated by my wanting to buy a book: cheap, pulp-fiction thriller ignominiously entitled *Bride of Satan*. Although my grandmother wasn't referring to burning the book she currently held in her hands, she was referring to the novel-in-progress she had found in my bedroom that I had feverishly been hammering out on my electric typewriter for nights on end. As a teen-age freshman, living with my grandparents in their rural home, I didn't have many choices to occupy my free time. I spent it reading Stephen King, H.P. Lovecraft, and any other horror/fantasy I could get my hands on. I've always had an overactive imagination which fueled my creative desire to write. This is the one thing I've been certain of since I was that gawky, teenage boy standing in the aisle of Osco Drug suddenly having my reading choices brought under such close scrutiny.

The story I was working on was about a teenage serial killer whose method of dispatching his luckless victims was via a rail road spike. It probably wasn't the greatest "bad horror" fiction ever penned, but certainly deserving of a better fate than the burn pile. What my grandmother failed to realize was that my story was fiction and that I harbored no personal intentions of ever harming anyone. Judging a writer personally for what they have written is unfair. It is grossly unjust to paint a portrait of a person having no personal knowledge of them except through words they have written. This sentiment was espoused numerous times in the first creative writing class I took at Western. The work presented to the reader is what should be of utmost importance and not the writer. For me to judge a writer based on what I have read is to take away from the story itself. Perusing every sentence looking for clues into the writer's psyche and spending valuable time trying to determine whether or not events in the story actually occurred is absurd at best and does a great disservice to the writer, especially in a work of fiction. A lot of fiction does have some element of truth ingrained in them, but that doesn't give the reader the right to make wholesale judgments upon the character of the writer. In all the creative writing workshops I've taken I have never personally judged any of my peers. I gave their writing the respect it deserved and critiqued it to the best of my ability. And I have never had anyone in those workshops ever pass judgment on me or cast aspersions onto my moral fiber—even though I'm sure it was warranted at times.

I enjoy reading about the lives of writers and some of my favorite writers haven't always been the best people, but that has never changed the way I've viewed their work. Their work and their words are a testament to hours of sacrifice and isolation to present the reading public the fruits of their labor. Sometimes the stories are great, other times not so much. But, hey, who am I to judge?





DINNER AND CONVERSATIONS: EDGAR ALLAN

BY: EMILY BRYCE SWAIN

There are two things in this world that can send me hurtling back into my emo teenage years: My Chemical Romance and Edgar Allan Poe. Suffice it to say, upon walking into the Helwig residence for Dinner and Conversation night, I was humming the melody to the song “Helena” while serving myself a healthy portion (or two) of mostaccioli. The entire residence was decked out with Poe-themed trimmings, from the ravens tucked in every corner to the lemon-frosted Poe cookies in the entryway, and I felt transported back to the “misunderstood” age of yore upon entering the dining room.

“Dinner and Conversations” is an event held by Sigma Tau Delta that I had heard much of from my Writing Center coworkers over the years. Previously, it was held at The Old Bailey House, but this year the Helwigs decided to hold the event at their morgue-turned-home as they felt the setting was more appropriate for Poe’s dark nature. The event is exactly what it sounds like—a bunch of Sigma Tau Delta members chit-chatting over homemade goodies about a particular topic or author. This year’s topic was Poe—a fan favorite amongst former angsty teens, like myself.

After settling in and eating far more Poe-face cookies than what was socially acceptable, I filed into the kitchen with the others to serve myself some pasta and warm thyme-spiced bread. To my relief, there were both meat and vegetarian options for the mostaccioli. After every-

one was served, we all found seating in the dining room to eat our loads of carbs as Dr. Tim Helwig called us all to attention.

Briefly, he explained a biography of Poe’s life, along with a few short anecdotes of his experience with reading and learning about Edgar Allan Poe. Following this, Dr. Helwig encouraged the other attendees to share their stories about their encounters with the works of Poe. While going around the room, the pattern of “I first read ‘The Telltale Heart’ in middle school” began to emerge, which showed not only the popularity of Poe, but also the odd fascination with that particular work. I admitted that despite drooling over “Annabel Lee” in my high school years, my favorite work was “The Black Cat,” which I did not read until college. It was interesting to learn about everyone’s favorite Poe works, as well as the varying opinions around the room. In fact, I was surprised to learn that not everyone who attended was a Poe fanatic, but rather a fan of free food and engaging in intellectual conversation.

In short, my first Dinner and Conversations was overall an interesting experience. I recommend that any new member of Sigma Tau Delta attend, even if they are not familiar with the chosen topic. Not only is the free food fantastic, but the company is even better.

AN ENGLISH MAJOR ABROAD: THE TRUTH IN TRAVEL BY: MOLLY CAMERON

“Traveling- it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller”
-Ibn Battuta

As an English major, when you make the decision to study abroad, the obvious choice is England. It's the birthplace of the Modern English language, and it is home to some amazing historical landmarks like Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and the resting place of professor J.R.R. Tolkien. As great as all of that history sounds, in the months leading up to my departure I was a little upset that I had chosen to go to England instead of somewhere more exotic. In many ways, England is incredibly similar to America; we share a language, we have similar food, and both of our cultures are decidedly first world and westernized. I was convinced that my time in the UK would be almost exactly the same as a normal year at WIU, and to some degree I felt that because of my major I was being cheated out of the international experience that other students had during their time abroad.

After being here for nearly a month, my world has been completely turned upside down. I am now friends with people from England, Korea, Poland, Greece, Mexico, and even the remote land of North Dakota. I have a friend who speaks six languages because she

thought it would be cool. I am constantly surrounded by more varied and colorful



culture than I have ever seen in my entire life, and I never could have prepared myself for it. When I sit down and think about all of the international students that I have met during my short time at Edge Hill University, I realize that all of these students have something in common. They may be here studying different things, they may come from different backgrounds, and they may all want to do something different with their lives, but the one thing that they have in common is the fact that the English language has given them opportunity. Some countries require students to learn English as a second language at a young age, other students have taken it upon themselves to learn

the language, but they all have done it with a purpose. When I find myself feeling

like a lazy person because I only know one language, they always tell me that it doesn't matter; I already speak the language that is important.

The English language, much like America, is a melting pot of different cultures and dialects. Sometimes it may feel like English-speaking nations don't have much of a culture of our own, but I believe that that is because we embrace all cultures. English is a language of diversity, and to study English is to study history and traditions from all over the world through literary art. I decided to travel because it is an incredible opportunity to see the world and become connected to it in a way that staying in Illinois would never allow me to. I didn't know it until now, but I decided to

study English literature for the same reason.

DR. DI CARMINE THE BOOK THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

BY: JARED WORLEY

What book that changed your life?

I grew up in Italy so the book that changed my life is an Italian novel entitled *Una donna* (A Woman). It was written in 1906 by Sibilla Aleramo. I remember reading it in high school. It had a strong impact on me, mostly because this was the first book I actually read that was written by a woman.

How would you describe it to someone who hasn't read it?

The book, which is a fictionalized memoir, depicts the struggling life of a woman from childhood to adulthood while, at the same time, describing the striking cultural and social differences between the industrialized North and the rural South of Italy.

Where/How did you first encounter this book?

I don't recall who mentioned the book to me but I remember getting it at the public library in my hometown and remember reading it in one day! When I came to the United States I bought the book in English and I still have it, at home, in a section dedicated to Italian books!

How did the book change you?

This book did evoke profound emotions in me as I was reading about the different stages in a woman's life through a female perspective. Later in life, when I moved to the United States to earn a Master's degree, I realized how influential this book has been as it literally opened my eyes on feminism and helped me better understand the problematic place that women have in any patriarchal society.



AN ABSURD PASTIME

BY: JARED WORLEY

When I enrolled at Western as an undergraduate in the fall of 2012, I never thought I'd be where I am today. Truth be told, I didn't even know if college was the right fit for me; I was what you would call a knucklehead in high

school. Since the age of three, I always knew I wanted to join the military like my father before me and his father before him. Needless to say, going into high school I had no real clear understanding of what I wanted for my life other than to join the military. And that's what I did. In February of my senior year, a mere three months before I graduated, I enlisted in the United States Air Force. I was on cloud nine; my dreams were coming true! But if you have seen any film about how life doesn't go as we plan it, you can probably guess what happens next. That's right, in August of 2010 I was honorably discharged from Air Force nine days short of being in a mere two years. I was completely devastated, lost even, from the turmoil that life threw at me. I came home to Illinois with no plans whatsoever.

After looking for work, finding work, and working various odd jobs, I was willing to give school a try, which is when I applied to Western for the fall of 2012. My first semester I was a psychology major as a freshman at almost twenty-three years old. I made the switch to English after taking a section of English 180 with Barbara Ashwood. I'll speed things up here a bit: three and a half years later, I graduated from Western with my B.A. in English. It was early on in the spring of my senior year at Western when Dr. Tim Helwig invited me to apply to the Master's program. I knew nothing about it, but I thought it wouldn't hurt any, so I applied. I was conditionally accepted into

the program going into the summer after I graduated. Truth be told, those three and a half years were full of ups and downs that, again, I never saw coming. I got married, I had a child, I lost a child, lost work, gained work, and because of it all, my grades suffered a little bit. The graduate program requires a 3.0 GPA for assistantships and I knew that I needed those assistantships to help pay for my Master's degree. I was given the opportunity to take two graduate classes that summer after undergrad in order to establish a 3.0 graduate GPA. I took those classes, did well enough to establish the required grade point average, and began fall 2016 as a first year graduate student in English.

Through those two summer classes and the classes I took last fall, I have realized that graduate study is not only intense, but also much more focused. Transitioning from undergraduate to graduate hasn't been easy, but I will say that it also hasn't been completely hard either. I've found that if you can stay three steps ahead of the reading,

“find what you are passionate about and own it. Own your work, immerse yourself into what you are doing, and lose yourself into your passion.”

writing, and work in general, you are doing pretty good for yourself. If you can dive deeper into your study and do more than just read and write, you are putting yourself at an advantage. I think it was Dr. Banash who said to my English 500 class, “Read deeply, define what kind of intellectual you

want to be, define what you believe in, and write your own project” and I couldn't agree more. I wrote this down on a sticky note that I leave taped to the monitor of my computer. It is his wisdom, through me, that I pass on to you. If you feel like graduate study might not be for you, find what you are passionate about and own it. Own your work, immerse yourself into what you are doing, and lose yourself into your passion. Legendary track coach, and co-founder of Nike, Bill Bowerman, has a quote about running that I have adapted for my own use and I encourage you to do the same: reading and writing, one might say, is basically an absurd pastime upon which to be intellectually exhausting ourselves. But if you can find meaning in the kind of reading and writing you have to do, chances are you'll find meaning in that other absurd pastime – life.

HUIZINGA ON LATENESS: 10TH ANNUAL MAGLIOCCO LECTURE WITH DR. BIRGER VANWESENBEECK

BY: SHELDON GASKELL



Late winter, 11:30 am, Tuesday, March 7th—the calm, sunny morning after tornado sirens and harsh, relenting winds beat the Maccomb

streets—my fellow graduate student Kelly Schloss and I were entrusted the honor of picking up the keynote speaker for the night's 10th Annual Magliocco Lecture, Dr. Birger Vanwesenbeeck, from his hotel and delivering him to the Mediterranean Grill where we were to have lunch with Dr. David Banash and a number of graduate students. I did not know what to expect from this accomplished scholar, but I was confident the experience would leave me even more electrified than the previous night's storms.

Dr. Vanwesenbeeck, sitting patiently in the hotel lounge, book in hand, struck me at once as the humble and ponderous type of intellectual who wanders a library's cobwebbed corridors leading a read to history's long-abandoned tomes. He introduced himself as Birger (pronounced "Beer-ghur"), extending a hand to each of us as he closed his book and gathered his materials for the drive into town. Like many dedicated professors, Dr. Vanwesenbeeck was immediately curious of our work as graduate students at Western, especially regarding the course of our thesis work while enrolled in the program. Our shared curiosities would extend throughout lunch, where, over hummus, falafel, and baba ghanouje, we discussed literature and learned more about the histories that have shaped each of our experiences with language.

7:00 that evening—WIU students and faculty gathered in anticipation for the Magliocco Lecture, a series established in 2006 by Dr. Maurine Magliocco in support of the discussion of literature, film, theory, or the state of the English discipline with, according to Magliocco, the specific purpose of helping faculty to strengthen

connections in their professional work. This year, the WIU community was provided the unique opportunity of hearing Dr. Birger Vanwesenbeeck speak on his recent scholarship concerning the critical approach to Late Style with a specific focus on the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga.

Dr. Banash began the evening by thanking Dr. Magliocco, in attendance, for her inspirational commitment to literature, the arts, and the academic culture of Western. He then introduced Dr. Vanwesenbeeck—an Associate Professor of English at State University of New York at Fredonia—highlighting key points in his career from his current specialty in Twentieth-Century American Literature and Culture, World Literature, and Critical Theory as well as his interest in postmodern novels by William Gaddis and Thomas Pynchon. Among his notable achievements include his current standing as Editor for the "Fictions Present" thread of the *Electronic Book Review*; Co-editor of *William Gaddis, The Last of Something*; and author of *Stefan Zweig and World Literature*.

Dr. Vanwesenbeeck took the stage and began his discussion of what is often considered to be the first postmodern novel, *The Recognitions* by William Gaddis, which Vanwesenbeeck had researched as a graduate student and was a precursor for his future pursuits in literary criticism. He then lead the audience through a powerpoint presentation of the night's focus, beginning with Huizinga's foundational text *Herfst-tij der Middeleeuwen (The Autumn of the Middle Ages)* that would act as a focal point for his exploration of art and literature that marks a blurred line between the start and end of literary periods. Returning to Gaddis, Vanwesenbeeck illuminated for the audience a new impressionable reading of the author as not only the creator of what would come to be known as "the first postmodern novel" but a writer attempting to pen "the last Christian novel." It was this simultaneous perception of ending and beginning that inspired Vanwesenbeeck to question what is last and what is first when it comes to the movements that define literary interpretation.

Vanwesenbeeck noted with excited hand movements and a precision of language

that as Gaddis bridged Christian Late-Modernity with the Postmodern, Huizinga observed a similar trend in artists and writers transitioning between the periods of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Huizinga's observations, Vanwesenbeeck argued, were a catalyst toward an obsession with "endings, lateness, and lastness in academia," especially in regard to the canonical works that seemed to be prioritized on the basis of how they fit into certain eras.

"The late work itself obscures the subject's objectivity," Vanwesenbeeck stated before delving into a discussion of the stylistic aspects that defined epics and other genres definitive to certain movements. After acknowledging the criticisms of approaching texts through late style, Vanwesenbeeck stated that "late style is a critical construct that serves ideological ends rather than stakes a claim in reality," suggesting that the method of categorizing texts as "early" or "late" runs the risk of bowing down to the cultural goals of societies at various points in history.

Through verbal moments of intense intellectual prodding and visuals of quotes, paintings, and book covers from an array of authors and critics, Vanwesenbeeck painted a refined excerpt of a field that would otherwise bury a person in years of unperturbed reading. Notable was his allusion to artists and authors from many periods and their association with a model of lateness as either "a coronation of crowning" or "exhaustion and decay." Where Huizinga writes of texts of the Late Middle Ages as "a tree with overripe fruit," other periods of lateness are presented as decay, as though tied with an aging artist's fear of death. Vanwesenbeeck then went on to provide various contexts for these approaches to lateness as it relates to Christian iconography, ekphrastic texts, perceptions of time, and a writer's identity at various stages of their life before ending where he began, highlighting the postmodern influences that sprouted his scholarly career.

"Postmodernists asked about origins," Vanwesenbeeck paused and looked around the room of enlightened faces. "Now we're asking about endings."

2016-2017 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Award Winning Students

Each spring, the English Department awards \$20,000 in scholarships and fellowships for our graduate and undergraduate students. We are pleased to announce the following students were awarded English scholarships this spring for the 2016-2017 academic year.

Undergraduate Scholarship and Award Winners

Barbara & John Blackburn Scholarship – **Emily Bryce Swain**; Paul Blackford Scholarship – **Rebecca Graham**; Olive Fite Scholarship – **Arielle Henry**; Irving Garwood Scholarship – **Courtney Bender**; Robert Hodges Scholarship – **Tess Tyler**; Lila Linder Scholarship – **Shelby Davin**; Karen Mann Award – **Emily Bryce Swain**; Alfred Lindsey Scholarship – **Kristen Dillender**; John Merrett Scholarship – **Anna Teggatz**; Beth Stiffler Scholarship – **Tess Tyler**; Nai-Tung Ting Scholarship – **Kelsey Renfro-Cline**; Norman & Carmelita Teeter Undergraduate Research Award – **Emily Bryce Swain and Rachel Troyer**.

Scholar of the Year – **Anna Teggatz**

Writing Awards

Bruce H. Leland Essay Contest: *English 100, Introduction to Writing* 1st Place, **Daniel White**; 2nd Place, **Margaret Voss**; 3rd Place, **Andrea Przybylski**. *English 180, College Writing I* 1st Place, **Apryl Moore**; 2nd Place, **Faith Buie**; 3rd Place, **Samantha Pryor**. *English 280, College Writing II* 1st Place, **Kelly Crowley**; 2nd Place, **Lisa Crawford**; 3rd Place, **Adena Ruckoldt**. Lois C. Bruner Creative Nonfiction Awards 1st Place, **Afolarin Sanni**; 2nd Place, **Rebecca Gonner**; 3rd Place, **Sarah Radtke**. Cordell Lerner Award in Fiction 1st Place, **Allen Dullen**; 2nd Place, **Cheyenne Rideaux**; 3rd Place, **Matt Gamperl**. *Cordell Lerner Award in Poetry* 1st Place, **Allison Hartman**; 2nd Place, **Rachel Troyer**; 3rd Place, **Natalie Jacobson**

Graduate Scholarship, Fellowship, and Award Winners

John Mahoney Research Fellowship – **Kristen Dillender** and **David "Bo" Plumer**; Ron & Leslie Walker Graduate Fellowships – **Ftsun Asfaha** and **Kristen Dillender**; Sydney M. Conger Essay Award – **Kelly Schloss**; Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award – **Sheldon Gaskell**.

A CAS Graduate Student Research and Professional Development Fund grant was won by **Kristin Dillender**.

Departmental and College Scholar Awards

The Departmental Scholar awards are sponsored by the Illinois Centennial Honors College. Each semester, departments select the top student in each of their majors graduating that semester. Students are selected based on g.p.a. as well as honors and activities. Those selected receive a medallion to be worn at graduation. Our winners for this year are **Jocelyn James** and **Rebecca Gonner**.

Cecile A. Christison Sterrett Award for Fall 2016 – **Rebecca Graham**.

Martin Dupuis Leadership Award for Historically Underrepresented Communities – **Arielle Henry**.

Announcements

Current Undergraduate Students

Katelin Deushane presented "Red Marbles" at the Sigma Tau Delta convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

Rebecca Graham presented "Noah's 'Nakedness': Nudity, Sodomy or Incest" at the EGO/STD conference in Macomb and at the Northwest Research Conference at Purdue; "*Beowulf*: Anglo-Saxon and Judeo-Christian Values" at the Sigma Tau Delta convention in Louisville, Kentucky, which also won fourth place in the 2017 Phi Kappa Phi Research Competition; "*Frankenstein*: An Autobiographical Fiction" at the Northwest Research Conference at Purdue. She also published "Recreating Who I Am" in *Wordy by Nature*, the Sigma Tau Delta blog, which won third place in the Midwestern Blog Contest.

Haley Helgesen presented "*Harry Potter* and the Representation of Fatness" at the Sigma Tau Delta convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

Arielle Henry was elected to serve as the Sigma Tau Delta Midwestern Associate Student Representative for 2017-2018. She received a CAS Undergraduate Research Grant to travel to the national Sigma Tau Delta convention in Louisville, Kentucky where she presented her paper, "Just Get Over It."

Max Keil received a CAS Undergraduate Research Grant to travel to the national Sigma Tau Delta convention in Louisville, Kentucky, where he presented his paper "Language and Monsterism in *Frankenstein*." He received an Honorable Mention in the British Literature category. He also presented his paper at WIU's Undergraduate Research Day. He also published "From Role-Player to Writer" in

Wordy by Nature, the Sigma Tau Delta blog, which won first place in the Midwestern Blog Contest.

Bryce Swain received a CAS Undergraduate Research Grant to travel to the national Sigma Tau Delta convention in Louisville, Kentucky where she presented her paper, "*Jane Eyre* and the Quest for Christianity." She also presented her paper at WIU's Undergraduate Research Day.

Rachel Troyer received a CAS Undergraduate Research Grant to travel to the national Sigma Tau Delta convention in Louisville, Kentucky where she presented her paper "*Smoke Signal's* Deeper Meaning." She also presented her paper at WIU's Undergraduate Research Day.

Current Graduate Students

Zachary Almqist is an intern at the office of Congresswoman Cheri Bustos (IL-17).

Sheldon Gaskell presented "Gendered Geographies: Pakistani Male Water-Becoming in Uzma Aslam Khan's *Trespassing*" at the Craft, Critique, Culture Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference in Iowa City. He also presented "The Paradise and Prison Garden: Problematic Natural Systems of Femininity in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*," at the 13th Annual English Graduate Conference. He edited *One Man's Journey Through War and Peace* by Mark Jurras, a WWII veteran. He also edited Stephen Ulrich's *Esoteric Echoes* and a book of poems entitled *A Summer of Song* by the Sarah Clark.

Klaira Strickland presented "Fan Subcultures in Dungeons & Dragons," an excerpt from her thesis project, at the Popular Culture Association conference in San Diego. At the English Graduate Organization conference, she presented "Transnational Inheritance in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*." She plans to teach English in Japan next fall, and she is connecting with other schools to further her research in D&D and Fandom.

Eliza Wells presented "The Rhetorical Power of the Cartoon: Discussing Feminism and Gender in *The Powerpuff Girls* (1998)" at the Popular Culture Association conference in San Diego.

Laura Winton traveled to the Sigma Tau Delta conference in Louisville to present her a creative nonfiction piece "Words in My/Her." At Craft, Critique, Culture in Iowa City, she presented a paper on Women's Transgressive Writing. She won the QC Women's History Month poster contest and the QC Iron Pen Contest for poetry from the Midwest Writing Center Association. She has been hosting the Coin-Op reading series at the Neighborhood Laundromat in Rock Island. She was inducted into Sigma Tau Delta and Phi Kappa Phi this year.

Alumni

Christopher Bevard (M.A. 2007) Assistant Director for Educational Technology at John Marshall Law School, Chicago.

Chelsea Brotherton (M.A. 2016) accepted a position as an assistant editor at the American Health Information Management Association in Chicago.

Cody Cunningham (M.A. 2016) accepted a position as a Senior Copywriter at JLL Commercial Real Estate in Chicago Illinois.

Tiffany Dimmick (B.A. 2011) accepted a position as Office Support Associate for the Writing and Graduate programs in English at Western.

Julie Kaiser (M.A. 2016) was accepted into the PhD program in English at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where she is currently a teaching assistant.

Justin Kim (B.A. 2016) was accepted into the M.A. in English at New York University.

Jacob Gamage (B.A. 2005) is an English teacher at Soundview Preparatory School in Bedford Hills, NY.

Christopher Ginn (B.A. 2016) is an intern with the McDonough County Voice.

Annette Glotfelty (B. A. 2008) was accepted to the Ph.D. program in Cognition and Neuroscience at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Stephanie Hoover (M.A. 2017) accepted a position at Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) as a Case Coordinator.

Brooke Hughes (M.A. 2003) teaches everything from developmental writing to freshman composition and upper-division writing at the California State University, Bakersfield. She also coordinates a University-wide adopted online program for grammar and writing help and oversees the student-run help center on campus for the program. She is currently writing a composition textbook that will be published in early 2018 by Fountainhead Press.

Ethan Knight (B.A. 2013) is a teaching assistant and doctoral candidate at the University of South Carolina, Columbia.

Cassidy Litle (M.A. 2014) accepted a full-time faculty position, teaching English, Communication, and Theater courses at Otero Junior College in La Junta Colorado.

Emily Litle (M.A. 2014) accepted a full-time faculty position, teaching developmental English at Otero Junior College in La Junta Colorado.

Kristi Relaz (B. A. 2008) accepted a new position as Bridge Instructor and Career Coach at North Lawndale Employment in Chicago.

Rayvon Shelton (M.A. 2015) accepted a position as a copywriter with Apple in San Francisco.

Faculty

Marjorie Allison won the College of Arts and Sciences Award for Multicultural Teaching.

Rebekah Buchanan published "A Punk Pedagogical Approach to Genre" in *Recontextualized: A Framework for Teaching English with Music*. Sense Publishers, Rotterdam; She reviewed "Morrow by Ananda Braxton-Smith"; "As Chimney Sweepers Come to Dust and Thrice the Brinded Cat Hath Mew'd by Alan Bradley"; "Dead Girls Society by Michelle Krysz"; "The Darkest Corners by Kara Thomas."; "Jillian Cade: (Fake) Paranormal Investigator by Jen Klein." "A Fierce and Subtle Poison by Samantha Mabry"; "The Cresswell Plot by Eliza Wass."; "The Leaving by Tara Altabrande," all for the 2017 PCA/ACA Mystery & Detective Fiction Reading List. She interviewed numerous authors for the *New Books in Popular Culture Podcast*, including "Mozlandia: Morrissey Fans in the Borderlands by Melissa Hidalgo"; "Nerd Ecology: Defending the Earth with Unpopular Culture by Anthony Lioi"; "Brat Pack America: A Love Letter to 80s Teen Movies by Kevin Smokler"; "Just Around Midnight: Rock and Roll and the Racial Imagination by Jack Hamilton"; "The Politics of Punk: Protest and Revolt From the Streets by David Ensminger"; "Seinfeldia: How a Show About Nothing Changed Everything by Jennifer Keishin Armstrong." She also contributed many radio commentaries to TriStates Public Radio throughout the year.

Merrill Cole published poems including "This Fabulous Shadow," *Women's Studies Quarterly*; "Johnny in Lights," *Spoon River Poetry Review* 42.1; "The Hip Poet," *Spoon River Poetry Review* 42.1; "Defense Mechanism." *Spoon River Poetry Review* 42.1; "Dirty Bits" *concis* (Winter 2016); and "Warm Brother." *HIV Here & Now* (20 November 2016). His non-fiction essay "The Blond Sheep," appeared in *Mayday Magazine* 10 (Fall 2016).

Everett Hamner published "Faith, Science, and Social Justice in Marilynne Robinson's Gilead Triptych" in *CRUX* 52.3-4 (Fall/Winter 2016): 69-78. He also presented a public lecture, "The Soul, the Cell, and Fiction since the Human Genome Project," at Regent College, Vancouver, BC. He was the session organizer and moderator for "Orphan Black and Biotech" roundtable, including "Orphan Black and the Slippage of Biotechnologies" presentation, at Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts, Atlanta.

Magdelyn Helwig published "Schultz, Robert and Binh Danh. War Memoranda: Photography, Walt Whitman, and Renewal (Poetry and Visual Art Exhibition) [review]"

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in the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*. She also published two poems, "Artemesia Gentileschi Painting Judith" and "Pulling out the Phials from Joseph Cornell's *L'Egypte de Mlle Cleo de Merode: cours elementaire d'Histoire Naturelle* and Examining Each One, Causing Blanks" in *The Ekphrastic Review* (June 2016). Her poem "The Kill Jar" will appear in *Plainsongs*. She presented "C. D. Wright's Legacy: Poetics of Communal Identity" at the 27th Annual Conference on American Literature, held in San Francisco, and "Murder Ballads as Story Structure in Sharyn McCrumb's Appalachian Crime Fiction" at the American Literature Association's Symposium, Criminal America: Reading, Studying, and Teaching American Crime Fiction held in Chicago.

Tim Helwig presented "'George Lippard and Nathaniel Hawthorne, Unlikely 'Partners in Crime'" at the ALA Symposium on Crime Fiction in Chicago, and "Teaching Edgar Allan Poe and Periodical Culture to Different Student Populations" at the ALA Conference in Boston. He was also awarded a Faculty Summer Stipend to conduct research toward his book project, *Writing the Working Class: The Literary and Rhetorical Discourses of Class Protest in Antebellum American Print Culture*. In terms of professional service, he served as the Midwestern Regent for Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society, the Treasurer for the Research Society for American Periodicals, and a manuscript reviewer for *ESQ: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture*.

Bill Knox presented "Planning and Teaching a Future-oriented Sustainability Honors Course" at the Upper Midwest Regional Honors Council Conference at South Dakota State University.

Barb Lawhorn published fiction including: "For Now, For The Time Being," *Helen: A Literary Magazine*; "Holy Like That." *FemLit*; "An Eye For Seeing." *Nebo: A Literary Journal*; "Toward the Future." *Toad the Journal*; "Everybody Knowing, But Pretending Not To." *The Longleaf Pine*. "Cosmos." *The Fabulist*; and "Easing Pain" in *BLYN-KT Magazine*. She published nonfiction, including "'On Writing, Rejection, and Janis Joplin.' Bird's Thumb"; "Wool Gathering" *Dirty Chai*.; and "Migration" in *FemLit*. She published poetry, including "Pears." *Naugatuck River*; "Laundry." *Fox Adoption Magazine* and "Blood Demands" *FemLit*. She reviewed books for *The Mom Egg Review*, including Joelle Biele's *Broom*; Jennifer Karetnick's *The Treasures That Prevail*; Samantha Duncan's *The Birth Creatures*; and Susan Rukeyser's *Not On Fire, Only Dying*. She also contributed many radio commentaries to TriStates Public Radio throughout the year.

Dan Malachuk published *Two Cities: The Political Thought of American Transcendentalism*, University Press of Kansas Press; "Disinterestedness and Liberalism" in L. Behlman and A. Longmuir, eds., *Victorian Literature: Criticism and Debates*, Routledge. He presented "Transcendentalism,

Orestes Brownson, and Public Religion" at the American Literature Association, San Francisco. He served as a reviewer on the American Literature Peer Review Committee for the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program, and he was interviewed for the film *Thoreau: Surveyor of the Soul*.

Mark Mossman published "Academic Capitalism, Student Needs, and the English MA" in *Degree of Change: The MA in English Studies*, eds. Margaret Strain and Rebecca Potter, NCTE Press, 2016. His essay "Atypical Bodies in Nineteenth-Century Britain" is forthcoming in *The Cultural History of Disability, Volume 5: The Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Martha Stoddard Holmes and Joyce Huff. Bloomsbury.

Richard Ness chaired and was a participant in the workshop "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Film Music (But Were Afraid to Teach)" at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies annual conference in Chicago. He signed the contract to write *An Encyclopedia of Journalism Films* for Rowman and Littlefield, scheduled to be published fall of 2018.

Shazia Rahman presented "Animalization in Pakistani Fiction" at the 45th Annual Conference on South Asia at the University of Wisconsin, Madison in October, 2016. From December 2016 to January 2017, she traveled to Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad, Pakistan where she visited family, friends, and colleagues as she squeezed in as much sightseeing as possible. Here she is in Islamabad.



Jacqueline Wilson Co-advised (with Barbara Lawhorn), *SITREP: Veteran Perspectives on Combat and Peace*, in its second year of publication. Our magazine featured sixteen contributors from all the major branches of the service who submitted in four categories--fiction, non-fiction, poetry and art. We worked with a team of editors, all WIU--graduate students, **Ryan Bronaugh** (fiction), **Luke Cummings** (art), **Jared Worley** (non-fiction) and **Dan Holst** (poetry). She helped pilot a Writing Fellows project for English 100, and she published two poems: "Washing Deborah's Hair" in *The Fem* and "Milkweed" in *Ink-in-Thirds* in June.

Alisha White was awarded "Best in Track" from CITR's Faculty Research and Creative Activities Awards for her research study titled "Creative Responses about the College Experiences of Students with Disabilities." She published two images in *Oddball Magazine*, "In Darkness" and "Red Dance." She presented "Creative responses to Literature: Advocating for the arts in ELA with Preservice Teachers." with student Alexis Phares; She participated in "Commission on Arts and Literacies Roundtable Session" at the annual conference of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), Atlanta, GA, where she also presented "First Person Narration as Agency in Novels Portraying

Disability and Mental Illness." With students Maggie Wallace, & Xiaowei Nu she presented "Connecting to Home through Artifactual Literacies Projects," a panel for the annual conference of Illinois Association of Teachers of English (IATE), Bloomington-Normal, IL, where she also presented "Close to Our Hearts: 20 New Authors who Engage Students in Reading" with student Cynthia Karabush.

Erika Wurth secured contracts to publish two books: a poetry collection entitled *A Thousand Horses Out to Sea* with Mongrel Empire Press and *Buckskin Cocaine*, a short story collection with The University of South Dakota/Astrophil press. She published short stories, including: "Light and Her Mother's Arms," *Midwestern Gothic*, forthcoming; "Almost Like Children," *Heavy Feather Review*; "Harlen Kurjo" *South Dakota Review*; "Alex Smith," *Eleven Eleven*; "-Fauna Moon," *Waxwing*. Her creative and critical essays included "The Dakota Access Pipeline, Running Through the Heart of Native American Invisibility" *Apogee Journal*; "The Fourth Wave in Native American Fiction" *The Writer's Chronicle*; "The Fourth Wave" *Waxwing*; *Introduction to Pariahs*; "Native Art, Here We are, Where are We" *Feminism for the Real World*. She also published poems, including "Your Eyes to the Sun" and "Beasts at Her Feet" in *Taos Journal of International Poetry and Art*; "Arcing Towards the Sun," and "Cold and Tired Wind," *Dark Matter: Women Witnessing*; "Distant as a Planet" and "Wild Blue Glory," *Hysteria*. She read her work or presented talks at the University of Dubuque; Aspen Institute of Arts, New York, NY; AWP Conference. Panels: Spaceships and Detectives and Celebrating Langston, Washington D.C.; Mile-High MFA, Writer Series, Regis University; Z-Arts (UT); Litfest Pasadena Book Festival; Salem College (NC); She was a judge for the University of Alabama, undergraduate and graduate creative writing contest, 2017.

Pat Young presented "The Tell-Token" at the National Council for Black Studies in Houston, Texas and "Killed Because of Success: The Lynching of Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell, and Henry Stewart" at The College Language Association in Columbia, Missouri.

Staff

Ellen Poulter, the Academic Advisor for English, has recently been awarded the WIU Advisor of the Year Award! The award is given to one individual per year who has displayed an excellence in advising and has reflected the mission and goals of the Advising Unit at Western Illinois University.

Lynne Ward, Staff Clerk in the Department of English for 5 years, was selected as the College of Arts and Sciences Civil Service Award winner for 2016. This award recognizes her endearing personality, on-going commitment to holding us all together, and astounding work ethic. Congratulations on a well-deserved award!

PRESENTING AT THE EGO CONFERENCE

BY: EMILY BRYCE SWAIN

Staring in the mirror, I quickly realized how dorky my former choir concert clothes from high school looked on my twenty-year-old frame. Unearthed from the back of my closet, the black and pink floral dress and matching black “business” heels made me look more like a fifteen-year-old soprano nervous for her solo and less like the studious English undergrad look I was going for. Regardless, I rushed out the door with a folder in hand, cursing myself for not buying a pair of slacks the night before.

That morning I was headed to the English Graduate Organization and Sigma Tau Delta Conference, along with other members of Sigma Tau Delta. This conference had recently begun to allow undergrads in for the first time. As a result, the members of Sigma Tau Delta were encouraged to submit academic papers about any book or topic, even though the theme of the conference was on “Economy.” Earlier that month, I submitted a paper I wrote for my English 299 methods course on *Jane Eyre* and the role of Christianity in the novel. My paper had been placed in a panel about “transatlantic women” (a term I ended up Googling the morning of) that I was expected to read out loud and discuss.

As I began to walk up to familiar Simpkins Hall, I became increasingly nervous. Was I dressed appropriately? What if the other two presenters on the panel had astoundingly better papers than mine? What if I was the only undergraduate to show up? My hands began to shake and I pulled my folder to my chest as I entered the hall.

Upon walking in, I was greeted with the

scent of coffee. I walked into the student lounge to find a slew of familiar faces dressed in business casual wear, like myself (albeit probably a bit newer than my five year old dress). Everyone was either walking around chatting or pinning on name tags casually while enjoying donuts and coffee. I set my purse down, took a deep breathe, and proceeded to eat at least five donuts while chatting with some friends. Instantly, I was feeling much calmer, until it was announced that the panels would be starting.



Presenters Emily Bryce Swain, Rebecca Gonner, and Haley Helgesen stand with Dr. Helwig after presenting their panel “Transatlantic Women: Overcoming Patriarchal Obstacles” at the local conference

was the same classroom I’d had class in only a semester prior. I settled myself down in the familiar seat as members of both EGO and STD filed into the room. My fellow panelists chatted with me. In fact, before everything started, I found myself laughing as panelist Rebecca Gonner noted the absurd amount of donuts I consumed. The people in the room all made me feel relaxed and welcome before we even began reading.

When it was finally my turn, I walked up to the table and spread out my paper. To my surprise, all eight pages of the paper went by incredibly fast. There were moments I cringed at my wordiness or suppressed a laugh at the ridiculously pretentious diction I used, but overall I found myself feeling proud of the work I’d done. Years prior when I first entered into the English Education program, I never thought I’d be a good enough writer to be asked to speak at a panel, but here I was reading new academic

My panel, of course, was first. I sucked in some air and forced down a gulp of coffee before heading up the stairs.

Once again, I found that the nerves were not at all needed. I looked for the room number, only to find it

work done on one of my favorite classics. In the end, everyone clapped, and one of my peers even raised his hand to compliment me on the work I’d done. When it was all over and I was asked to stand with my fellow presenters to take a picture, the smile on my face was one hundred percent genuine.



BY: REBECCA GONNER

As the spring semester begins, Western students have flocked back to campus from their winter break retreats. The halls of Simpkins are once again filled with the chatter of classmates and colleagues, and the squeals of shoes on the outdated tiles. Yet one staple feature of Simpkins Hall did not return from our well-deserved break.

Due to the efforts of our landscapers over the course of this past fall semester, the infamous puddle that we all loved to hate no longer forms at the sidewalk juncture on the north side of the English building.



You may have noticed university workers outside Simpkins, working on the grassy area adjacent to the Simpkins Sidewalk Dip. Though I didn’t pay them much attention during the process, in hindsight it’s clear the workers were steamrolling the ground to create a path for the water that normally puddles all across the sidewalk to drain down into the grass. It may not look like much of a difference, but the slight dip in the grass created by this steamrolling was all that was needed to redirect the rainwater away from the sidewalk. The students of Western need no longer to fear damp socks or puddly footprints previously caused by collisions with the once-formidable puddle. The path to the home of English shall forevermore remain clear of watery obstructions.

MURDER, MYSTERY, AND ENGLISH MAJORS: EXPERIENCING AN EVENING OF SHERLOCKIAN DETECTION

BY: TESS TYLER

I have always had an immense passion for literature, so when I joined Sigma Tau Delta and was promptly invited to the Dinner & Conversations event entitled “Murder at the Old Bailey: An Evening of Sherlockian Detection,” I nearly trembled with excitement. Of course, as a bonus, I was notified that all attendees (student and staff) were encouraged to dress as particular artists from the 1920’s while participating in this event. At this point, I was practically squealing with delight. In my eyes, attending a murder mystery dinner with other English majors while simultaneously imitating one of my favorite authors was better than *any* night out.

From the moment I stepped foot in the Old Baily House, I was entranced. I came dressed as Virginia Woolf (complete with a long skirt and a bun), and I giggled as I observed the character prop table set up in the entryway of the building. This table held various props for each artistic figure that would be “attending” the dinner, and it contributed to the aesthetic of the evening. For example, the table included a peach for T.S Elliot, a magnifying glass for Agatha Christine, and a pink feather boa for Mae West. I scooped up the rocks left for Virginia Woolf and winced as I remembered my clothing did not have pockets. What a shame! Student and staff enjoyed carrying their props throughout the night and also appreciated the character biographies left with them. The short biographies we received were extremely useful later.

Once everyone was present and had the opportunity to consume some of the delicious food prepared for the event, Dr. Helwig described Sherlock’s methods of inductive and deductive reasoning, and also “set the scene” for the evening. According to her story, H.G. Wells created a time machine and used his machine to bring various artists and historical figures from the 1920’s to the Old Bailey house in the year 2017. Unfortunately, this angered many of the figures, and coincidentally, H.G. wells was promptly, mysteriously, and ridiculously murdered shortly after this event. Dr. Helwig explained that she would be

playing the police and the rest of us, the artists and historical figures, would be playing the suspects. We were then encouraged to talk to different characters about their biography and look for clues in order to solve the murder of H.G Wells. Thus, we began socializing with other characters, writing down clues, and laughing as we did our best to imitate our historical figures.



Tess Tyler (me), Bryce Swain, and Rebecca Gonner attended the dinner as Virginia Woolf, Sarah Bernhardt, and Isadora Duncan.

At the end of the discussion period, everyone analyzed their notes and guessed the name of the murderer. I am delighted to say that many attendees guessed correctly! It appeared that the analysis and prediction skills we obtained through our English degrees paid off that night. I am sure that Sherlock Holmes would be proud!

I thoroughly enjoyed my first Sigma Tau Delta Dinner & Conversations event. It was wonderful to see new faces, meet new people, and discuss some of the most influential figures in history. I immensely appreciated the time and effort spent organizing and planning the event, and I believe everyone who attended was equally charmed and enchanted by the evening. I look forward to my future as a member of

Sigma Tau Delta and the opportunity to participate in more Dinner & Conversation events in the future!

GRADUATE STUDENT KLAIRA STRICKLAND THE BOOK THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

BY: JARED WORLEY

What is the book that changed your life?

The Marble Cake Cat is the book that has changed my life for the better.

How would you describe the book to someone who hasn’t read it?

It is a children’s chapter book about a marble colored cat that no one wants to adopt because he has such strange patterns on his fur. He goes through many owners, each having a one problem or another such as a big dog, other cats, and general abandonment. Eventually he runs away and wanders in the woods until he comes upon a lonely cabin. He encounters a sick boy and finally finds peace, acceptance, and a loving home.

Where/How did you first encounter this book?

I first encountered this book when I was a small child and my mother would read it to me. I liked it so much that it became my favorite book and I wanted to hear or read the story every night. I still own the original book that is yellowing and curling with age. It even has four-year-old scribbles of my name in it.

How did the book change you?

The Marble Cake Cat changed my life because I have always felt different for various reasons being double-jointed, the child whose parents are divorced, or the tattooed creative writing girl so I identified with the Marble Cake Cat and his journey to find acceptance and the place he really belongs. Everyone I have mentioned the book to has never heard of it so I continue to spread the word about this little book so that others can learn about the marble cake cat and what it means to be accepted.

A MAGICAL EXPERIENCE: HARRY POTTER STUDY ABROAD

BY: HALEY HELGESEN

I first read *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* when I was eleven years old. Staying up past my bedtime, reading by lamp light, I never imagined the series would have such a profound effect on me. J.K. Rowling's books not only delighted my overactive childhood imagination, they also cemented reading as one of the great passions of my life. I wouldn't be an English major today without those books, so when I heard the English Department was looking for people who wanted to spend two weeks in the United Kingdom visiting all the locations that inspired the series I hold most dear, I only had one question. Where do I sign up?

Before we even left, Dr. Buchanan instructed us to keep travel journals, saying we would thank her someday. Well, it hasn't even been a year, and I'm already thankful. Rather than attempt some retrospective that explains the abstract benefits of studying abroad, I'm going to share some of my prized journal entries. Hopefully that paints a clear picture of what being a Harry Potter fan in the United Kingdom is like.

I've never flown internationally before. Our flight attendant is a sassy Irish man who makes us laugh at every interaction. He asked my boyfriend if he wanted a coffee, and then made fun of him for saying yes. "This isn't a Starbucks" he shouted loud enough for the whole plane to hear. He also reprimanded me for meekly asking if they carried any tea. "This is a good Irish airline," he responded, "of course there's tea". I'm a little disappointed we won't be spending any time in Ireland, they seem like my people.

"At the end of the tour is Hogwarts Castle, just a scale model of course, but it was honestly beautiful. . . seeing the castle in its entirety made me believe in magic again."

I had another cup of tea on the return trip from the Jacobite (aka The Hogwarts Express). It feels like I am traveling solely to drink tea in new locations. I go from drinking tea at the pub, to drinking tea on the train, to drinking tea at the café, to drinking tea on the train home, to drinking tea in bed. It makes for a very cyclical day. On an unrelated note, my heart rate appears to have tripled over the past few days. I should really look into whether decaffeinated tea is a thing here. [Edit: It is!]

Alnwick Castle is where they filmed Quidditch training, McGonagall's office, the Whomping Willow, the entrances to Hogwarts, and the Forbidden Forest scenes. Exploring the castle's interior and grounds was a weird mixture of emotions. I felt adoration for the richness and visibility of Europe's history, as well as pleasant confusion over how Hogwarts was jigsawed together with so many pieces of a single castle. As amazing as it was, it was also a little heartbreaking because a part of me still wants

to believe there is a real Hogwarts out there.

The walking tour of Edinburgh was my favorite part of the trip thus far. We saw how Rowling's local haunts inspired many of the characters and locations in Harry Potter. We went to a graveyard where Rowling frequently ate lunch (she's an eccentric writer, this is pretty standard behavior for us) and saw headstones for a poet named McGonagall and some nobody named Tom Riddell. We also saw George Harriet, the school that inspired Hogwarts, and Spoon Café, where she wrote the first few books. I'm almost certain that the reason my own series hasn't been published yet is because I have no moody cemetery to steal names from, and no relative whose coffee shop I can write in for free.

Today we went to High Tea. I can now confirm that tea sandwiches are a superior food group, and I will be unjustifiably denied them no longer. When we walked in, a string cover of "Yesterday" by the Beatles was playing, which was great. What wasn't great was how they played that same cover on repeat the entire hour and a half we were there. I get it, London, the Beatles are awesome. Thanks for ruining their



best song forever.

Seeing Stonehenge is weird. We've seen some old buildings so far, but standing in awe of a 5,000-year-old stone circle makes you realize your presence is an insignificant blip in the relic's lifespan. It's humbling, and more than a little unnerving. Thankfully, the gift shop sells tea to calm you down from post-Stonehenge existential crises.

We only had a half hour of free time before leaving Oxford, so a group of us ran to the Inklings pub, The Eagle and Child, where Tolkien came up with Middle Earth. It was cool, but crowded, and we barely got our drinks before it was time to hop on the bus. In summation, I chugged a glass of tepid merlot in honor of Tolkien. I've never felt so alive.

The tour of the stages where they filmed Harry Potter held the last great surprise. At the end of the tour is Hogwarts Castle, just a scale model of course, but it was honestly beautiful. They played the film score and I got to walk around the entire castle grounds. I saw pieces of Gloucester Cathedral, Alnwick Castle, Lacock Abbey, George Harriet, and more. Every minute of the trip had left me with puzzle pieces of the United Kingdom hodgepodge that is Hogwarts. Seeing those pieces assembled wasn't just emotional because it represented my trip, it also confirmed my childlike desire to know Hogwarts is real. I have been told since I was young that Hogwarts is fictional. Throughout this trip I've had to remind myself that I'm only visiting a few of the thousands of set pieces and locations that make up my fictitious version of Hogwarts. However, seeing the castle in its entirety made me believe in magic again. Hogwarts isn't just a bunch of carefully edited stills or CGI, it's just as real as the tenderness with which I regard it. Seeing it is a memory I'll never forget.

PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE- DR. MAGDELYN HELWIG

BY: KATE IVY

The Proust Questionnaire is a popular form of interview, developed by French writer, Marcel Proust, that is focused on the interviewees personality.

Dr. Magdelyn Helwig is an Assistant Professor and the Writing Program Director at WIU. She received her PhD in English Language and Literature from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Who are your favorite writers?

Ted Hughes, William Faulkner, Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, Margaret Atwood, Wallace Stevens, Frank O'Hara, Geraldine Brooks, Eugene O'Neill, Iain Pears, C.J. Sansom, Tennessee Williams, Emily Dickinson, Kurt Vonnegut, T. S. Eliot, Toni Morrison

Who is your favorite hero/heroine of fiction?

Offred (the narrator of *The Handmaid's Tale*)

Who are your heroes in real life?

My mom and Eleanor Roosevelt

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Beach + Book

Which historical figure do you most identify with?

Queen Elizabeth I

What is the trait you most loathe in yourself?

Laziness

What is the trait you most loathe in others?

Narcissism

What do you enjoy most about WIU?

The fabulous students!

Describe Macomb in one word?

Isolated

What is your dream occupation?

Rare book archivist

What or who is the greatest love of your life?

My mom

Which talent would you most like to have?

The ability to carry a tune (and thus play an instrument...)

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Completing my Ph.D.

What is your motto?

Nolite te bastardes carborundorum (Don't let the bastards grind you down)

What is your current state of mind?

Anxious

If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what do you think it would be?

A book

If you could choose what to come back as, what would it be?

A cat

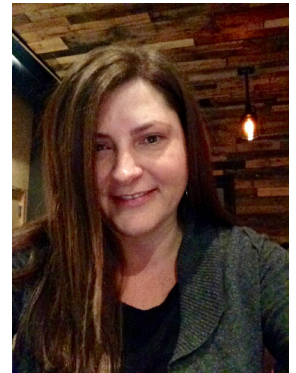
How would you like to die?

"Oh starry starry night! This is how

I want to die:

into that rushing beast of the night,
sucked up by that great dragon, to split
from my life with no flag,
no belly,
no cry."

-Anne Sexton



THE MIRROR & THE LAMP

We hope you enjoy the third print edition of *The Mirror & the Lamp*. The goal of our magazine is to bring together students, faculty, and alumni of Western Illinois University's Department of English.

Please keep us informed of your recent activities and achievements. Please email your news to our faculty adviser, Dr. David Banash: d-banash@wiu.edu.

You can also find more stories in our online edition: <https://mirrorandthelamp.org/>

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