Veronique Lee ’11
From Amherst to Uganda: a career in international development
Dear Friends and Alums,

It’s an exciting and challenging time for the Department of English as we seek out new directions in English studies (environmental humanities, gaming culture, Arab American literature) and seek to help others understand what an English major can entail. Although nationally the number of English majors continues to decline, and UMass is not immune to such a trend, we are heartened by the creativity of our majors and their ability to, in the words of Veronique Lee ’11, “be nimble” and to “understand the versatility” of their skills. In this newsletter, we see the variety of work English majors go on to do, from being award-winning writers to program developers and English teachers. The department continues to seek ways to highlight the diversity of careers open to English majors and to invite alumni to share their stories and expertise with our current students. Panels such as “The State of English Studies, 2019,” offered by current faculty, alumni, and students in April, offer opportunities for all of us to reflect upon why the humanities and English in particular are so important in our times for not only careers but also understanding each other and our positions globally.

Department faculty continue to lead in such endeavors, winning high prestige awards such as the MacArthur “genius” grant, writing residences, Fulbrights, “best article” honors, and taking on leadership positions on campus and beyond. I’m delighted to share some of those accolades and experiences here. I’m just as happy to report that our faculty continues to grow as we are currently searching for a specialist in African American literature. The department has also launched a new task force on helping to grow the major and is considering everything from highlighting the variety of paths through an English major and the ways it helps one engage the world to new recruiting efforts. Stay tuned for more and do be in touch if you would like to help us get the word out about how valuable an English major can be in the 21st century. Stay connected through our improved website, join us through LinkedIn, and keep abreast of our activities through Facebook and Instagram. Please use those venues to keep us informed of your doings, as well. We want very much to know, and we may want to tap your expertise!

On a side note, let me say that when you read this in the spring semester, Randall Knoper will have returned as chair of the department after a much-deserved fall sabbatical. While my presence as chair was fleeting, the achievements described in this newsletter are sure to be lasting.

—Donna LeCourt, Acting Chair

Cover Photo: Veronique Lee ’11 among the Tegalalang rice fields in Ubud, Bali (Indonesia). Photo: Michael Buehler

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WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Thanks for editorial assistance are owed to Meg Caulmare and Jennifer Jacobson.

Cover Photo: Veronique Lee ’11 among the Tegalalang rice fields in Ubud, Bali (Indonesia). Photo: Michael Buehler

UMassAmherst

College of Humanities & Fine Arts

English

The Literary Arts Fair, one of many events featured in the 2019 Juniper Festival. Photo: Noah Loving

Acting Department Chair Donna LeCourt. Photo: D. Toomey
Stephen Clingman delivered the Bram Fischer Memorial Lecture at Oxford University in October. This prestigious event is held every year at Rhodes House in celebration of the life and commitment to justice shown by Bram Fischer.

David Fleming received the 2019 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Richard C. Ohmann Outstanding Article in College English award. The award recognizes an outstanding refereed article in the past volume year that makes the most significant contribution to scholarship or research, or theory or pedagogy, in English studies.

Laura Furlan was named as the program chair of the Five Colleges Native American and Indigenous Studies program. Students in the Five College Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAISS) certificate program explore Native American and Indigenous histories, literatures, and cultures.

John Hennessy and Ostap Kin were awarded the John Frederick Nims Memorial Prize for Translation for their translation of Serhiy Zhadan’s poems. The prize was established in 1999 by Bonnie Larkin Nims, trustees of the Poetry Foundation, and friends of the late poet, translator, and editor.

Edie Meidav was selected as the Jane Geuting Camp Fellow by the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts (VCCA). The Jane Geuting Camp Fellowship was established in 1988 in memory of former VCCA president Jane Camp and is endowed by her family and the Creative Arts (VCCA). The Jane Geuting Camp Fellow by the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts (VCCA).

Trea. Andrea M. Russworm has been named the series editor of *Power Play: Games, Politics, Culture* (Duke University Press). Russworm was also honored by Indiana University's Black Film Archive and Cultural Studies program with a “master class,” designed around her work.

Ocean Vuong, author of the New York Times bestselling novel *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* (Penguin Press, 2019), received a MacArthur Fellowship. Commonly but unofficially known as a “genius” grant, the fellowship is awarded annually by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation typically to between 20 and 30 individuals, working in any field, who have shown “extraordinary originality and dedication in their creative pursuits and a marked capacity for self-direction” and are citizens or residents of the United States.

The Troy Lectures on the Humanities and Public Life are presented in honor of the late Frederick S. (Barney) Troy, emeritus professor of English, honorary professor of the university, and former university trustee. The list of past speakers is singularly distinguished, and includes Nadine Gordimer, Sherman Alexie, Wole Soyinka, and Zadie Smith.

This year’s Troy Lecture was delivered by Natasha Trethewey ‘95MFA, a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and two-time US poet laureate. Her talk, given on October 3, was entitled “You Are Not Safe in Science; You Are Not Safe in History: On Abiding Metaphors and Finding a Calling.”

Treasures are being selected for the Jane Geuting Camp Fellowship by the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts (VCCA). The Jane Geuting Camp Fellow by the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts (VCCA). The Jane Geuting Camp Fellow by the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts (VCCA).

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The English Department Troy Lecture, 2019

Natasha Trethewey

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, 2007

University of Massachusetts MFA for Poets and Writers, 1995


“The English Department Troy Lecture, 2019”

Thursday, October 3, 4:30pm

Brookner Auditorium, Stockbridge Hall

Free and Open to the Public

doors open at 4:00pm

 Natasha Trethewey

“You Are Not Safe in Science; You Are Not Safe in History”: On Abiding Metaphors and Finding a Calling

Thursday, October 3, 4:30pm

Brookner Auditorium, Stockbridge Hall

Free and Open to the Public

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Chair of the Troy Lecture Committee Steven Clingman, Natasha Trethewey, and MFA Program Director Jeff Parker. Photo: Dennis Vandal

Poster design by Mosia Clingman.
I'm happy to have so much writing to do. I'm deeply thankful that people want to hear from me. It means almost everything right now."

PATRICIA MATTHEW ’03PHD

Your scholarly work—from "Jane Austen and the Abolitionist Turn" to "The Ideology of the Mermaid"—is remarkably wide ranging. Yet you also publish public-facing humanities writing. Do you see these two kinds of endeavors as distinct? As parts of a larger project?

I picked up a copy of Patricia Williams's The Atlantic, I wrote for. It was also the first time I saw a Black woman work in two ways at the exact same time, and I realize now that her "Diary" mode shaped my post-tenure relationship with writing. I coped, and I did it without worrying too much about where it would land and whether or not it fit into some cohesive narrative about my work as a "scholar."

Your edited collection Written/Unwritten: Diversity and the Hidden Truths of Tenure addresses the ways institutions of higher learning implicitly and explicitly disenfranchise groups of academics. It was published before the 2016 presidential election. Do the essays it contains seem as timely now? More timely?

I had no idea what would happen with the book after the election. This says a lot about a particular kind of bubble I am in at Montclair. We need a more diverse faculty and we try to develop solutions that will have a positive, and hopefully transformative, impact, my work also requires a deep understanding of socioeconomic contexts and cultures.

What do you like most about your work?

I'm responsible for business development and proposal writing. My work begins with analyzing trends in donor priorities and funding. These donors ran the gamut from grant-making organizations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to government donors like the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UK Department for International Development, to corporate foundations like the MasterCard Foundation. Since we try to develop solutions that will have a positive, and hopefully transformative, impact, my work also requires a deep understanding of socioeconomic contexts and cultures.

What do you do like most about your work?

I'm deeply thankful that people want to hear from me. It means almost everything right now.

VERONIQUE LEE ’11

What do you do like most about your work?

A few years ago I had the chance to co-design a program to help rural communities in central Mali cope with and adapt to the impacts of climate change. We pulled together a multidisciplinary team of experts from Mali to implement the activities we were proposing. Working alongside, and most importantly, learning from people from all walks of life is one of the greatest privileges in my work.
On April 5, nearly two dozen high school Department of English chairs from around Massachusetts came to South College to meet with students and faculty and to discuss “The State of English Studies, 2019”.

PROGRAM REPORTS

Undergraduate Studies

Faced with declining enrollments, the department continues to remind any and all listeners that English is not only a vital part of any well-designed undergraduate program in the arts and sciences but is also good preparation for a wide variety of careers. We have been marshaling our alumni to demonstrate how well our graduates do in the world and to build a network of mentors for current students. The department’s LinkedIn group now has 379 members!

At the same time, we’ve been turning to the high schools, both to make connections for students interested in teaching but also to ensure that secondary English teachers know what English at UMass Amherst is like today—how vibrant and diverse our programs are and how well our students do in the world beyond.

On April 5, nearly two dozen high school Department of English chairs from around Massachusetts came to South College to meet with students and faculty and to discuss “The State of English Studies, 2019.”

Undergraduate Studies

Speakers included Jenny Adams, Nick Bromell, and Rebecca Lorimer Leonard of the UMass Amherst Department of English; Head of English at Canton High School Rebecca Ashley; and Head of Secondary English Language Arts in the Springfield Public Schools Brian Dickey. Participants also heard from current English majors, most of them graduates of Massachusetts public high schools: Julia Avila, Victoria Bourque, Parawat Changthong, Grace Dugan, Tess Halpern, Yashika Issrani, Mira Kennedy, and Natalie Mezzina. Students talked about their experiences in high school and their college English as well as their plans for life after UMass. We hope to host similar events in the future.

As always, the department thanks Chief Undergraduate Advisor Janis Greve and Undergraduate Studies Office Manager Celeste Stuart for their hard work on behalf of our students this year!

—David Fleming, Director of Undergraduate Studies

Graduate Studies

This year, 2019, was a highly productive year for the MA and PhD programs in English. Seven students defended their dissertations and received their PhDs: Gregory Coleman, Sarah D’Stair, Elizabeth Fox, Gayathri Hewagama, Neelofer Qadir, Heather Wayne, and Victoria Worth. Several of these graduates have already taken up tenure-track and long-term teaching positions at colleges and universities across the US. In addition, seven students passed their two-area exams and seven students successfully completed their advisory sessions or qualifying exams.

The Graduate Office has continued to work on mentoring initiatives aimed at supporting our graduate students as they pass through these milestones. In the fall semester, we offered our graduate writing workshop, intended to demystify the process of writing by breaking it down into achievable steps. Under the direction of Associate Graduate Program Director Jane Degenhardt, the office also ran a successful dissertation workshop and helped graduate students form writing groups based on research areas. Professor Mazen Naous continued in his position as international student faculty advisor, helping support our international graduate students, who continue to be a strong presence in the department.

Of course, funding is crucial to our students making successful progress through the program, and I am happy to report that we had another successful year of being granted new graduate school fellowships to support our incoming and continuing students. Four of our incoming cohort were awarded either research enhancement and leadership (REAL) diversity fellowships from the graduate school or summer funding fellowships. In addition, six of our PhD students were awarded a summer dissertation fellowship, and two of our students were awarded dissertation research grants. Our students also presented and published their work nationally and internationally, and several received acknowledgment and funding from external organizations. Together these achievements speak to the excellent work being produced across the graduate community.

This fall also saw the second iteration of the Graduate Student Methods Symposium, which brought three leading scholars to campus to lead workshops on Black Studies, Queer Studies, and Postcolonial Studies. This gathering was organized and implemented by a committee of graduate students. We also look forward to the English Graduate Organization’s renovation of the Graduate Student Conference this coming spring.

A final note of thanks to our administrator Wanda Bak for her dedication to our office and to our students. We could not do the work we do without her generous care and support.

—Daniel Sack, Director of Graduate Studies
MFA PROGRAM FOR POETS AND WRITERS

Faculty fellowships, publications, prizes, and residencies abound: Peter Gizzi had a six-week residency at the MacDowell Colony last summer. The UMass Sustainability Curriculum Fellowship to cultivate teaching excellence in sustainability was awarded to Noy Holland. Edie Meidav was selected as the Jane Geuting Camp Fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. The 2019 Samuel F. Conti Faculty Fellowship went to Sabina Murray. Jeff Parker received a Fulbright US Scholar grant to Kyiv, Ukraine. Ocean Vuong received a MacArthur “genius” Award and his debut novel *On Earth We Are Briefly Gorgeous*, a *New York Times* bestseller, was longlisted for the National Book Award. Dara Wier received a Lannan Foundation Fellowship.

In other news, we’re pleased to host four guest MFA faculty this year: prose writers André Alexis and Mona Awad and poets CAConrad and Shayla Lawson.

It’s been a delight to see so many alumni on campus of late including Natasha Trethewey ’95MFA, Pulitzer Prize winner and 19th poet laureate of the United States, who delivered the 2019 Troy Lecture; and Kamila Shamsie ’88MFA who was featured in the Visiting Writers Series. Mira Bartok ’08MFA, Hannah Brooks-Motl ’13MFA, Andrea Lawlor ’12MFA, Zach Savich ’11MFA, Arisa White ’06MFA, and Jung Yun ’07MFA participated as readers, panelists, and in the Literary Arts Fair at the 2019 Juniper Festival, which brought community members, students, faculty, and accepted students to campus for another dynamic celebration of the literary arts.

In MFA and Juniper staff news, we bid farewell to longtime program assistant, Barbara McGlynn, who retired in July. We welcomed Cheena Marie Lo, a poet from the San Francisco Bay Area, as the new program assistant this fall. Jennifer Jacobson, associate director, had a short story featured in the *Masters Review*. Betsy Wheeler, managing director of the Juniper Summer Writing Institute, received an Orein Arts Residency. Jacobson and Wheeler submitted a successful grant application to the Charles Hayden Foundation, securing $65,000 to support the attendance of 29 high school writers from New York and Boston at the Young Writers Institute. This is the third year the Hayden Foundation has funded scholarships for high school writers to attend Juniper.
The Kinney Center for Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies launched a series of new research and arts initiatives this year. One is Forging Shakespeare, a podcast in which host Jennifer Thornton speaks with local directors, writers, and artists to discover the sometimes-surprising ways in which our creations today find their roots in the Renaissance. Another is the Players Project. Under the founding direction of Noah Tuleja, the project brings a cross-campus company of Five College actors together to workshop contemporary dramas that use the Renaissance as a touchstone for thinking about today’s cultural questions. This fall the Players read Peter Whelan’s The Herbal Bed, a drama about a court case involving Shakespeare’s daughter. We also introduced The Refinery, a forum for advanced graduate students to share work-in-progress with an invited scholar whose research is shaping their thinking. At the inaugural meeting, Liz Fox (UMass) and Professor Stephen Spiess (Babson College) explored Shakespeare as law: a ShuckMoot. The hearing considered the right to medical aid in dying for an advanced Alzheimer’s patient. Using All’s Well That Ends Well as the law, the lively workshop explored the nature of interpretation, the intersections of law and consent, and the way in which value and meaning intersect in the creation of law and literature alike.

As this newsletter goes to press, the center is planning an ambitious trans-historical graduate conference, “Eco-Entanglements: Ruin, Grafting, Stratification ca 920-2020.” Organized by English graduate students Melissa Hudasko and John Vargo and to be held on February 22, the conference will grapple with the questions: What are the ecological affordances of thinking with the medieval and early modern pasts? And, why turn to the medieval and early Modern with the medieval and early Modern?

Center Director Marjorie Rubright and Arts & Academic Programs Coordinator Liz Fox. Photo: Brittany Hathaway

Experiential learning is at the heart of the center’s teaching mission. UMass English undergraduates visited the center throughout the year to learn about the history of the book, Renaissance printing practices, and to try their hands at calligraphy arts. Librarian Jeff Goodhind curated a number of special exhibits including, “Tiny Books, How to carry the world of knowledge in the palm of your hand.” This exhibit invited visitors to consider how the Renaissance predicted our digital age. The center also hosted a new workshop on Shakespeare and the law. Paul Yachnin, Tomlinson Professor of Shakespeare Studies (McGill University), was in residence for the annual Dan S. Collins Lecture during which time he invited us to participate in the Shakespeare Meet Court Project. Just as we think of the Civil Code or the judgments of the Supreme Court as law, our workshop explored Shakespeare as law: a ShuckMoot. The hearing considered the right to medical aid in dying for an advanced Alzheimer’s patient. Using All’s Well That Ends Well as the law, the lively workshop explored the nature of interpretation, the intersections of law and consent, and the way in which value and meaning intersect in the creation of law and literature alike.

UMASS WRITING PROGRAM

This year the Writing Program hired three new faculty to offer stability, fresh perspectives, and new writing pedagogy expertise.

The UMass Writing Program continues to grow! This year UMass Amherst increased its freshman class by almost 700 and as a result, the Writing Program placement readers (under the guidance of Anne Bello and our placement coordinator) read an unusually large number of in-coming student placement essays. Likewise, our office staff (Hish Hefna and Becky Blayda) went above and beyond the call of duty to make sure our students were properly placed, had classrooms to meet in, and teachers to teach them. On an already crowded campus, the Writing Program added over 40 sections of freshman composition for the year. Much thanks to all our Writing Program teachers who continue to take this growth in stride and still richly engage our students through innovative pedagogy across campus.

This year the Writing Program hired three new faculty to offer stability, fresh perspectives, and new writing pedagogy expertise. Devin Day graduated from the University of Missouri with both an MA and PhD in English literature with a focus on contemporary American novels. He brings a deep knowledge of teaching first year writing and running a writing center. Day teaches the College Writing course and serves as a staff member of UMass’s Writing Center, supporting its day-to-day and outreach efforts. Shaktunala Ray received an MA in English literature from Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India, and recently earned a PhD in English from UMass Amherst, specializing in post-colonial theory and literature. Ray teaches College Writing and coordinates the Charles Moran Best Text Committee, she will lead a social justice pedagogy fellowship group in spring 2020. Prior to coming to UMass, Aaron Tillman was an associate professor of English and director of the honors program at Newbury College. While at Newbury, he was one of three faculty members who redesigned their composition sequence to better serve writers of varying experiences and abilities. Tillman teaches College Writing, our first-year writing course, and co-leads the Writing Program’s curriculum committee. Welcome to all three!

Two additional notes, worthy of mention. Under the leadership of Anna Rita Napolitane, the Writing Center continues to serve a large number of students on the UMass Amherst campus and at the Mount Ida campus. In October, a group of ten high school students from Deerfield’s Frontier Regional School visited the UMass Writing Center to observe tutoring sessions and meet with staff. The visit, supported by a $15,000 Public Service Endowment Grant, is part of an ongoing collaboration between the Writing Center and the school.

—Rebecca Dingo, Director, University of Massachusetts Amherst Writing Program
The Western Massachusetts Writing Project (WMWP) was selected by the Library of Congress 2019 Literacy Awards Program as a Best Practice honoree. The Literacy Awards Program honors organizations that have made outstanding contributions to increasing literacy in the United States or abroad. The $5,000 award recognizes WMWP’s promotion of literacy and development of innovative methods and effective practices, and exemplifies the ongoing work to which WMWP teacher consultants are committed, as seen by the various programs this past year.

This year, the WMWP was delighted with the success of our youth summer programs. Three week-long sessions were held at the Three week-long sessions were held at the success of our youth summer programs. This year, the WMWP was delighted with the success of our youth summer programs.

In fall 2019, the Professional Writing and Technical Communication Program doubled its retinue of teaching assistants, as PhD candidate Elena Kalodner-Martin joined Thomas Pickering, each teaching a section of Introduction to Professional Writing. Students spoke highly of their dedication, enthusiasm, and concern for their intellectual and academic well-being. We continue to adapt the program with new software, and to respond to larger changes in the profession, especially the growing field of user experience.

This year many program graduates returned to speak to our classes, sharing knowledge of workplace cultures and long-range career planning. Among the returnees was Deb Chatigny ’08 now a documentation manager at Vertica. Thanks in part to her efforts, Kevin Xu '19 was hired as a junior tech writer at Vertica, and Yashika Issrani '20 interned, performing in Deb's words, "outstanding work that will really make a difference." It wasn’t all work, of course. In late May, we hosted the annual program reunion at a local restaurant, where current students and grads from years past met and mingled. We are gratified and reassured that job placement—thanks in part to notices sent by program alumni, now at 380 and counting—was very robust. Congratulations to all!

—Janine Solberg and David Toomey, Co-directors, Program for Professional Writing and Technical Communication
This past summer marked the twelfth year of the Department of English’s summer study-abroad course, Live Performance: International Theatre Festival Immersion, and our second year in partnership with the University of New Mexico (UNM). The Edinburgh Fringe Festival is the world’s largest arts festival with more than 3,500 performances each day spread across 400 different venues. This past year I acted as the faculty representative from UMass, UNM Theatre Professor Dominika Laster directed the program, and Professor Rachel Anderson-Rabern of Franklin and Marshall College rounded out our team of instructors. We were also joined by our own Emeritus Professor Jenny Spencer, who founded the study abroad course more than a decade ago and now leads groups of older visitors to the festival, and Professor David Toomey, who has been a regular visitor to Edinburgh over the last several years.

Eighteen students from three institutions witnessed performances from around the world, and then gathered together to meet artists and to develop their responses in conversation and in writing. After an online course introducing students to the festival and to a variety of theatrical strategies, we spent two weeks in Edinburgh. This year students saw between 35 and 50 different performances over the course of their stay, and still managed to find time to explore the city, to hike up Arthur’s Seat (the mountain in the middle of the medieval city), and to rally for an evening cèilidh (Scottish contra dancing).

A number of other festivals also occupy the streets of Edinburgh during August: students were able to attend readings at the Edinburgh International Book Festival (the world’s largest of its kind), concerts at the Music Festival, and some extraordinary exhibitions at the Arts Festival. We look forward to next summer’s edition of the festivals and what that may hold.

—Daniel Sack, Program Advisor, Live Performance: International Theatre Festival Immersion

In summer 2019, 10 English majors and an MFA poet joined the UMass Oxford Summer Seminar. In the heart of the “City of Dreaming Spires,” 44 students lodged at Trinity College, explored the UK, journeyed to France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Hungary, and engaged in intensive coursework modeled on Oxford’s unique tutorial system on topics including Shakespeare, Jane Austen, British detective fiction, prose fiction writing, and British politics. UMass students have been walking on the same stony paths now for more than half a century in a university that is more than twice as old as the US Constitution. Learning in this environment helps us to engage with humanistic endeavors from the deep past. As Professor Adam Zucker, who also joined the seminar as a faculty member, put it: “There is nothing quite like teaching Shakespeare in Oxford! The plays come alive in the quads and libraries and gardens and alleys of the city ... it’s like living in a history play, without all of the beheadings.”

—Jason Moralee, Director, Oxford Summer Seminar

This year students saw between 35 and 50 different performances over the course of their stay, and still managed to find time to explore the city, to hike up Arthur’s Seat (the mountain in the middle of the medieval city), and to rally for an evening cèilidh (Scottish contra dancing).
Robert Bagg—Isabel Alamar living consciously in freedom. That may answer questions about being and desire to return to those origins of the self. These poems convey longing as well as the variety of landscapes and geographies. Various themes: love, loss, and nature in Para El Vuelo.

Joselyn Michelle Almeida. Condiciones Para El Vuelo Los Libros del Mississippi, 2019. “Condiciones Para El Vuelo [Conditions for Flight] is a poetry collection that blends various themes: love, loss, and nature in its different landscapes and geographies. These poems convey longing as well as the desire to return to those origins of the self that may answer questions about being and living consciously in freedom.” —Isabel Alamar

Robert Bagg. Four by Euripides: Medea, Bakkhai, Hippolytos and Cyclops University of Massachusetts Press, 2019. Robert Bagg’s translations are prized for taut and vivid language that sustain the strengths that make ancient Greek dramas immediate and gripping. His earlier translations of the plays of Sophocles and Euripides have been performed over seventy times, across a wide array of stages. This edition includes accessible new translations of four plays by Euripides [that] sustain the strengths that Bagg is known for: taut and vivid language and faithfulness to the Greek.

Martin Espada. ed. What Saves Us: Poems of Empathy and Outrage in the Age of Trump. Northwestern University Press, 2019. “Far more than a protest anthology, Martin Espada’s What Saves Us brings together portraits of Trump’s enablers with the myriad voices of the lost, abandoned, and marginalized. These stories of immigrants, minimum wage workers, alcoholics, victims, broken angels, and dreamers redeem their lives and install their voices in our hearts.” —Cary Nelson, author of Revolutionary Memory: Recovering the Poetry of the American Left

Ruth Jennison and Julian Murphet, eds., Communion and Poetry: Writing Against Capital. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. “Now, more than ever, it is necessary that we take seriously the connection between poetry and communism, which is to say, the connection between the living breath and the unending criticism of everything that exists. By taking a broad, dynamic swipe from the contemporary landscape, Communion and Poetics: Writing Against Capital answers this urgent call. It should be heard as far and wide as the name of Marx himself.” —Anne Boyer, poet, scholar, and professor at the Kansas City Art Institute


Strange Attractions reminds us that even chaos has a pattern, and now more than ever, we are grateful for it. Attraction is evidence of the sublime. The very idea sparks revelation.” — Annie Lontzas, author of Let Me Explain You

Peggy O’Brien. Tongues. Dublin: New Island Books, 2019. “Fizzing with energy, these poems arrest the reader with earthy language, wry wordplay, and clear-eyed compassion. O’Brien’s reframing of the classic exchange between Abelard and Heloise moves from ‘horns and haloes’ to Airbuses and touchscreens, meshing the medieval with the personal.” — Kate Donovan

James Tate. The Government Lake: Last Poems. Ecco, 2019. “The rare American poet who managed to make poems that were at once fanciful and grave, mundane and transcendent. His work is singular in American poetry for marrying goofball humor and childish jouissance to a lyricism that never seems cheap or self-serious—an unusual achievement.” (The New York Times Book Review)

Ocean Vuong. On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous. A Novel. Penguin Press, 2019. “Vuong writes about the yearning for connection that afflicts immigrants. But ‘ocean’ also describes the distinctive way Vuong writes. His words are liquid, flowing, rolling, teeming, mighty and overpowering. When Vuong’s mother gave him the oh-so-apt name of Ocean, she inadvertently called into being a writer whose language some of us readers could happily drown in…Like so many immigrant writers before him, Vuong has taken the English he acquired with difficulty and not only made it his own—he’s made it better.” — Maureen Corrigan, Fresh Air

From Page to Stage

Eric Berryman, Jonathan Burke, April Mattis, Daniel J. Bryant, and Ezra Knight. Photo Joan Marcus

Martin Ackmann ‘88 PhD, is a journalist and author whose book, Carvelia (Chicago Review Press, 2010), recounts the story of Toni Stone, the first female player in baseball’s Negro League. Award-winning playwright Lydia R. Diamond has adapted Ackmann’s work for the stage. Toni Stone, performed by the Roundabout Theatre Company and featuring April Matthews in the title role, premiered on May 23 at the Laura Pels Theatre in New York City.

The following represent recently published books written or edited by graduates of the PhD Program.


The Department of English recognized the achievements of its students at the Annual Scholarship and Awards Celebration held on April 22 in Old Chapel’s Great Hall. Photo: D. Toomey

RETURNING ALUMNI

Department of English alumni who, in person or remotely, shared their experiences with us in 2019.

- Jesse Buday ’08, Senior Technical Documentation Specialist, Pegasystems.
- Deborah Chatigny ’08, Career Navigator, JVS Boston
- Chanel Dubofsky ’01, Freelance Writer
- Judah Phillips ’97, Founder/Principal, SmartCurrent
- Emily Hunt ’19, Technical Writer, athenahealth
- Ivan Maximoff ’86, Senior Director of Sales Enablement, Attivio and Founder, Principal Trumpet, Occasional Brass and Strings
- Andrew Hammond ’86, Tech Solution Architect, IBM
- Bryan Hilliard ’93, Senior Director of Sales Enablement, Attivio and Founder, Principal Trumpet, Occasional Brass and Strings
- Emily Mias ’13, Senior Product Manager, Drift
- Matt Oliver ’18, Technical Writer, athenahealth
- Angela Simonelli ’05, Supervisor, Information Development, Rosdat Software
- Rebecca Tarr Thomas ’10, Acquisitions Editor, Adams Media
- Taylor Wise ’17, Technical Writer, athenahealth

The following alumni, all working in publishing in New York City, hosted undergraduates who “shadowed” them.

- Beth Coday ’14, Penguin Random House
- Stephanie Meyers ’05, Inc. and Farm Company
- Eden Univer ’10, Hearst Magazines
- Amanda Pritzker ’04, Grand Central Publishing
Kendall Higgins ’19 and Molly Trowbridge ’19 prepare to turn the page.