“[W]e shall every one be mask’d”

- Love’s Labour’s Lost, Act V, ii
Thanks for editorial assistance are owed to Meg Caulmare and Jennifer Jacobson.

Cover Photo: Shakespeare in Kinney Center Shakespeare Garden “masked” by anonymous admirer. Photo courtesy Marjorie Rubright

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I write this in the first week of 2021.

In some ways it is painful to look back on 2020, for the reasons you all know too well. People we care for became ill with COVID-19, almost every aspect of the entire English Department operation changed from face-to-face to remote, the novelty of Zoom classes and meetings wore off, South College became eerily silent and vacant, living with masks and chapped hands became wearisome.

But here, in this newsletter, is an antidote to those bleak memories. The accomplishments, and sheer vitality, of the people associated with the Department of English prove invigorating every year, but this year reading about all of these achievements, attained under difficulties, is a real balm. The lists of books and other publications by faculty members and alumni are heartening all by themselves; the accolades for these achievements make them all the more inspiring. Faculty members and students continue to receive awards and grants, from the multiple honors Ocean Vuong’s new novel has earned to the large grant Laura Furlan helped the Five-College Native American and Indigenous Studies Program win, which next year will fund a new position for a Native Americanist in the department. Speaking of hiring, we added a new faculty member this year, despite the university’s straitened circumstances. Having to start his job under bizarre conditions, Jimmy Worthy nonetheless hit the ground running. We will continue to expect great things from him, and we’ll look forward to the day when we can greet him in person.

Because of the administration’s retirement-incentive programs, we have lost, or will be losing faculty (Nick Bromell and Dara Wier) and staff (Meg Caulmare and Mary Coty). Their departures mark the end of an era. It still seems impossible to imagine our department without them. But we will carry on, impelled forward partly by the support—moral and financial—from the members of our departmental community. Our best wishes to you all.

-Randall Knoper
Chair, English Department
Jenny Adams was awarded a Chancellor’s Leadership Fellowship for the 2020-21. This fellowship seeks to “cultivate future campus leaders by offering a half-time, one-year, temporary appointment to an administrative area on campus.”

Joseph Black was awarded the William H. Helfand Research Fellowship in the art and history of the book, named in honor of late Grolier Club benefactor and former president William H. Helfand.

Laura Furlan, chair of the Five College Native and Indigenous Studies Committee, reported that the Five College Native American and Indigenous Studies Program was awarded a $2.5 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The grant will allow expansion for the existing Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) certificate program, the addition of new courses and course support, faculty members, increased visiting scholars, and better relationships with Native and Indigenous communities in western Massachusetts.

Haivan Hoang was awarded an Office of Faculty Development Mutual Mentoring Award with Deborah McCutchen, a senior lecturer and associate director for Junior Year Writing for “Cross-Disciplinary Faculty Designing Multimodal Writing Courses,” which aims to improve members’ respective multimodal junior-year writing courses.

Sabina Murray was featured as a Spotlight Scholar as part of UMass Amherst’s Research Next: Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity for a Brighter Future. Murray’s work often brings together the creative, historical, and political; her latest novel, The Human Zoo, is set in the Philippines during the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte.

Asha Nadkarni won a Distinguished Graduate Mentor Award for “extraordinary guidance in research, excellent teaching in both formal and informal settings, and strong support for students’ professional development as they prepare for their chosen careers,” as well as for “making significant and consistent contributions to promoting diversity and inclusion in graduate education at UMass.”

Daniel Sack was awarded a George A. and Eliza Gardner Howard Foundation Fellowship in Theatre Studies. The George A. and Eliza Gardner Howard Foundation, an independent foundation administered at Brown University, awards a limited number of fellowships each year for projects in the arts and humanities.

Ocean Vuong’s critically-acclaimed novel, On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous, was awarded the 2020 American Book Award in Fiction, and the 2020 Mark Twain American Voice in Literature Award. It was also shortlisted for the 2020 Dylan Thomas Prize, and longlisted for the Massachusetts Books Award. Vuong himself was awarded the NAAAP Pride Award from the National Association of Asian American Professionals, granted annually to luminaries in their respective fields.

Caroline Yang was awarded an Office of Faculty Development (OFD) Mutual Mentoring Grant for 2020-2021 with the goal of co-editing an anthology with Dr. Esther Kim Lee of Duke University on the study of blackface and yellowface minstrelsy.

Jimmy Worthy
We were delighted to welcome Jimmy Worthy to the Department of English in the fall 2020 semester. Worthy specializes in African American literature, African American religious history, 19th and 20th century gender performance, and African American literary and historical movements. He is currently working on two book projects. The first will bring into print an unpublished volume of verse by Harlem Renaissance poet and playwright Georgia Douglas Johnson. The second, a monograph entitled Defiant Resurrection: A Study of Subjectivity, Restoration, and Sacred Imperative in African American Literature, will argue that African American literature from 1772 to 1987 employs the motif of death and resurrection as a strategy for defying racially imposed identities. Worthy’s work has appeared in Cambridge Scholars, Gale Researcher, and Canadian Review of American Studies.
I’ve discovered [that] retirement is a kind of harvest. You start to gather in the gifts and blessings of the work you’ve done over the course of your career.”

NICK BROMELL – A REFLECTION

“Congratulations!” people would say when I told them I had retired. But I didn’t understand why. Surely retirement isn’t an achievement, like getting your first job, or publishing a book, or winning an award. What was I being congratulated for?

However, now that I’ve been officially retired for three months, I’ve had time to reflect on what retirement is and means. Those reflections have led me to think a lot about the job I’ve retired from. This is because, as I’ve discovered, retirement is a kind of harvest. You start to gather in the gifts and blessings of the work you’ve done over the course of your career.

While I was doing that work, I rarely saw those gifts. And when I did, they were swiftly crowded aside by the endless forward press of tasks and obligations. But now I see what the work actually was, and why it was so rewarding.

For 35 years, I was paid to engage in human encounters, thousands and thousands of human encounters, all of them turning in the space where teachers and learners meet. That’s a rich harvest indeed. But there’s more.

It’s no exaggeration to say that for the first 15 or so years of my career, I had no idea what I was doing. Like most professors of my generation, I’d received very little instruction in teaching, and no wisdom about the subject at all. Most days I was well prepared for class, but only in a strictly formal sense: I had done the reading, prepared discussion questions, and perhaps composed a short lecture.

But what was my deep purpose? What was the underlying continuity of meaning that linked one course to another, one semester to the next, one year to the next? I seldom asked this question because I was so busy. I was already on to the next class, on to the next set of papers to grade, on to the next committee meeting, on to the next article or book to write.

Slowly, I was approaching the knowledge that my every encounter with a student was essentially a caring one. Of course, that seems obvious, and maybe even trite. Certainly there’s a sense in which I always knew that I cared for my students, and I would even say so sometimes to my friends and colleagues. But the kind of awareness I’m talking about here runs deeper than that. It’s an awareness that permeates and shapes all one’s actions. Even the most banal corrections on a paper— “run-on sentence,” “Where’s your thesis?”— began to present themselves to me as opportunities to care and to show that I cared. And it was students, hundreds and hundreds of students, who patiently led me to this kind of awareness of the inner meaning and purpose of my work.

Naturally, I wish that I’d learned more quickly. Still, I did eventually learn that teaching is all about caring. That we teachers care about each and every student we teach. And that we learn everything we come to know about teaching—“know” in the sense of being aware of what we’re doing and consciously practicing it—with and from our students.

It is quite a rich path to have walked for 35 years. I’m so grateful to all my students for showing me the way.

Today, when people say, “congratulations,” I think I know why.
On September 24, Jeff Parker, director of the MFA Program for Poets and Writers, interviewed Gabriel Bump ’17MFA as part of the Visiting Writers Series, now celebrating its 56th year. Bump was recently named the 2020 winner of the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence, and his novel, Everywhere You Don't Belong, was selected as one of the New York Times 100 Notable Books of 2020. A partial transcript of their conversation appears below, lightly edited for clarity.

**Parker:** I cannot tell you how honored and proud I am to be introducing Gabriel Bump. His debut novel, Everywhere You Don't Belong, is being met with the reception it deserves but which not all deserving books get. The glowing Tommy Orange review in The New York Times stated, “Bump's meditation on belonging and not belonging, where or with whom, how love is a way home no matter where you are, is handled so beautifully that you don't know he's hypnotized you until he's done.” That hypnosis Orange speaks of is a result of many things. But above all it's a result of what Gabe does with language and sound on the page. What magic it is to hear those squiggles played by a stylist like Bump in the speaker-drum of your skull. He writes like Coltrane, Mozart or Slayer play. I'm a horrible blurb writer, but I think that I've written the best blurb that I have ever written for Gabe's book, so If you don't mind indulging me, I'd like to close by reading it.

“Sometimes the moment just asks things from us.”

**Bump:** Thanks, Parker. Writing this book and having it nurtured by you, Edie, Noy and Sabina not only made me a much better writer than I would have been, but a more caring and thoughtful person.

**Parker:** In the novel you give voice to ’60s-era civil rights activists, basketball prodigies, and gang members. While shepherding us into the light. Everywhere You Don't Belong is a startlingly powerful novel, an unusual concentration of opposing forces, blind rage versus empathy, comedy versus tragedy, despair versus hope, that resists every label it evokes: picaresque, Bildungsroman, generational saga, political novel, comic novel, love story. It's all of those things at once, and much more. An instant American classic.”

Welcome back, my friend.

**Bump:** Thanks, Parker. Writing this book and having it nurtured by you, Edie, Noy and Sabina not only made me a much better writer than I would have been, but a more caring and thoughtful person.
making good fun of everyone, you manage not to make cardboard or a villain of anyone. Could you say a bit about the process of finding all these voices?

**Bump:** When I was in high school I wrote for my high school newspaper. Most reporting is just talking to people, so I talked to gang members. They were in gangs because everyone in their neighborhood was in gangs, and to me they seemed like normal, wacky, insecure teens. Those representations are missed in fiction and nonfiction tellings of places like South Shore that are viewed as these monolithic, Black spots. I figured if I was going to write a book I might as well just empty out my brain onto the page, and not leave anything unaccounted for.

**Parker:** In the world of this book, the character Grandma is an icon from another time. She exerts a tremendous force on Claude (the book’s central character) and everyone around her. I remember you saying once that she was based on your own Grandma.

**Bump:** The book is dedicated to my Grandma. She lived most of her life in Harlem, so I didn’t know her very well as I was growing up. When she got really sick she came to live with us in Chicago. Here was this woman who was really funny, really tough, and we got really close. When she died and we went to the funeral in Harlem, I was really struck by how many people in the neighborhood knew her. It was also surprising how many people she had raised. Historically, African American women have shouldered the burden for a lot of evils that befall the Black community. So I learned about this tough, smart, beautiful, funny woman who I had known as someone who couldn’t walk down the stairs without me helping her. In some of the early sketches that became this book, I was imagining if she had raised me.

Those sketches were a way to get closer to someone I didn’t really know.

**Parker:** Several of the many good reviews of your work referred to it as being timely as regards to issues of police brutality and racial conflict in America. As you were writing this, you were thinking of the beginnings of the Black Lives Matter movement.

**Bump:** On tour I didn’t read from the riot scene, where a young Black man is murdered by the police and the neighborhood erupts, and didn’t talk about it in interviews unless prompted. I felt that the book was about much more than that. This summer has been surreal. I’m angry. I was angry when I wrote it and I’m angry now. It will continue to be part of how I view America, how I view the world, and I think it will continue to be an aspect of my work and my place in the world until America changes, until something happens here to give me some hope. Police getting away with murdering people just because they have badges is something I fear happening to me.

**Parker:** I thought your book is your answer to having had all these experiences. Now I wonder if that’s how you feel.

**Bump:** While writing this book, I was feeling isolated, and that was me trying to answer questions. How do I feel now? Every day of June and into July I wasn’t writing. I was out in the streets. I couldn’t write. I don’t know what’s different about the anger I feel now as opposed to the anger I felt as I was writing the book. I was the victim of racist policing and racist violence. Writing the book was a way to deal with that traumatic experience, and in the moment maybe it worked.

**Parker:** In one of the early interviews you expressed a wish that you would be better at Twitter. I went to check it out, and it wasn’t as weak as you put on. But in the ensuing months you really found your voice, in a different way, and as the book started getting recognized the world reacted to you differently in the social media space. You really rose to the moment. As if we weren’t proud enough.

**Bump:** Whatever small soapbox I have, who would I be if I wasn’t using it to speak for people who can’t speak for themselves? Sometimes the moment just asks things from us.
The suspension of in-person classes in March, due to the coronavirus pandemic, began a difficult period in the department. At the top of everyone’s mind, of course, was the physical health of our students, colleagues, and families. For faculty, adapting courses to remote instruction was the next order of business. But there were other worries: Many of our students suffered from anxiety and loneliness away from school; and their families faced hardship as the national economy went into free fall.

One group we were especially concerned about was our graduating seniors. At first, we cancelled year-end events and promised in-person substitutes when things were back to normal. But it became clear that we had to have some kind of event to recognize the department’s graduating English majors. So, on May 8, we held an hour-long, online celebration, attended by nearly a hundred students, faculty, and staff (with many friends and family members looking on). Presentations included a keynote address from senior speaker Yashika Issrani, as well as original compositions from students and readings from the work of Emily Dickinson, James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, and Ocean Vuong.

At the end of a difficult semester, it was a sign of our collective resilience and of the special place of language, literature, and culture in times of crisis.

By fall, faculty could give some attention to other matters. The department began a three-year trial project to raise the profile of specialization in the undergraduate curriculum. The department has long offered specialization options, like Professional Writing and Creative Writing; the goal now is to better integrate such options into the major. The three-year trial includes two changes: First, the department will begin encouraging all majors to complete at least one specialization in English; Second, the department is expanding the suite of specializations offered, from five to 10.

The benefit to students? The changes will:

1. Give more shape to the end of the major, helping students developing advanced knowledge in at least one subfield of English;

2. Provide all students majoring in English with at least one additional credential, complementing “English” with something more specific; and

3. Better represent to prospective majors the many different things they can do with an English major.

Specialization options in the department now include American studies; creative writing; Digital Humanities + Games; Environmental Humanities; Literature as History; Professional Writing and Technical Communication; Social Justice: Race, Class, Gender, Ability; the Study and Practice of Writing; Teaching the English Language Arts; and an individualized option.

Liza Flandreau, a new English major from Sturbridge, Mass., had this to say about the new suite of options: “Seeing the different specializations, new and old, has been informative. It is a nice way to add additional structure to the next four years here.” Interested in becoming a teacher, she is especially drawn to teaching the English language arts.

More information can be found at umass.edu/english/certificates-and-specializations

-David Fleming, Director of Undergraduate Studies
GRADUATE STUDIES

The year 2020 was highly productive for the graduate program in English. Nine students defended their dissertations and received their PhDs: Faune Albert, Joshua Barsczewski, Gayatri Hewagama, Annalise Hoehling, Eugenia Krichesky, Katelyn Litterer, Russell Nurick, Rebecca Petitti, and Magdalena Zapedowska. Six students completed the terminal MA. In addition, five students passed their two-area exams and four 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. Professor Mazen Naous took up the position of associate graduate program director in the fall after Professor Jane Degenhardt’s term ended. Under their shared direction, the office helped graduate students form writing groups based on research areas and conducted workshops on career development within and alongside the academy.

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. A member of our incoming cohort was awarded a Research Enhancement and Leadership (REAL) diversity fellowship from the Graduate School, and two incoming students were awarded Summer Funding Fellowships. In addition, seven of our PhD students were awarded a Summer Dissertation Fellowship through the department. 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.

We are all immensely grateful to Jane Degenhardt for her work in the office over the past years, during which time she helped many of our graduate students successfully find positions at institutions around the world. Finally, our office could not function without the care and support of our administrator, Wanda Bak. She has been especially impacted by the administrative pressures of these trying times, but Wanda’s commitment to our students and our common project has been unflagging. We thank her for her continued service to everyone in the program.

-Daniel Sack,
Director of Graduate Studies

Our students... 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.”

Dr. Jenny Krichesky (top left), upon completing the defense of her dissertation, “Passing Literacies: Soviet Immigrant Elders and Intergenerational Language Practices.”
This year was like no other. We mourned community members who lost their lives to COVID-19. We moved to remote teaching. We confronted issues of systemic racism in a year when the MFA admitted its most diverse group of students to date. And yet we found ways to write and to celebrate in community, even if that meant being in a virtual space together.

We are pleased to share news about prizes and publications awarded to our alumni and current students.

**Mark Bias** (’22MFA) was awarded a 2020 William Matthews Poetry Prize for his poem “How God Breaks.” His poem “And Now That I’m Done, I Give Him Back to You” will be published in the 2020 Best New Poets Anthology.


**Juleen Johnson** (’21MFA) was awarded a Winter Residency by the Studios at MASS MoCA.

**Jayson Keery** (’21MFA) and **Miles Collins-Sibley** (’19MFA) were published in *We Want It All: An Anthology of Radical Trans Poetics*.

**Andrea Lawlor** (’12MFA) was named a 2020 Whiting Award Winner in Fiction.

**Lisa Olstein** (’03MFA) and **Susan Steinberg** (’00 MFA) were awarded Guggenheim Fellowships in April 2020.

**Kritika Pandey** (’20MFA) won the 2020 Commonwealth Short Story Prize in June 2020 for her short story, “The Great Indian Tee and Snakes.”

Dāshaun Washington (’22MFA) was awarded a Winter Residency by the Studios at MASS MoCA. Four new poems were published in the November/December 2020 issue of the American Poetry Review.

For the last 15 years, the Juniper Institute for Young Writers has been a destination for teen writers. This weeklong creative writing program is a pre-college opportunity for high school students interested in UMass, and an exciting way to invite students into the humanities, English, and our home in South College.

In response to COVID-19 and the cancellation of classes on campus last March, every aspect of Juniper’s program was redesigned for online learning and community-building for writers in grades 8-12. In July, Juniper welcomed a record number of teen writers to the program with 131 participants from all over the world.

Over the course of five days, these teens enjoyed writing labs, craft sessions, writer’s life talks, participant readings, and write-alongs. They wrote, revised, and compiled a portfolio of work participating in synchronous and asynchronous offerings. They learned about writing careers, the literary life and had the opportunity to share their writing in labs and readings. Despite the online setting, these high school students said they “wanted more time!” They “loved being together and nerding out about writing.” They were “happy to find a community.”

Whether delivered online or in-person, the success of our young writers program depends on the instructors—all graduate students at UMass Amherst pursuing their master of fine arts degrees. This year, instructors offered multi-genre labs where participants explored creative styles, forms, subjects, and modes of writing. These complex college-level writing labs allowed participants to develop their own work and exchange feedback on creative writing projects.

Since 2006, the Juniper Institute for Young Writers has been a showcase for teen writers who are interested in UMass. Juniper’s summer programs also provide career and professional development opportunities for undergraduates to work in the literary arts and assist with the residential experience for participants, along with exceptional possibilities for MFA candidates in marketing, production, and administration. These real-world experiences enhance undergrad and graduates’ professional knowledge and skills.

Who knows what 2021 will bring? At Juniper, we hope to welcome teens back to campus, but only if it is safe to do so. In the meantime, we will continue to deliver excellent creative writing opportunities and create community through the literary arts.

We’d like to invite your teen writer to join us. For more information visit: umass.edu/juniperyoungwriters/
In the year ahead, we will invite students to shuttle between the university classroom and the campus landscape, discovering the earth beneath one’s feet as a site for engagement with the past, present, and future.”

The Renaissance of the Earth, photo courtesy Marjorie Rubright
This year, the center launched “The Renaissance of the Earth” project, which invites us all to consider how thinking with the early modern past might reshape our environmental future. Hands-on learning at the Renaissance Center is a dirty business: digging into the earth one day to plant or pluck medicinal herbs, twisting a gnarly pippin from a tree, and then paging through the sometimes dusty leaves of our library’s botanicals, agricultural books, and sylvan poetry the next. It puts the past to work by inviting students, faculty, local farmers, herbalist, chefs, and craftspeople to probe the early modern world for what it might teach us in our endeavor to imagine alternative forms of habitation and cultivation of the earth. How, we ask, does our current climate crisis and the social justice issues that arise in its wake demand a longer view of both human and environmental history, literature and science? In the year ahead, we will invite students to shuttle between the university classroom and the campus landscape, discovering the earth beneath one’s feet as a site for engagement with the past, present, and future. The Renaissance Center will offer professional and pre-professional opportunities for undergraduates and graduate students alike with RA-ships, work-studies, internships, curatorial positions, and service-learning possibilities. Please, be in touch with us if you’re interested in digging in!

A number of distinguished invited speakers shared their research with us this year. Professor Sarah Wall Randell delivered the Normand Berlin Lecture on “The Sibyls Fire: Women and Textual Destruction in Early Modern England,” and, just in time for Halloween, Professor Katherine Walker revealed what joins “Drama, Demons, and Knowledge” in early modern literature and demonology. Among the six special exhibits curated by center librarian, Jeff Goodhind, was “The Ocean as Monstrosity: Cartographic, Mythological, and Folkloric Fantasies of the Sea.” Did you know, according to Ovid, that Medusa’s blood is the origin for the sea’s red coral reefs?

The center also hosted a Five College interdisciplinary symposium, Amer-Asia: Object Lessons in Early Modern Connectivity, co-organized by the departments of English, History of Art and Architecture, and History by faculty at UMass, Amherst, and Hampshire colleges. Each invited speaker presented our audience with a single object (ranging in origin from Japan to Mexico) in an effort to explore the ways in which Europeans understood and represented America as Asia during the course of the 16th century.

One day this fall, we discovered that the Shakespeare bust that lends the name to our “Shakespeare garden” had been masked by a kind passerby. Our actors-in-residence were not so easily muffled this season. The Players Project, the center’s creative troupe of Five College undergraduate actors, continues their work, meeting the challenges of the pandemic by creating radio plays. This spring, undergraduates from across all five campuses will endeavor to produce The Roaring Girl, an early modern drama that features a gender nonbinary character as the lead. The show will be made available on the center’s website and an aftershow talk back with the director, Noah Tuleja, actors, and scholars will transpire on Zoom.

Please visit our website to learn of our upcoming events, our work-study and internship opportunities, and to listen to episodes of our podcast, Foraging Shakespeare. As we look ahead to next summer’s plans to dig into the past in our gardens, orchards and rare book library, I welcome you to reach out with expressions of interest in joining a campuswide team of student-scholars exploring the Renaissance of the Earth.

For more information, visit: umass.edu/renaissance

—Marjorie Rubright, Director
In 2020, the UMass Writing Program remains a robust and integral component of UMass’s General Education program, offering two courses—College Writing and Writing, Identity, and Power—to approximately 5,000 undergraduates with 100 graduate student and lecturer instructors and six staff members.

In Spring 2020, we were fortunate to hire two new faculty members to continue to provide these high-quality courses. Our new assistant director, Dr. Elkie Burnside, comes to us from the University of Findlay in Ohio where she directed their master’s program in professional communication. Elkie specializes in online content development, multimodal composing, and curricular assessment. In 2020, Elkie taught College Writing, mentoring experienced instructors, and providing directed instructional support on remote instruction. Our second new colleague, Alina Parker, is a doctoral candidate in communication at UMass Amherst whose research interests include discourse analysis, performance studies, postsocialism, and Russian politics. Alina has taught at Moscow State University for the humanities in Russia as well as at the University of Tampa and at Smith College. In 2020, Alina taught College Writing and mentoring experienced instructors in the program. Finally, Associate Professor Rebecca Lorimer Leonard from the English department rotated in as director of the Writing Program in July 2020. Welcome to our new Writing Program colleagues!

As with all areas of campus, the Writing Program also has adapted to many changes brought on by the pandemic in 2020. In response to the move to remote instruction in 2020, the Writing Program’s nationally-recognized training program shifted all of its summer and fall activities online, including a brand-new hybrid orientation, ongoing professional development workshops geared toward supporting teaching writing online, addressing topics such as linguistic diversity, community-building, and accessibility in online learning spaces. Under the leadership of Dr. Anna Rita Napoleone, the UMass Writing Center also moved all of its writing support services online in Spring 2020 and continues to support the writing success of hundreds of UMass students across all majors and disciplines.

While the program’s instructional and learning goals remain the same, we are shifting how we respond to changing student needs under new learning and writing conditions. The program has slowed down the pace of the curriculum; we are focusing on student retention and persistence in our grading and attendance policies. We also have incorporated more explicitly anti-racist professional development in an instructor-initiated pedagogy support group and will collaboratively implement changes to placement and assessment as we move into next year.

Rebecca Lorimer Leonard, Director, UMass Writing Program
The Western Massachusetts Writing Project (WMWP) leadership team continues its commitment to teachers, students and communities by collaborating with K-12 teachers in western Massachusetts on pressing issues centered on teaching and learning. Given the coronavirus crisis and the ongoing political and racial tensions, the WMWP focused its efforts on remote learning and on equity, access, and racial justice. The WMWP published an opinion piece in the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* on May 4, 2020, noting that “access alone, when discussed only in economic terms, will not resolve issues of racial and linguistic inequities.”

The WMWP Teaching for Racial Justice course was offered last spring and will be offered again this spring. The course has also been adapted for a professional development series that can be offered to school districts. The course and workshop focus on anti-racism and social justice education. Both the course and the workshop explicitly address privilege, equity, and cultural responsiveness in the school's content curriculum and social environment.

The WMWP held its 28th Summer Leadership Institute online, which brought together K-college teachers. They spent two weeks immersed in writing, reading, and reflective inquiry. Even though there were initial reservations about how to best build community online, the institute proved successful as facilitators and participants worked together. Furthermore, the WMWP's commitment to social justice is central to the institute as participants reflect on and inquire into their identities and the communities they work in.

This year, the WMWP offered an online virtual workshop for youth in the summer. Young writers were fully immersed in creating their own narrative adventures. This was WMWP's sole youth writing program. The weeklong initiative was titled “Interactive Fiction: The Many Paths of Stories.” Interactive fiction is a storytelling concept in which a writer "maps" out possibilities for a story to go, with each choice leading to a different “branch” of the story.

Two years of research, collaboration, and curriculum development by a WMWP team will come to fruition this fall with the publication of the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services History and Social Science Instructional Guide, a three-volume resource of over a thousand pages for teachers of incarcerated youth. WMWP produced the guide under contract with the Collaborative for Educational Services, which manages the educational program in Department of Youth Services schools.

WMWP's fall conference, Best Practices in the Teaching of Writing, was held online. We had various workshops, and featured a keynote speaker, Dr. Patty Bode. Bode's work is rooted in anti-racism and anti-bias activism, and her goal is to equip teachers and professors to prepare their students to be full participants in our multicultural democracy.

- Anna Rita Napoleone, Site Director, Western Massachusetts Writing Project
That so many freshly-minted grads found safe harbor is evidence—as if more were needed—of their high caliber as aspiring professionals.”

English 382 is the capstone course in the Professional Writing and Technical Communication (PWTC) certificate program; a key feature of the course is guest speakers who talk about careers in writing, editing, technology, and user experience (UX) design. In Spring 2020, English alumnae and PWTC graduates Deb Chatigny and Melissa Martel took time to visit English 382—via Zoom.

Chatigny has worked for over a decade in the technical communication field, having worked at Skillsoft and MIT’s edX, and is presently documentation manager at Vertica, a company that produces technologies that support big data analytics. Martel started her career in technical writing just a few years ago, after having pursued a career in education as a middle school teacher. She has now been working as a technical writer at Bose Corporation for nearly five years, writing content across all channels (print, web, multimedia), including operational, instructional, maintenance, and test procedures.

Other alumni speakers from spring semester (2020) were Ashley McDermott, Kirsten Forscher, Christina Sun, Felicity Saucier and Nick Trieber.

Job placements from spring through summer and fall would be counted as quite robust even in a normal year, and 2020 was anything but normal. That so many freshly-minted grads found safe harbor is evidence—as if more were needed—of their high caliber as aspiring professionals. A partial list of 2020 placements is at the right. Congrats to all.

"That so many freshly-minted grads found safe harbor is evidence—as if more were needed—of their high caliber as aspiring professionals”

-Janine Solberg and David Toomey, Co-directors of the Program for Professional Writing and Technical Communication
The coronavirus pandemic disrupted the 2020 Oxford Summer Seminar. No new students came to Oxford to learn about scouts and porters, Pimm’s Cups and High Table. In June, there were tears and some gnashing of teeth. But the seminar alumni made a decision: Summer 2020 would not go by unnoted. Thus was born a monthlong Facebook reunion and the creation of the All-Alumni Summer Covid Virtual Class of 2020.

Of course this meant pictures. Loads of them. From every decade to the most recent summer. Peggy Melozzi and Dana Roszkiewicz (Oxford Summer Seminar 1976, 1977-1981, 1985), who met during their seminar and then married several years later, shared a lovely shot of their wedding. The 1980s crowd went a little crazy with their posts, which were filled with…well, hair. We saw a multigenerational snap of Kerry McDonough (Oxford Summer Seminar 2012) with her mother Kathy Ryan (Oxford Summer Seminar 1980). Indeed, we could put a hundred more shots in this article. Instead, we’ll send you to the page itself to have a look. If you went on the program, you might find a shot of your roommate...or yourself: facebook.com/groups/umassoxfordalumni/about

If the postings made everyone smile, the final event made everyone cry with joy and yes, a little nostalgia. On July 28 the seminar hosted its first ever Zoomed Tuesday lecture, a talk by Oxford superstar tutor Beau Beaumont on "Oxford: The Plague Years.” Over 90 alumni from the 1960s to the most recent year joined in for a night of celebration. It was…incredible. It was…Oxford. Covid style.

We want to thank all who participated. We would also like to thank some of the program’s major donors, whose support of the Hofer Fund has helped it to grow. These include Craig (Oxford Summer Seminar 1969) and Carolyn Spiewak; Jason Gregoricus (Oxford Summer Seminar 1985), and the aforementioned Peggy and Dana. We are so grateful.

- Jason Moralee, Director, 2018-20; and Jenny Adams, Director, 2007-9, 2016-18

Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night, nor a virus, stays the Oxford Seminarians from the completion of their appointed rituals!”

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LIVE PERFORMANCE: INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL IMMERSION

This past summer would have marked the 13th year of the Department of English’s summer study abroad course in alternative theaters. The Edinburgh Fringe Festival is the world’s largest arts festival featuring more than 3,500 performances each day spread across 400 different venues. However, the pandemic forced the organizers of the festival to cancel the program alongside many other such events around the world. Regrettably, our course was also suspended for the year, though we hope to see its reinstatement in 2021.

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

Edinburgh landmark Greyfriar’s Bobby, ever-resilient
RECENT BOOKS

BY FACULTY


*The Martin Marprelate Press: A Documentary History* offers a freshly edited collection of primary documents connected with the secret press that produced the Martin Marprelate tracts (1588–89), the notorious anti-episcopal satires that sparked the most famous pamphlet war of the English Renaissance. The depositions, examinations, investigative summaries, trial records, and other documents generated by the hunt for the Marprelate press provide extraordinary evidence, unmatched for the period, for the day-to-day workings of an underground print campaign.


“Nick Bromell and R. Blakeslee Gilpin have edited Frederick Douglass’s iconic autobiography with great verve and insight. Coupled with some known as well as unknown documents, this edition of *My Bondage and My Freedom* will be of tremendous use for experts and nonexperts alike.” —Manisha Sinha, University of Connecticut


“John Clayton, with his Parkinson’s, admits to feeling like a ghost, but his work here is a tour de force of flesh, blood, and a vital spirit. An acute act of memory, a lifetime’s moral reckoning, a refusal to go gently, the pinnacle of an elegant writer’s talent—*Parkinson’s Blues* is a book of healing and of hope.” —James Carroll


“This ambitious and truly global book provides a new framework for analyzing literature and culture across time and space. Located in the ‘shatterzone’ between empires, both old and new, this ingenious work creates enlivening intersections among literature, language, feminism, resistance, and decoloniality.”

—Isabel Hofmeyr, Professor of African Literature, University of the Witwatersrand, and Global Distinguished Professor, New York University


Black sailors, political activists, memoirists, appear in these pages, but the book also re-examines living history, in the form of modern plays, television programs, and genealogical sleuthing. Through them, Britain’s Black Past is not only presented anew, but shown to be very much alive in our own time.

**Peter Gizzi.**

“Gizzi is not a sentimental poet—not even close. His best poems exist on a different plane, as if he has achieved and is writing from a transcendent vantage most of us only strive for. He identifies the thing we’re all searching for in voices, in poems, in language, in songs; why we read and why we listen.” —Amanda Petrisch, *The
**New Yorker Now It’s Dark.** A collection of poems. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2020

**Sky Burial: New and Selected Poems.** Manchester UK: Carcanet.


**Archeophonics.** Translated into Dutch by Jan Mysjkin. Rotterdam: Studio 3005.


**John Hennessy** is the co-translator, with Ostap Kin, of A New Orthography, Selected Poems by Serhiy Zhadan. Lost Horse Press Contemporary Ukrainian Poets Series, distributed by the University of Washington Press, 2020.

In these poems, the poet focuses on daily life during the Russo-Ukrainian war, rendering intimate portraits of the country’s residents as they respond to crisis.


How might art disrupt Arabophobia and Islamophobia in the U.S.? In Poetics of Visibility in the Contemporary Arab American Novel, Naous argues that fiction is one of the ways in which Arab Americans can correct dominant narratives of themselves with representation of their lived realities. Looking at both the aesthetics and politics in contemporary Arab American novels, Naous demonstrates that the novels’ poetics cannot be extricated from or subsumed under political content. In his finely textured analyses of form and style, Naous uncovers crucial transcultural and transpoetic solidarities that extend beyond the politics of representation.

“The Poetics of Visibility offers a vantage point and a level of expertise that have been missing in Arab American literary studies. This book will finally allow us to examine Arab American novels not merely as testimonials of a community but as the burgeoning literature of a people.” —Moustafa Bayoumi


“Elegantly parsing both continuities and discontinuities in racial formation from the 19th to early 20th centuries, Caroline Yang charts the peculiar survivals of the minstrel form. The power of antiblackness to deform Blackness and Chineseness on both stage and page is everywhere evident in this assiduously researched and argued book.” —Tavia Nyong'o, Yale University

“The Peculiar Afterlife of Slavery offers fascinating new insights into minstrelsy as an enduring cultural form. Caroline Yang’s nuanced comparative analyses enrich by challenging us to reconceptualize minstrelsy in the development of U.S. literature and our ideas of the ’West.’” —Edlie L. Wong, University of Maryland, College Park.
**RECENT BOOKS**

**BY ALUMNI**

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


**The following represent recently published books written or edited by graduates of the MFA program.**

**Marie Buck.** *Unsolved Mysteries.* Roof, 2020.


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Thank you!

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