

Wordsworth



The Newsletter of Lewis & Clark's English Department

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Front page
Mary Szybist Honored with Morgan S. Odell Professorship in Humanities A Reading with Derrick Austin
Page 2
A Reading with Derrick Austin, Cont'd. Updates Abroad
Page 3
An Interview with Rosalie Moffet A Conversation with Pauls Toutonghi
Page 4
Faculty & Alumni News & Updates
Page 5
An Interview with Corey Van Landingham Student Awards and Honors
Page 6
Student Awards and Honors Cont'd. Graduating Seniors
Page 7
A Letter from the Chair

We want to hear from you!

Drop us a line to let us know what you've been up to, where you're living, and what plans you're making. You can email the department at english@lclark.edu or write to :

Lewis & Clark English Department
MSC 58
0615 SW Palatine Hill Rd.
Portland, OR 97219

Newsletter Staff:

Project coordinator & designer
Eva Gellman
Contributing writers:
Eva Gellman
Carmel Companiott
Will Pritchard
Special thanks: *Debbie Richman*

MARY SZYBIST HONORED WITH MORGAN S. ODELL PROFESSORSHIP IN HUMANITIES

This spring, Professor Mary Szybist was awarded the Morgan S. Odell Professorship in the Humanities. This professorship was established in 1994 through the generosity of James F. Miller, a Portland philanthropist and long-time member of the Lewis & Clark Board of Trustees. The previous holder of the chair was John Callahan, also of the English department. The chair honors Morgan S. Odell, who was president of the college from 1942-1960 and who was the first president after Lewis and Clark moved to Portland and renamed itself. "Receiving a named professorship is a deep honor in the academic community," said Catherine Gunther Kodat, Dean of the College, "and I'm thrilled that we can recognize Mary's talents and accomplishments in this way."

Prof. Szybist's inauguration as Odell Professor was celebrated by a reading in the Agnes Flanagan chapel on Wednesday, March 22, 2017, followed by a reception afterwards in the Gregg Pavilion. Since winning the National Book Award for *Incarnadine* in 2013, she has been much in demand as a reader, but it is a rare occasion when she reads on campus. There was a robust crowd in attendance, including students and colleagues, administration and alumni. (There were also numerous poetry

lovers in attendance without any particular connection to the college.) She began by expressing her gratitude for the honor and then proceeded to read poems and answer questions. She read some poems from *Incarnadine* but also shared some of the poem she has been working in the last few years. The somewhat cavernous chapel is not the ideal venue for a poetry reading, but Mary's demeanor and delivery made it feel like an intimate occasion.

In addition to receiving the Odell chair, Prof. Szybist was also promoted from associate to full professor this year, joining two other department members (Rishona Zimring and Kurt Fosso) at that highest rank.



Mary Szybist

A READING WITH DERRICK AUSTIN

by Carmel Companiott

During his poetry reading at the Manor House on March 15, Derrick Austin revealed himself to be an incredibly approachable, friendly guy. He demonstrated his humor and wit, as well as his thoughtfulness in many side-notes and tangents, in addition to the complex observations about life that come alive in his poetry. In the Foreword to his debut collection, *Trouble the Water*, Lewis & Clark's very own Morgan S. Odell Professor of Humanities Mary Szybist writes: "These poems are so alive, so good, so full

of wit and charm and sorrow and tenderness and grace..." Each of Austin's poems grapple with many of the paradoxes that make up so much of human experience—those concerning the emotional, the artistic, and the identity. His collection also has a wide variety of subject matters, ranging from pop-culture, to art history and mythology, to issues regarding race, sexuality, identity, memory, love and spirituality. He links these varied subjects with the endlessly fruitful metaphor of water, while also grounding

the work with a focus on and awareness of the human body. Szybist has pointed out how, for Austin, spiritual salvation is not separate from bodily salvation. In this collection, the body is linked to it all—spirituality, identity and sensuality.

Szybist selected Austin's collection as the winner of the 2015 A. Poulin, Jr. Poetry Prize. After an introduction by Associate Professor Jerry Harp, Austin thanked the crowd for being part of his first visit to Portland. Above all, however, he wanted to thank Szybist for picking his book out of all the

continued on page 2

other submissions in the competition and thus changing his life. He then leapt into the reading, commenting, “it’s time to read poems before I get too emotional.”

Austin read a total of 18 poems, including “Bow Down” — titled after Beyoncé’s song from *Lemonade* — that deals with questions about masculinity, power and submission. Austin prefaced his reading of “Torch Song” — a drag queen’s anthem — with a story about a friend of his who says that people cannot call themselves poets until they’ve written a poem about Persephone. Austin, on the other hand, joked that you “can’t call yourself a poet until you’ve written a poem about a drag queen.” Here, and in “O-P-U-L-E-N-C-E,” we can see how Austin weaves together images and inspiration from some of his favorite films — in this case *Paris is Burning*.



Derrick Austin

Austin also finds ways to interact with visual art — another area of great personal interest for him — while also commenting on race. In “Sweet Boys” and “Sweet Talk,” Austin takes inspiration from Kara Walker’s visual art installation “A Subtlety, or The Marvelous Sugar Baby.” Walker’s piece was made up of a black female Sphinx made out of white sugar. Surrounding the Sphinx were sculptures of black boys made of molasses and brown sugar. The piece became infamous for the ways white viewers interacted disrespectfully with the figures. In the poems, Austin discusses the historical erasure of slavery and the personified experience of these figures, writing: “their bodies now magical - / burning, dismembered, singing - to make the myth / easy.”

Even though these poems were influenced by modern art, Austin has always been drawn to Renaissance-era European art. Growing up, Austin wanted to be a historian—especially in the areas of art, fashion, and religion. He does not do visual art work himself, but finds a way to interact with it through his poetry. Rather than describing exactly what he sees in a given work, he pays attention to the experience and sensibility of the viewer, and even imaginatively reworks and changes what he sees. He also finds Renaissance art particularly compelling because it tends to tell clearer narrative stories, and forces him to pay attention to “where I am, and where I’m not.” He, as an African American queer poet, would have never been an individual imagined by Renaissance painters. He finds himself aware of where someone like him would or would not fit into the narratives of old, white European painters, and uses that idea as inspiration in much of his writing.

Two audience questions related to “truth” in Austin’s poems began an interesting discussion about art and creativity. The first dealt with Austin’s sources of inspiration and whether or not his poems were based on real events. After playfully responding that “a lot ain’t real,” Austin went on to discuss how much more important emotional truth is than literal truth. For example, the poems in his collection about the “grandfather figure,” such as the one suffering from Alzheimer’s in “Summertime,” were created from a conflation of both his mother’s father, who died of cancer, and his father’s father, who died in the military. Austin works to creatively pull different experiences together in order to get to the powerful emotional truth that lies beneath. The second question was about the poem “5. Etching of Adam and Eve,” which discusses a work of art that doesn’t actually exist. Austin discussed how he loves bringing together inexact amalgamations of images collected from art and media. He wishes he could paint, but alas, cannot and instead combines images in his poems that are able to “talk back” to art.

Austin concluded the night with an answer to a question about his writing methods. He said that his biggest hurdle now — and the main difference in his work pre-book release and post-book release — is his past work. Before he released the book, he joked, all he had to contend with was the entirety of his literary predecessors. Now, he has to contend with his past self, work and habits. More than anything, he does not want to write *Trouble the Water*, pt. II. What’s next is still a mystery, but there is little doubt that Austin will be able once again to enthrall us all.

NEW STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM IN LONDON

English majors and minors have a new opportunity for their semester abroad: the new Fall London Humanities program enrolls students at Queen Mary University in the East End, where they live in the dorms and become full-time London university members. Students also take the course taught by the LC faculty leader. The program’s first run is Fall 2017, led by Professor Karen Gross, who will take students to Canterbury Cathedral, Dover Castle, the Green Chapel and Haddon Hall in the Peak District, and other significant sites as part of her medieval literature class. Alumni of the now-defunct Glasgow program will be happy to learn that the popular Highlands experience with Eddie Stiven is now incorporated into the first ten days of this new London program.

UPDATES FROM ABROAD: ENGLISH MAJORS IN IRELAND

Led by Professor Kurt Fosso, English majors were busy this past semester exploring all that Ireland has to offer. They took courses in Irish literature, history, and theatre, as well as classes in art, architecture, and social change in Ireland. In addition to these classes and their own explorations, students read authors such as Yeats, Joyce, Synge, O’Casey, and Boland. Fosso and the students traveled to the west of Ireland, including to The Burren and The Cliffs of Moher. They also traveled to northern Ireland’s Londonderry and to Giant’s Causeway. Students took side trips with Fosso to the Joyce Tower and Museum and to The Boyne Valley, including the Hill of Tara, among many other famous sites.



JUNE IN EDEN: AN INTERVIEW WITH L&C ALUM, ROSALIE MOFFET ('08)

1. How did your experience as a student in the Lewis & Clark English department influence your literary pursuits after college?

I would say that my experiences in the English department took my interest in literature (i.e. my interest in language and culture and history and psychology and creative expression) and deepened it and stretched it and left me with a better understanding of what art does for us as thinking, feeling people. I can't imagine wanting to pursue a career as a writer without a sense of that.

In less abstract terms, my time at (and my degree from) LC helped me do a number of real-world things. I applied for and was offered an internship at Tin House magazine, (and part of my application was to write a review of a recently published book of fiction or poetry), and I was able to apply to MFA programs in poetry. For these applications, you submit a creative writing sample and a critical writing sample and a cover letter that, among other things, demonstrates your understanding of yourself as an artist. I certainly owe, in large part, the caliber of each of those elements to my professors at LC.

2. What was the experience like to come back to school as an alum and published poet and read your own work in the manor house?

It was extraordinary. I wish a return like that for everyone.

Perhaps equally stunning was sitting in on Mary Szybist's poetry workshop. I was utterly

reassured by the current batch of LC poets—they were even smarter and weirder and more talented than I could have hoped. Part of what made coming back to read so wonderful was their close attention to my work, their truly thoughtful questions.

3. What advice do you have for current English majors who may be interested in pursuing their own literary careers?

Do it.

By which I mean: do whatever you need to do in order to feel as if you've done right by yourself.

And with that: I hope you already know that some literary career paths are hard and disastrously uncertain and pay very little and you're taking that into account. (I remember when, as a senior, Mary cautioned me that there were many poets, and good poets, who can't find a job.) It's true that sometimes I have looked longingly at the salaries of IT workers and business suit-types and lawyers.

But on the other hand: if you're worried about paying the bills and you (like me) feel an utter aversion (bordering on nausea) to the idea of going into IT or Business or Law or whatever else seems to be the thing that people point to as the career that pays the bills, there are a ton of things, other than academia, that you can do as a good writer with the skill set that being a sophisticated reader gives you. I know one poet who designs personalities for AI in silicon valley--she

creates origin stories for them, just like one might for a novel. I know one poet who is an e-sports writer for Riot Games. I know multiple poets who have gone into marketing. I know some banks now have writing centers. So maybe some practical advice is to know you can market yourself in a huge variety of ways, should you need to.

4. What else are you working on right now?

I'm always working on teaching. I teach at an independent high school and online for Stanford University.

But I'm also always chiseling out time to write, and right now I am working on a book-length series of poems about neurology and dreams and science and... spiders.



Rosalie Moffet ('08)

A CONVERSATION WITH PAULS TOUTONGHI

On Tuesday, April 17th, the Lewis & Clark community was lucky enough to join Pauls Toutonghi, Associate Professor of English, at the LC Bookstore to discuss his most recent book, *Dog Gone*. Penguin Random House describes the book as “the true story of a lost dog’s journey and a family’s furious search to find him before it is too late” (2017). However, Jerry Harp, Associate Professor of English and host of the event, started out the conversation saying that the novel had been mismarketed. While grounded in the cross-species friendship of dog and human, Harp insists that Toutonghi’s book is one about “family trauma and how that trauma is passed along.” Behind the story of Gonker, the family dog that goes tragically missing, Toutonghi delves deeper

into his own family history and the childhood of his mother-in-law. The book explores the traumas of her past, including her upbringing by her alcoholic mother. Toutonghi seemed to be in agreement with Harp that his book goes farther than the typical animal narrative. He said, “the deeper substance of character that matters is the stories that come from talking about the lost dog.” For his mother-in-law, this means “fixing a broken part of her childhood and surviving trauma to parent her own children in a way that she had never been parented herself.”

For Toutonghi, this book was an opportunity to learn more about his family and about stories he had not heard prior to writing the book. For the aspiring writers

in the audience, Toutonghi described the memoir style as a way to “teach you about yourself,” and after reading *Dog Gone* and hearing him speak about it, it is clear that Pauls has done just that with this memoir.



Jerry Harp (left) & Pauls Toutonghi (right)

FACULTY NEWS & UPDATES

KURT FOSSO inaugurated a senior seminar on John Keats in the fall, and this spring led the Overseas Program in Dublin, Ireland, with a large number of English majors. His chapter “Animals” will appear later this year in *William Blake in Context* from Cambridge University Press.

KAREN GROSS continues her research on illuminated Apocalypse manuscripts, and in the last year she has presented at conferences in London and New York as well as published two essays. She has been excited to share her love of manuscripts and illustration with students in two new classes, both supported by the College’s recent Mellon grant (“Working with Medieval Manuscripts” and “Text & Image”). Last



summer, she and a friend walked the length of Hadrian’s Wall, where she experienced with each step how a landscape becomes a palimpsest of different generations

LYELL ASHER’s essay on Hamlet entitled “Gertrude’s Shoes” was published in the winter 2016 issue of *English Literary History*. Additionally, his essay, “Low Definition in Higher Education” came out online in *The American Scholar* this past November, and was reprinted as “Your Students Crave Moral Simplicity. Resist” in the February 9th edition of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. It also appeared online in January, in Portuguese translation, in *Avante*.

KRISTIN FUJIE has two publications coming out (hopefully) this year. With the help of the Graves Award, she (finally!) brought her article “Hurt So Bad: The Crisis of Female Embodiment in Faulkner’s *Mosquitoes*” to completion and it has been accepted by *The Faulkner Journal*. A second essay, “Trashing Sanctuary,” will be included in *Faulkner & Print Culture* (UP of Mississippi), due out this June. She’s currently buried in film theory and working on an essay tentatively titled, “Through a Piece of Colored Glass’: Race, Mediation, and Faulkner’s Turn

Toward the South.” Next spring she will teach the English department’s survey of post-Civil War American literature (322) for the first time and is excited about that.

JERRY HARP wrote the introduction to a reissue of *Breckenridge County Suite* by Joe Bolton (Tavern Books 2015). His “Evolution and Apophatic Thought: A Theological Poetics for Our Time” was published in the summer 2015 issue of *Spoon River Poetry Review*. More recently, his “More’s Utopia and Never-Ending Dialogue” appeared in *Moreana*, as did his verse translations of nine of Thomas More’s Latin epigrams. His essays have recently appeared in *Academe*, *December*, *Pleiades*, and the anthology *Parts Unbound: Narratives of Mental Illness and Health* (Lime Hawk Books). His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Boulevard*, *December*, *Image*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Pleiades*, *Ruminant*, and *Spoon River Poetry Review*. In the last year he has presented papers at conferences in Bruges and Toronto, and in February he attended the 2017 International Poetry Festival in Granada Nicaragua. He is currently editing the letters of the poet Donald Justice.

ALUMNI NEWS & UPDATES

MOLLY DICKINSON (’12) received her MFA in poetry from the Helen Zell Writers’ Program at the University of Michigan in April, where she is now beginning a year long fellowship. She is the managing editor at Wolverine Press (a letterpress studio), an apprentice in wood engraving at Gravure Graphics, and is also at work on her first manuscript, *See if I Still Float*.

ERICA TERPENING-ROMEO (’14) moved to rural western Massachusetts where she splits her time doing carpentry, assisting a chef in her prepared foods business, and working on a friend’s farm. She travels to Colorado every few months to work on an experimental opera written by her theatrical mentor and collaborator, Ethelyn Friend. The opera, which takes place inside the mind of a writer as she attempts to write an opera, is performed in a Victorian house and features improvised music. Erica and Ethelyn have spent months developing the libretto and assembling a group of performers from around the country for several workshops, and have just now mounted a full-scale production. Erica both directed and performed in the current version, which opened on May 25th to a very warm reception. She has never felt

more challenged or more satisfied by a creative project. Her favorite detail of the opera is that the “orchestra” is just one pianist (the unbelievably talented improvisational musician and composer Gary Grundei) sitting at a white baby grand in the center of a small room, blindfolded.

CLAIRE ASKEW (’13) worked at a nonprofit in Portland (ANDEO International Homestays) while applying to graduate programs. She began an MFA in poetry at Washington University in St. Louis in 2015, and has had the time of her life. She is so glad she went to LC for undergrad but it’s been a wonderful experience being at a larger school while still getting to be part of a small, tight-knit community. Claire graduated this month and is continuing to work as an archival assistant/blogger at the special collections department of WashU’s library, where she gets to assist with research work mostly related to the local literary community.

CASEY NEWBEGIN (’12) graduated last August with a Masters of Science in Information Studies, with a focus in Museum Studies, from UT Austin. She is currently developing exhibits on the history of medicine for the

Texas Medical Association. Casey got her start in archives/museums at L&C, where she worked in the Special Collections department and co-curated an exhibit for Watzek with Professor Zimring. She is moving to New York this summer to further pursue this line of work. Casey has also had some success in poetry - her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Off the Coast*, *The Sandy River Review*, *Plainsongs*, *The Hollins Critic*, and a couple of anthologies. She also wrote a chapbook titled *Northern California Lightning Series*.

CLAIRE BURDICK (’12) is currently getting her PhD in English at UC Irvine, which just so happens to be where our very own Kurt Fosso received his own PhD. There, Burdick is focusing on epitaphic poems and Romanticism. While at Lewis & Clark, Burdick received the Jerry Baum award for her essay entitled, “A Poet’s Epitaph’: Wordsworth’s Epitaphic Poetics,” and it is clear she is continuing on in a similar vein in her current research.

An Interview with NEA Fellow, Corey Van Landingham ('08)

1. How did your experience as a student in the Lewis & Clark English department influence your literary pursuits after college?

My time in the English department at Lewis & Clark was invaluable, and for many reasons. The first was the great privilege to have such deeply talented, brilliant, and kind mentors—Mary Szybist, Jerry Harp, Karen Gross—who were also accessible to and invested in their students. Poetry was exhibited and honored as a living, breathing art, one quite relevant to our own young lives. This opened up a new world to me; whereas in high school creative writing seemed somewhat hermetic and self-indulgent, in the courses I was taking at LC I learned to take poetry, and my own poems, seriously, which led me to apply for the MFA and continue to study, and teach, the craft of writing. The department was also influential in its rigorous introduction to English literature. Kurt Fosso and Lyell Asher are—still to this day—two of the most challenging, and inspiring, professors I've had the pleasure of taking courses with. By treating their students like serious scholars, they transformed and unlocked classic texts. These were poems and plays that required close attention, and the questions we asked of them were questions we could ask of all art, demanding and developing a level of critical thinking that has remained crucial to my pursuits in academia.

2. What was the experience like to come back to school as an alum and published poet and read your own work in the manor house?

To step from the audience to the front of that

room was one of the greatest honors in my writing life. As a writer, always steeped in the on-going practice of revision, it can be difficult to find tangible markers of growth. But reading to LC students, and in front of faculty whose work I have cherished and heard out loud in that very room, allowed me the rare Look how far you've come moment. How many bad poems I wrote during those four years! Reading from my book, which wouldn't exist if not for my time there, was surreal, and I'm beyond grateful for the chance to have done so.

3. What advice do you have for current English majors who may be interested in pursuing their own literary careers?

Read, read more, and keep reading. As a student and teacher, I know how difficult it can be to maintain reading that branches outside of the classroom during the semester. But allowing yourself the time and space to look beyond those texts, even if only occasionally, helps not only to situate the assigned reading in our present moment, to see how it informs and challenges what is being written coextensively with your own courses, but also helps, I think, literature to remain human. To relegate books to the classroom is to turn literature into an object, and maintaining its vibrancy, its immediacy, will help keep you sane, informed, and an active member of a larger literary community.

I would also advise you not to only keep tangible goals. English majors are constantly having to defend their line of study as practical. There is nothing more practical than

honing the ability to read and write. Yes, this will help you in many different careers. But I hope that students will also dream about life-long scholarly and artistic pursuits alongside what might be called more practical career paths. We need artists and dreamers, people who understand history and character and nuance, more than ever.

4. What else are you working on right now?

As I've recently completed my second book of poetry, I've turned my attention to nonfiction. I'm at work on a collection of essays, titled *Monument*, which explore both public and private acts of commemoration. The essays I've written so far are centered around Gettysburg's battlefield and the monuments honoring both the Union and Confederate dead, looking closely at the florid language engraved on these moments and the aestheticization of death, of war. These essays also look into how monuments function in the digital age, centering around a long essay focusing on the work of the CyArk project, an organization that is creating a 3D online library composed of images of world cultural heritage sites before they are lost to natural



disasters, or destroyed by human aggression, such as Afghanistan's Bamiyan Buddhas.

Corey Van Landingham ('08)

STUDENT AWARDS & HONORS

2017 JERRY BAUM AWARD RECIPIENT, JESSICA KOSTKA



Jessica Kostka ('17)

This year's recipient of the Baum Award is Jessica Kostka for her paper entitled, "Choice and Decision-Making in *The Age of Innocence* and *The Portrait of a Lady*." The paper compares the endings of the two novels (by Edith Wharton and Henry James) in which each protagonist makes a life-changing decision not to pursue a particular romantic relationship. Jessica argues that although it seems like Newland Archer and Isabel Archer make their choices in relationship to their lovers, their choices actually tell readers more about their relationships to the conventions of their respective societies. Though both Newland and Isabel start by searching for a life outside societal conventions, they ultimately choose to adhere to these conventions rather than deviating from them. Jes-

sica uses Ralph Waldo Emerson's writings to talk a little bit about how every decision a person makes is a way to define themselves, and also cites biographical evidence about the two authors to put the novels in better context with each other.

The Jerry Baum Award was established in 2007 by the Department of English, alumni, family, and friends to honor the memory of beloved professor R. Jerold (Jerry) Baum. The recipient is a senior whose senior-seminar paper addresses the relationship between literature and history and is recognized as outstanding by the English faculty. A \$250 prize accompanies the award.

STUDENT AWARDS & HONORS CONT'D.

2016 DIXON AWARD RECIPIENT, EMMA CRANSTON

This past summer, Emma Cranston ('17) travelled to two archives in England. The first was the Cadbury Research Library at the University of Birmingham, where she read Henry Swanzy's letters to writers, readers and listeners of the radio program *Caribbean Voices*. *Caribbean Voices* was the first outlet for post-colonial Caribbean poets, playwrights and authors and hosted some of the most influential modern and post-modern Caribbean works. Many of these are only available as transcripts from the BBC written archives in Reading, where Emma found Derek Walcott's first lyric play "Paolo and Francesca." This play changed Emma's understanding of oral tradition, contemporary poetry and overall sound and led her to write her own 'first play.' It was recently shown in Manhattan, and was read at the end of her presentation by her colleagues Maddie Ticknor ('17) and Matt Ross



Emma Cranston at the BBC Written Archives



The Dixon Award was established in 2002 by the Dixon Family Foundation thanks to the generous efforts of alumni Hillary ('99) and Adam ('01) Dixon. Each year a junior English major is awarded a \$2,500 research and travel grant to enrich their current studies in preparation for senior year.

Photo by Cranston: Walcott's signature on his first letter to the producer of *Caribbean Voices*

HONORS THESES 2016

Kristin Lang ('16), "The Entanglement of *Season of Migration to the North* and *Othello*, *The Moor of Venice*."

Frances Mahoney-Mosedale ('16), "(A Bad Accident is to Happen Quite Soon)."

HONORS THESES 2017

Cole Hildebrand ('17), "John Keats and the Spatial Process of 'Soul-Making.'"

Hannah Smay ('17), "Severed Tombs: Keats's Elegiac Art in *Isabella*; or, *The Pot of Basil* and Other Late Poems."

Sammie Weiss ('17), "I can't carry it': Counting the Costs of the Past in Octavia Butler's *Kindred* and Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*"



The 2017 honors recipients celebrating with the department after their presentations.

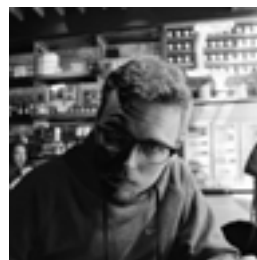
2017 SENIOR FICTION AND POETRY PRIZE AWARDS

Shannon Williams ('17)



The 2017 Lewis & Clark College Fiction Prize is awarded to Elizabeth DeBunce for her short story entitled "Settled Down." Kenya Granich received an honorable mention for her short story, "Three Narratives on the Subject of Drowning."

This year's winner of the Academy of American Poets Prize Contest goes to Shannon Williams for her poem, "Palliative." Vincent Singer received an honorable mention for his poem, "With Kathryn and Helen."



Vince Singer ('17)

Graduating Seniors

- Raquel Arce-Guillen
- Ursula Arhart
- William Beck
- Sarah Bucknovitz
- Emma Cranston
- Elizabeth DeBunce
- Benjamin DeLuca
- Spencer Gibson
- Shannon Gormley
- Kenya Granich
- Emma Grillo
- Cole Hildebrand
- Dorothy Jaffray
- Jessica Kostka
- Torin Lee
- Jacquelynn Mauldwin
- Andrew Morse
- Morgan O'Sullivan
- Ivy Parry
- Hannah Prutton
- Sully Pujol
- Melissa Rogers
- Zachary Scribner
- Hannah Smay
- Madeline Ticknor
- Samantha Weiss
- Noah Wells
- Haines Whitacre
- Shannon Williams

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear friends of the English Department,

This month will mark the end of my three-year stint as department chair. In English the chair descends by seniority, and there are five people younger than me awaiting their turn. I think this means that at least fifteen years will pass before the job could possibly return to me, at which point I should be safely retired. Chairing in our department thus tends to be something that happens only once, roughly at the midpoint of one's career. It's not exactly a mid-life crisis, but maybe a rite of passage.

The chair's role is more administrative than executive. He or she takes charge of the main annual tasks of schedule and budget. The chair goes to meetings with other chairs, adjudicates matters such as transfer credits and student petitions, represents the department at recruiting and orientation events, runs department meetings and writes letters for tenure and promotion cases. When there is hiring to be done, he or she also chairs the search committee, but I have not had to do so (John Callahan retired on my watch, but his replacement, Kristin Fujie, had already been hired). With every aspect of the chair's job, Debbie Richman, our gifted and experienced administrative assistant, provides invaluable guidance and support. Thanks in large part to her expertise, my reign has been an era of peace and prosperity, stability and security.



We all must guard against complacency, however, and fortunately our students assist us in that effort. They challenge us in the classroom and out, and in the past couple of years especially our majors have been vocal about changes they would like to see in the curriculum and the structure of the major. The time now is ripe for us to consider such proposals. Next year we undergo our decennial review, wherein two professors from other English departments visit to scrutinize who we are and what we do, interviewing us and our students and ultimately writing a report with recommendations. In preparation for their visit, we will produce a "self-study," and in preparation for that we have been administering an exit survey to English majors for the past couple of years. (I hope to extend this survey to alumni more generally, so watch for an email later this summer.) So there are lots of opportunities for us to consider who we are and what we are doing. Thus there has been no major overhaul of the major, although individual courses come and go and evolve perpetually.

Speaking of individual courses, the chair is also charged with reading the student evaluations for all the courses in the department. I have found this to be a somewhat painful task, because it reinforces my sense (it may be your sense, too) that my colleagues are much better teachers than I am. After each term I comb through these evaluations hoping to find instances of professorial incompetence, negligence or half-heartedness. Alas, all my colleagues appear to be touching souls, changing lives and forging better writers, readers and citizens. Imagine, for a moment, that (when you were a student) in addition to getting a professor's tepid comment and mediocre grade on one of your papers you also had to look at the glowing comments and superior grades bestowed upon all the other students in the class. It is a little discouraging, but when I can overcome my envy, I can also say that it is a pleasure and a privilege to teach alongside such gifted and dedicated teachers. To be outdone by them is no disgrace.

Best,

Will Pritchard