A letter from the Chair

Jennifer Summit

It is a special honor to serve this department as its new chair. I came to Stanford thirteen years ago, straight from my PhD; but my move was also a homecoming to the Bay Area, whose “tumbled hills as bright as a lion’s hide” I had sorely missed as a homesick native. The beauty of the area is something all of us share—whether as faculty and students living here, or as alumnæ, alumni, and friends now living elsewhere—as much as we share in the long and continuing distinction of the great department that Wallace Stegner (whose words I quote above from Angle of Repose) helped build.

I feel especially fortunate to follow Ramón Saldívar, under whose superb leadership the department has grown and flourished. In his first Chair’s letter, written in these pages three years ago, Ramón expresses his intention to recruit and foster a new generation of scholar-teachers at Stanford. We can all celebrate his success and its legacy: a vibrant group of young scholars, each representing the very highest levels of achievement and promise in his or her field. This year we welcome three new assistant professors, Claire Jarvis, Michelle Karnes, and Hannah Sullivan, who join Associate Professor Blair Hoxby and Assistant Professors Saikat Majumdar and Stephen Sohn, who were hired just last year but who have already become indispensable members of the department. This new generation of English department colleagues helps solidify the work of previous chairs Rob Polhemus and Terry Castle, who secured our department’s future by building its foundation of established scholars and bringing up new colleagues whom they supported, tenured, and promoted.

With our faculty strengthened and renewed, we find ourselves at a perfect point from which to take stock, refocus on the big picture, and think hard about our current mission and our future direction as a department.

We are one of the very best English departments in the country. As the reports in this newsletter show, our faculty comprises leaders in the diverse fields that make up our shared discipline. We are extraordinarily productive and inventive in our scholarship, which commands the highest levels of professional recognition and influence. Furthermore, our faculty members are passionately dedicated teachers. One thing I have found especially inspiring since my arrival here is the department’s vital culture of teaching. Our highly visible and productive colleagues share a justifiable pride in our collective successes in the classroom. Rather than see professional accomplishment in conflict with our roles as teachers, English department faculty bring the innovative thinking that drives our scholarship to our teaching,
This year’s English Commencement ceremony took place on June 15th in Memorial Church. Graduating students were invited to mark the importance of the day with some thoughts and reflections on their experiences at Stanford as part of the English department.

First to speak was Bob Borek, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences in English (Honors) and Symbolic Systems. He expressed his thoughts on the impact English majors make on the world as a direct result of studying literature:

During my sophomore year, Professor John Felstiner introduced me to the 1928 Robert Frost poem “West-Running Brook,” in which a married couple stands beside a stream and observes a small wave that has risen out of the current. It rises where the stream catches on a sunken rock, and the water is “flung backward on itself in one white wave.”

In the poem, the husband, the wife, and the poet all struggle and compete to describe what it is they are seeing. The husband's description comes last, and he says,

Speaking of contraries, see how the brook
In that white wave runs counter to itself.
It is from that in water we were from
Long, long before we were from any creature.
Here we, in our impatience of the steps,
Get back to the beginning of beginnings,
The stream of everything that runs away.

Several lines later, he concludes,

It is this backward motion toward the source,
Against the stream, that most we see ourselves in,
The tribute of the current to the source.
It is from this in nature we are from.
It is most us.

Frost’s white wave can, I think, offer an image for the place and the day. Today we are particularly attuned to the momentum of the current; we move forward with “impatience of the steps,” ready for what comes next. And at the same time we are, in a sense, cast back on ourselves, keen to the pull of the past; our longing is for what we must leave behind.

As English majors, we have spent more time in this self-reflective state than most. Frost tells us that “it is this backward motion toward the source, against the stream, that most we see ourselves in.” And yet, to some, our subject seems little more than self-indulgence; we build a shelter from the world with our fictions. To them, all stories are bedtime stories, and introspection is the opposite of action.

We think differently. What we have read and written over the last four years keeps us highly attuned to the world around us, and we know that an act of self-reflection is also an act of self-definition. You can’t spend half-an-hour crafting a sentence, weighing its words and placing its clauses, without realizing that you are not merely recording a thought but creating one. And the hope is that someone else, as their eyes move lightly over the page, will be caught by your words. Your sentence can be the sunken rock that causes the white wave to run counter to itself; it can compel an act of reflection; it can make another person think differently.

When you are an underclassman, it might feel like a badge of honor to be told that you are impractical, that your discipline is not useful, that you’re a dreamer. Yet since the time that graduation has appeared on the horizon, such criticisms take on a sharper poignancy. At times, we begin to suspect that we are ‘nothing but’ dreamers. Not only do we move through our studies without one set purpose in mind, without one quantifiable goal, but we traffic in fictions—we leave the hard business of pursuing hard truths to our classmates in the sciences. They tell us that to desire one is to have been born too late in a world too old. And, in some sense, they’re right.

We have been trained to be sharp readers and insightful writers, but there is something else, I think, that is unique to a discipline like ours, something that will keep it relevant for a long, long time. As English majors, we have learned that the way we think and relate to the world is deeply, perhaps endlessly, metaphorical. It is only through comparison, approximation, over- and understatement that we can talk about what we are doing here and why, that we can communicate what we think and what we feel, and that we can begin to realize that there are others who think and feel the same way, or differently. We have learned that in these cases what you say becomes subsumed by how you say it, and it is then we recognize that these metaphors—these fictions—are the best...
way we have to weave ourselves into the world.

No matter what paths we each pursue, we will be guided, in part, by this deep respect for the words that we use, for the possibilities that arise in a turn of phrase. We will work to sustain our little backward-tending wave, and as we reconsider where we’ve been, we will realize that reflection is also a kind of action, a way of going on. Our professors and our classmates have cultivated in us this capacity for reflective action, a capacity as under-appreciated as it is rare.

In Frost’s poem, it is simply chance that the brook contains a sunken rock, that the water is cast back on itself against “the stream of everything that runs away.” At the end of the great privilege that is a Stanford education, I think that each of us has attained the skills to ensure that the existence of this little wave is not left to chance. I believe that it is our responsibility to sink to the bottom of the stream, to struggle to make others think differently, to cultivate reflection and appreciation in their minds as we feel it in ours, to act and speak with the knowledge that it is a strange and often beautiful thing to be alive. As we go forward with this task, I suspect we will find that the future is in many ways a re-wording of the past, and that the time we spent here will not fade away.

Bob was followed by Annie Wyman, who completed her Bachelor of Arts in English with a Creative Writing Emphasis and Interdisciplinary Honors in the Humanities. Annie continues with the English department in the 2008-2009 academic year as a co-terminal master’s student.

I do not have a job. I do not have a car or much of a bank account or too many of what you might call material prospects. And so it seems suitable that over the weeks approaching graduation I have thought long and hard about how to make something out of what would appear to be nothing.

But there is no reason for me to attempt to defend my choice to study English to you, to describe for you, my peers and my mentors, the intangible pleasures of reading, of writing—of intellectual exercise, discovery and the thousand beauties of language. I believe that poetry and prose possess a near-fantastical power to “emit lightnings on all beholders,” as Emerson once said, but I don’t need to tell you that. You understand this—it is one of the many reasons we are here together today.

Still I would like to refer to Mr. Emerson again, with an eye toward some sort of alchemy, some literary sleight of hand—a distillation of something tangible from the intangible, something from nothing. This is not a defensive action—I am not interested in answering for the practicality of literary studies in a technological age or any such notion at this moment. I want to share with you one specific, astounding joy that has come to me over four years of study, and for this purpose Emerson will be my guide. In 1838, he addressed a group of young graduates at Dartmouth. He told them:

“If any person have less love of liberty, and less jealousy to guard his integrity, shall he therefore dictate to you and me? Say to such doctors, We are thankful to you . . . but now our day is come; . . . and now will we live,—live for ourselves,—as the upholders and creators of our age. . . Now that we are here, we will put our own interpretation on things, and, moreover our own things for interpretation. Please himself with complaisance whosoever will,—for me, things must take my scale, not I theirs.”

Things must take my scale, not I theirs. What empowerment, what strength there is in that sentence! When I read this passage a few weeks ago, I felt like jumping up and shouting, Oh, Ralph Waldo, I agree!

It has been one hundred and seventy years, but I do not believe those Emersonian days have entirely passed, those days when it was possible to view the act of interpretation—which is our special provenance as literary scholars—as the means by which we become the upholders and creators of our age.

Later in his speech, Emerson calls language “the subtlest, strongest, and longest-lived of man’s creations, and only fitly used as the weapon of thought and of justice.” Over the last four years, we have learned to slip in and out of texts, to weigh single words and to rub them against each other until they acquire voltage and brilliance. We have learned to pursue meaning—that wisp of a willful daydream someone once called Truth—and to appreciate its very elusiveness. At the same time—and inextricable from this learning to “put our own interpretation on things”—we have also learned to be just, to begin to take our places as the stewards of the cultures in which we live.

As I read Emerson’s work and reflect on my time at Stanford, I begin to believe—and now I insist with all my heart—that we are better people because we have learned to read and write and imagine with eloquence and care. Whether we
choose to write a novel, an essay, a thorough treatise on the work of Hart Crane or a theoretical approach to Chaucerian erotics, it will always be within our grasp to define “liberty,” “integrity,” the scale of things—for ourselves and for each other. As we examine our world and respond to it, each in our particular idiom, we are crafting a tremendous gift. We are presenting our cultures with the many choices, the variations in identity and perspective that are essential for healthy social discourse. This sounds rather dry, I know, but it fills my heart when I consider the fact that I—that we—have chosen this path, to commit these past four years and all the years to come to reading, to writing, to the interpretive act, with its wild intangible joys and its tangible responsibilities.

If Emerson can link imaginative and interpretative acts to justice and integrity, so can we. He sees them as “co-extensive.” At Stanford I have learned that there is no separating the intangible pleasures of language and intellect and the tangible facts of social responsibility, no distilling one from the other. This good—indeed, this excellent and unsurpassable—kind of education is what we have all been so blessed to receive as students at this university, in this department, from all of our professors and instructors and fellow students.

So I was wrong to call this sleight of hand, this something-from-nothing I have found myself considering in my last months as an undergraduate and which I have tried to describe to you this afternoon. Something-from-nothing is the wrong phrase by a mile or three. Our true prospects as young literary—perhaps temporarily unemployed but nonetheless happy—people are some kind of beautiful impossibility, tangible and intangible, something and nothing, all at once. We have everything already, and everything left to gain.

The final reflections were given by Allison Carruth, who earned her doctorate in English with a dissertation entitled “Global Appetites: Literary Form and Food Politics from World War I to the World Trade Organization.” Allison begins her career in 2008-2009 as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and has accepted a position beginning in 2009-2010 as a tenure-track assistant professor at the University of Oregon. She discussed the impact past literature has had on her experience in the modern world:

The year that I began the PhD program in English, Irish poet Seamus Heaney—at the age of 62—published his eleventh volume of poetry, entitled Electric Light. When I began my dissertation some five years later, I wrote first about that 2001 volume of poems. This choice returned me to my own reasons for undertaking a PhD … a modern poetry seminar that I took in college in which we read my undergraduate adviser’s most beloved of poets, Seamus Heaney.

As I reflect on my experience at Stanford, I realize that Heaney’s first work of the twenty-first century clarifies what it means to study English in this age of nanotechnology and digital culture. In organizing what follows, I have also taken a cue from the form of Heaney’s work—namely, his use of lyrical lists—to articulate some of the people and places that today define our field of English.

Electric Light opens with a ten-line poem about the 1798 Irish rebellion at Toomebridge against British rule and closes with a three-part poem about the arrival of electricity in rural Northern Ireland during the Second World War.

This description somewhat belies the book’s literary and geographic horizons, however. Electric Light includes translations of Virgil’s Eclogues, evocations of Beowulf, a reference to the ancient Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, and a reenactment of Shakespeare’s Tempest. At the same time, the volume reads as a tribute to modern writers: to W.H. Auden, Elizabeth Bishop, Joseph Brodsky, Nadine Gordimer, Brian Friel, Hugh MacDiarmid, William Faulkner, and many others beside. Akin to this capacious survey of literature, the book’s 39 poems prove expansive in their geographic scope as well—traveling across locales as varied as Heaney’s birthplace of County Derry, a ranch in rural Montana, a poetry festival in Macedonia, the Sandymount Strand of Dublin (made famous by James Joyce’s Ulysses), temples in Aztec America and ancient Greece, the metropolitan centers of Berlin, New York, Melbourne, Belgrade, and London, and finally, the West Bank of the Jordan River.

As such, Electric Light is an apt touchstone for the field of English today—a field of study that encompasses Old English allegory and hypertext fiction and ranges across the Americas, India, Africa, the Pacific Rim, the British Isles, and many other locales beyond. And perhaps more than ever, our “work in the English tongue” (to cite Heaney) invites us to investigate the complex relationships between individual identity and the experience of place.
Golden Legends Images of Abyssinia, Samuel Johnson to Bob Marley
W.B. Carnochan
Stanford University, 2008

From the eighteenth century to the present, travellers, explorers, journalists, imaginative writers like Samuel Johnson, and legendary reggae musician Bob Marley have shared a fascination with Abyssinia. So did even earlier writers and mapmakers, who thought Abyssinia was the land of the mythical (and fabulously rich) Christian ruler, Prester John. The principal subject of this book is the allure of the exotic, as represented by Abyssinia, to the British imagination. In addition to Johnson and Marley, some others included are the eighteenth-century Scot James Bruce, nineteenth-century explorer Richard Burton, author Evelyn Waugh, Wilfred Thesiger (best known of twentieth-century British explorers), Sylvia Pankhurst (crusading journalist and daughter of the suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst), and the contemporary Irish traveller Dervla Murphy. The author also considers the beginnings of anthropology and the variations of quest narrative in modern travel writing.

The Great Age of the English Essay
Denise Gigante
Yale University Press, 2008

From the pens of spectators, ramblers, idlers, tattlers, hypochondriacs, connoisseurs, and loungers, a new literary genre emerged in eighteenth-century England: the periodical essay. Situated between classical rhetoric and the novel, the English essay challenged the borders between fiction and nonfiction prose and helped forge the tastes and values of an emerging middle class.

This authoritative anthology is the first to gather in one volume the consummate periodical essays of the period. Included are the Spectator cofounders Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, literary lion Samuel Johnson, and Romantic recluse Thomas De Quincey, addressing a wide variety of topics from the oddities of virtuosos to the private lives of parrots and the fantastic horrors of opium dreams.

In a lively and informative introduction, Denise Gigante situates the essayists in the context of the contemporary Republic of Letters and highlights the stylistic innovations and conventions that distinguish the periodical essay as a literary form. Critical notes on the essays, a chronology, descriptions and a map of key London sites, and a glossary of eighteenth-century English terms complete the anthology—a uniquely pleasurable survey of the golden era of British essays.

Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global
Ursula Heise
Oxford University Press, 2008

Sense of Place and Sense of Planet analyzes the relationship between the imagination of the global and the ethical commitment to the local in environmentalist thought and writing from the 1960s to the present. Part One critically examines the emphasis on local identities and communities in North American environmentalism by establishing conceptual connections between environmentalism and ecocriticism, on one hand, and theories of globalization, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism, on the other. It proposes the concept of “eco-cosmopolitanism” as a shorthand for envisioning these connections and the cultural and aesthetic forms into which they translate. Part Two focuses on conceptualizations of environmental danger and connects environmentalism and ecocritical thought with the interdisciplinary field of risk theory in the social sciences, arguing that environmental justice theory and ecocriticism stand to benefit from closer consideration of the theories of cosmopolitanism that have arisen in this field from the analysis of transnational communities at risk. Both parts of the book combine in-depth theoretical discussion with detailed analyses of novels, poems, films, computer software and installation artworks from the US and abroad that translate new connections between global, national and local forms of awareness into innovative aesthetic forms combining allegory, epic, and views of the planet as a whole with modernist and postmodernist strategies of fragmentation, montage, collage, and zooming.

Children’s Literature
Seth Lerer
University of Chicago Press, 2008

Seth Lerer’s Children’s Literature charts the makings of the Western literary imagination from Aesop’s fables to Mother Goose, from Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland to Peter Pan, from Where the Wild Things Are to Harry Potter. Lerer here explores the iconic books, ancient and contemporary alike, that have forged a lifelong love of literature in young readers during their formative years. Along the way, Lerer also looks at the changing environments of family life and human growth, schooling and scholarship, and publishing and politics in which children found themselves changed by the books they read. Children’s Literature is an exhilarating quest across centuries, continents, and genres to discover how, and why, we first fall in love with the written word.

Silverfish
Saikat Majumdar
HarperCollins India, 2007

In Saikat Majumdar’s novel, a retired schoolteacher in present-day Calcutta is caught in the labyrinth of rusty bureaucracy and political crime under a communist government. Across a vast ocean of time, a widow leads a life of stark suffering in a wealthy feudal household in 19th-century, British-ruled Bengal, at a time when widow burning has gone out of practice but widow remarriage is far from coming into vogue.
the many other languages that have so profoundly shaped literature in English. Heaney puts a finer point on this observation in a poem entitled “Sruth” (a Gaelic word meaning both electric current and bloodstream), in which the speaker figures Irish literature and culture as profoundly “bilingual”.

To study English in the twenty-first century—and to anticipate reading, teaching, and writing about literature as the century continues—is thus an exciting if at times bewildering venture.

I imagine like many of the graduates today, I can say that my years at Stanford have taught me to take a wide view of the discipline of English and its value. In that time, I have been afforded the opportunity to study both Old English allegory and hypertext fiction, the philosophy of beauty and the history of capitalism, the rise of the novel and the origins of cinema, theories of race and ethnicity and narratives of science and the environment.

In studying English in this way, we learn a great deal. We have learned that the human capacity for both imagining beauty and narrating suffering is indeed vast—that the stories to be told about the world’s communities could never be found in a single book—that a critic and teacher of English is someone who illuminates that which is most strange, difficult, alien, and at times dull about a work of the imagination.

We have learned these things from a remarkable group of faculty in the Department of English at Stanford (my deepest thanks here to my principal advisors, Ramón Saldívar, Ursula Heise, Gavin Jones, and Andrea Lunsford). We have learned these things from an equally remarkable group of fellow graduate students—who are both colleagues and friends (especially in those wee hours before oral examinations). We have learned these things from the undergraduate students at Stanford whose discussions and essays challenge habitual ways of thinking about literature.

And we have learned these things from family (I wish here to acknowledge especially my partner, Barron Bixler, because to him I dedicated my dissertation, and my dad, Dennis Carruth, because it is Father’s Day). For it has been family members who have supported our ventures from the first... even when they were most unsure whether we would ever finish and what in heaven’s name we would do with our rather lengthy education in English!

In “On his Work in the English Tongue,” Heaney—poking fun at one of my areas of interest (postmodern literature)—articulates what is to me the ultimate value of our study of imaginative literature and the literary traditions of English. The opening two stanzas of the poem suggest that the criticism of literature is a venture in apprehending another’s experience—a venture in apprehending acts of language that make language new.

And so, I conclude this address as many essays we write begins—with a quotation:

Post-this, post-that, post-the-other; yet in the end
Not past a thing. Not understanding or telling
Or forgiveness.
But often past oneself,
Pounded like a shore by the roller griefs
In language that can still knock language sideways.

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As their stories begin to connect, they weave a larger narrative of historical forgetting, of voices that have been pushed out of a nation’s memory. And what we are left with is the intriguing tale of two cities: the same geographical space separated by decades of experience and neglect.

Busy Dying
Hilton Obenzinger
Chax, 2008

At Columbia University in April 1968, Hilton Obenzinger was one of many students who dramatically occupied the president’s office. For six days they protested the university as secret research to support the Vietnam War and its plans to build a gym in Morningside Park despite the opposition of Harlem. The occupation and subsequent strike was a generational moment repeated in universities around the country and throughout the world. Busy Dying is an autobiographical novel, a portrait of the author’s Polish Jewish family, a coming of age in poetry, music, politics, and friends in New York City and Columbia, including a dangerous exodus through the Yukon to end up teaching on an Indian reservation in Northern California. All of this is comically and sometimes tragically relived as the author is inspired by a series of encounters and coincidences, including the revelations of students he teaches at Stanford today and the surprising discovery of the story behind Hilton Obenzinger, a 1980s Long Island high school humor magazine.

Memory’s Library
Jennifer Summit
University of Chicago Press, 2008

Libraries,” wrote Francis Bacon in 1605, “are as the shrines, where all the reliques of the ancient saints, full of true virtue, and that without delusion or imposture, are preserved, and reposed.” But in Jennifer Summit’s account, libraries are more than inert storehouses of written tradition; they are volatile spaces that actually shaped the meanings and uses of books, reading, and the past. Considering the two-hundred-year period between 1431, which saw the foundation of Duke Humfrey’s famous library, and 1631, when the great antiquarian Sir Robert Cotton died, Memory’s Library revises the history of the modern library by focusing on its origins in medieval and early modern England.

Summit argues that the
Claire Jarvis studies Victorian literature with emphasis on the novel and theories of sexuality. Her current project is titled *Making Scenes: Supersensual Masochism and Victorian Literature*, and examines the relationship between masochism and companionate marriage in novels by Emily Brontë, Anthony Trollope, and Thomas Hardy, and in representations of Queen Victoria. Her other research interests include sensation fiction, New Woman novels, the long Victorian poem, nineteenth-century material culture, Henry James and Barbara Pym.

Michelle Karnes studies medieval literature, with a focus on religious literature and philosophy. Her first manuscript, *The Age of Imagination: Meditation and the Medieval Mind*, studies the role of the imagination in medieval literature on meditation and in theories of cognition. It is currently under review by Cambridge University Press. She is beginning research on a second project on medieval notions of wisdom and stupidity. She teaches courses on Chaucer, Langland, medieval mystics, the Pearl poeet, and the Bible.

Hannah Sullivan comes to Stanford from the English department at Harvard, where she received her PhD in June. Hannah studies late nineteenth- and twentieth-century British and American literature, with particular focus on modernism and material textuality. Her first book project, *Passionate Correction: The Theory and Practice of Modernist Revision*, looks at the ways in which writers from Henry James to W. H. Auden rewrote and revised after completing first drafts of their work.

Hannah is originally from London, and received her undergraduate degree in Classics from Cambridge. She first came to the US in 2000 as a Kennedy scholar, and returned in 2003 after graduate work at the London Consortium. Her research interests include autobiography and life writing, the classical tradition in English, cultural studies, theories of authorship, and British poetry. She has articles published or forthcoming in *The Egoist* magazine, on revision and Imagism, and T. S. Eliot. Her poetry has appeared in various British magazines, including *P. N. Review, Stand, Poetry Wales* and *The Rialto*. At Stanford she will be teaching courses on modernism, twentieth-century British literature, book history, and textual studies.

medieval sources that survive in English collections are the product of a Reformation and post-Reformation struggle to redefine the past by redefining the cultural place, function, and identity of libraries. By establishing the intellectual dynamism of English libraries during this crucial period of their development, *Memory’s Library* demonstrates how much current discussions about the future of libraries can gain by reexamining their past.

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**Our Story Begins**

**Tobias Wolff**

Knopf, 2008

Tobias Wolff returns with fresh revelations—about biding one’s time, or experiencing first love, or burying one’s mother—that come to a variety of characters in circumstances at once everyday and extraordinary: a retired Marine enrolled in college while her son trains for Iraq, a lawyer taking a difficult deposition, an American in Rome indulging the Gypsy who’s picked his pocket. In these stories, as with his earlier, much-anthologized work, he once again proves himself, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, “a writer of the highest order: part storyteller, part philosopher, some-one deeply engaged in asking hard questions that take a lifetime to resolve.”

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**New Faculty**

*Welcome to our new faculty:* Claire Jarvis, Michelle Karnes, Hannah Sullivan.
John Bender completed his term as Director of the Stanford Humanities Center and Anthony P. Meier Family Professor on August 31. In returning to the Departments of English and Comparative Literature, he continues as Jean G. and Morris M. Doyle Professor in Interdisciplinary Studies.

In September 2007, Bender was a plenary speaker at the conference “Beyond Reasonable Doubt” at Cambridge University, where his talk was titled “Novel Knowledge: Judgment, Experience, Experiment.” At the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies meeting in March 2008, he gave a paper on “Adam Smith and the Narration of Consciousness.”


Bender was co-chair of the Presidential Fund for Innovation in the Humanities. He was on the board of the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes and is on the board of the Cambridge University Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities.

Helen Brooks was invited to speak again this year at Stanford’s New Student Orientation on “Considering the Humanities and Social Sciences”. She spoke earlier this year at Stanford’s “Admit Weekend” for prospective students on the “Art of Perspective in the Early Modern World.” She served as a Respondent for one of the sessions at the John Donne Society Conference at Louisiana State University in February, 2008. Brooks also was invited to write an extended “Foreword” for a recently published book by Roberta Albrecht: Using Alchemical Memory Techniques for the Interpretation of Literature: John Donne, George Herbert and Richard Crashaw (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008). She also wrote an invited article for Stanford Magazine on the future of libraries—and specifically Stanford’s Green and Meyer Libraries—and the digitization of books and journals: “The Way We Read Now”; March/April 2008: 30-31.

Professor Emeritus Bliss Carnochan published articles on Swift and the Journal to Stella; on punishment and Utopia; on the recent MLA task force report concerning scholarship, promotion, and tenure; and a revised, completed version of Golden Legends: Images of Abyssinia, Samuel Johnson to Bob Marley (Stanford University Press).

Terry Castle was a plenary speaker at two international conferences in July 2008: she gave the keynote address (on the poet Philip Larkin) at the “Novel and its Borders” conference at the University of Aberdeen; and another keynote, on the revival of 18th-century literary and iconography in Britain in the 1920s, at the “Literature and History” conference at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia.


In May, Castle chaired the External Visiting Committee charged with reviewing the English and American Literature program at the University of Southern California. At Stanford, she served as an alternate on the Humanities and Sciences Appointments and Promotions Committee.

Castle’s artwork—much of it “literary” in theme—is on view at [http://terry-castle-blog.blogspot.com] (Fevered Brain Productions) and has recently garnered attention. The same French arts journal mentioned above, La revue internationale, ran a suite of her images, some 12 inches tall, in its May-June, 2008 issue. She provided the cover image for a recent Carcanet book, The Collected Poems of Sylvia Townsend Warner, ed. by Claire Harman, and will have another cover work later this year on a book forthcoming from Ohio State University Press. In June, two of her pieces were included in the 11th annual Visual Art Exhibition at SomArts Gallery in San Francisco—“Making Room for Wonder”—in conjunction with the National Queer Arts Festival. In April, she was a featured speaker at a Clark Colloquium held at the Clark Art Institute, in Williamsburg, Massachusetts, on the subject, “How Queer is Art History?” and had the pleasure of being lambasted for it by the right-wing critic (and now blogger) Roger Kimball.

Simone DiPiero’s latest book, Chinese Apples: New and Selected Poems, won the California Book Award this year, though he can’t quite pin its Gold Medal to his chest. He read from Chinese Apples at the Wordstock Festival in Portland last fall and was recently interviewed about it on the Leonard Lopate radio show in New York. He has published poems and an essay on Hayden Carruth in Poetry and has had poems also in Three Penny Review, Northwest Poetry Review, and Harvard Divinity Bulletin. His articles on Andre Kertesz, Graciela Iturbide, Asher Durand, Georgia O’Keeffe, and others continue to appear in the San Diego Reader. His new book of essays, City Dog, will be out in March.
At the Tor House Robinson Jeffers Festival in Carmel, **John Felstiner** spoke on “‘Seeing rock for the first time’,” and an interview he gave to Stanford’s Leland Quarterly carried a Jeffers title, “Not Man/Apart.” He presented Pablo Neruda in the East Palo Alto and Burlingame libraries, and lectured on “The News from Translation—Some Emergent Occasions” for the American Translators Association and American Literary Translators Association. At the annual dinner of Sempervires Fund, America’s second-oldest land trust, John spoke on “Poetry and Environmental Urgency,” and at the De Young Museum, he assisted soprano Lucy Shelton and the Adorno Ensemble’s performance of Neruda settings.


John’s Neruda translations came out in Edward Hirsch’s *Poet’s Choice, Mirrors and Windows* (a highschool textbook), and *Jams Head*, which also included fourteen Paul Celan translations. John Banville’s *conversation in the Mountains*, published by Gallery Press in Ireland and performed there, featured John’s translations.

Spring saw three festival screenings of *This Dust of Words*, Bill Rose’s documentary inspired by John’s memoir of a brilliant student, Liz Wiltsee (English, ’70), who perished in 1999 as a homeless person. John’s presence runs throughout the film. At its 50th reunion, sharing a climate change panel in Harvard’s Sanders Theatre with Jared Diamond, John presented poems of environmental concern.

This last year was wonderful but also especially busy for **Michele Elam** who continued in her position as Director of Undergraduate Studies in English through Summer ’08, and began a three-year position as Director of African & African American Studies (AAAS). [http://www.stanford.edu/dept/AAAS/]

AAAS held a successful national search for a new Associate Director, instituted a new curriculum, and recently launched a major new campus-wide initiative, Race Forward [http://www.stanford.edu/dept/AAAS/race-forward/index.html], with generous support from many departments and programs as well as from the President’s Fund. This last summer, Elam was given an endowed Chair as the Martin Luther King Jr. Centennial Professor.

This last year, Elam organized two international conference panels and was invited to speak several times, including at “Re-thinking Race and Civil Rights in the 21st Century: Multiracialism and the Renegotiation of Racial Boundaries,” at the Harvard Law School and the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, in February ’08. Alex Woloch and Elam hosted a day-long conference on Race and Narrative Theory at Stanford through the Center for the Study of the Novel and co-sponsored by African and African American Studies and will be continuing the interesting discussions that emerged from that on an MLA ’08 panel this December.


**Shelley Fisher Fishkin** was a producer of Mark Twain’s *Is He Dead*? on Broadway, a play she uncovered in the archives of the Bancroft Library at Berkeley and published in 2003. The play, which, was favorably reviewed by *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The New Yorker, Variety, The Wall Street Journal*, and many other publications, won or was nominated for numerous theatre awards, including a Tony. Fishkin led four talkbacks with actors in the Lyceum Theatre after performances. She also wrote the preface to the acting edition published by Playscripts, Inc., which is now licensing the play for other productions around the world.

She submitted for publication a book, *Feminist Engagements: Forays into American Literature and Culture*, which will be out next year, as well as an article on Mark Twain and Shakespeare for Pat Parker’s *Shakespeare Encyclopedia*. An article she wrote on transnational American Studies was translated into Russian (and published in Russia) and one she wrote on Mark Twain was translated into Spanish (and published in Argentina).

She gave the keynote talk at the Danish Association of American Studies conference in Copenhagen, and gave a series of invited lectures at other Danish universities as a Fulbright scholar. She also gave an invited talk on feminism and Erica Jong at Columbia University and presented a paper on Twain as a transnational animal welfare advocate at the American Literature Association conference in San Francisco. As Founding Editor of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, she helped prepare the journal for its fall ’08 launch.

At Stanford, she hosted a talk by novelist Min Jin Lee, and gave the opening comments at the conference on “Utopia’s Coasts:
Faculty

Tom Stoppard's Coast of Utopia in New York and Moscow." She was reappointed for another term as Director of Stanford's American Studies Program.

Fishkin has been appointed by the president of the UC system to a five-year term on the Board of Governors of the University of California Humanities Research Institute—the board for all the humanities centers in the 10-campus UC system.

Denise Gigante has published The Great Age of the English Essay: An Anthology (Yale University Press, 2008), which features essays from some of the greatest prose writers of English literary tradition, from Joseph Addison to Samuel Johnson to William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb.

Ursula Heise’s new book, Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global, appeared from Oxford University Press in September 2008. Ursula also published articles and essays on American literature, the poetry of Aimé Césaire, and Japanese animation in American Literary History, Écologie et Politique, the MLA anthology Teaching North American Environmental Literature and a Japanese anthology on the poetics of place. Over the last year, she has given plenary addresses and conference presentations in Germany, Japan, Spain and the United States.

In June, Matthew Jockers traveled with English graduate students, Joe Shapiro and Sarah Allison, to Oulu, Finland. They attended the 2008 meeting of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations and presented papers derived from the collaborative work completed in the "Beyond Search" workshop that Jockers organized. An article in the August 4 issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education featured work that Jockers has undertaken to geo-reference and visualize Irish-American literary history using Google Earth. In September, Jockers served as a Fact of Life': A National Conference on Teaching Literacy through the Community and the Future of Memory," to take place in Winter and Spring 2009 with support from the Division of Literatures, Cultures and Languages, the Forum on Contemporary Europe, and the Department of English.

Valerie Miner, Consulting Professor in English and Artist in Residence at the Clayman Institute, lectured at Turku University in Finland, Pacific University in Oregon, College of the Redwoods and the University of Alaska, Anchorage this year. She also gave various readings and interviews from/about her 2007 novel, After Eden. In March 2008, she had a Fellowship to the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. She published several book reviews in the Boston Globe and others in the Women's Review of Books. On campus, she has organized arts salons for the Clayman Institute and has served on the Core Faculty of Feminist Studies. She recently finished a new novel, Traveling with Spirits, set in India.

In April, Hilton Obenzinger published Busy Dying, an autobiographical novel that revolves in part around his experiences during the 1968 student occupation and strike at Columbia University. Hilton was also one of the key organizers of a conference at Columbia re-visiting that historical moment, and as part of that he organized a literary event for many of the writers who also participated in the strike, including Paul Auster, Thulani Davis, Mary Gordon, Bob Holman, Sharon Olds, David Shapiro, Jonah Raskin, Ntozake Shange, Paul Spike, and Meredith Sue Willis. Also, several journal articles appeared this past year, including “Naturalizing Cultural Pluralism, Americanizing Zionism: The Settler Colonial Basis to Early Twentieth Century Progressive Thought,” in

Saikat Majumdar’s essay, “Katherine Mansfield and the fragility of Pākehā boredom,” will appear in a Special Issue of Modern Fiction Studies (55.1) titled Regional Modernisms. He presented his work in two panels organized by the 20th Century English Literature Division at the Chicago MLA in 2007, and also at the Modernist Studies Conference in Nashville in November 2008, in an event titled “The Global Afterlife of Modernism.” This October, he read from his fiction at San Francisco’s Litquake. At Stanford, he co-organized a speaker series, “Contemporary History and the Future of Memory,” to take place in Winter and Spring 2009 with support from the Division of Literatures, Cultures and Languages, the Forum on Contemporary Europe, and the Department of English.

NEWS OF CONTINUED
South Atlantic Quarterly (expanded from a paper he presented at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem), and “Americans in the Holy Land, Israel, and Palestine,” in The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing.

Professor Emerita Marjorie Perloff received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters, from Bard College in May 2008. In June, she curated a three-day Symposium on Conceptual Poetry for the University of Arizona Poetry Center and gave the keynote address called “Unoriginal Genius.” This address will be the first of Marjorie's Weidenfeld Lectures at Oxford in the Spring of 2009 and the book version of the lectures, will be published by the University of Chicago Press.

During the academic year 2007-08, she gave plenary addresses at the annual conventions of Modernist Studies Association and the American Comparative Literature Association, was a visiting professor at the University of Coimbra in Portugal, gave the Jesse Mack Lecture at Oberlin College and the Logan Lecture at the DeYoung Museum in San Francisco. The Sound of Poetry, The Poetry of Sound, the book of twenty-one essays Marjorie has co-edited with Craig Dworkin, based on her MLA Presidential Symposium and Workshops, is in press at the University of Chicago Press, due out in 2009.

Essays, reviews, and interviews on poetry, intermediated, and the visual arts have appeared in TLS, Poetry, Boston Review, Fulcrum, and various book collections. Marjorie has continued to teach one course a year at the University of Southern California as Scholar-in-Residence.

In the last year, Rob Polhemus has taught courses on his early Victorian love, Anthony Trollope; his favorite cinematic love, the films of Woody Allen; and his dearest literary loves, George Eliot and James Joyce. His keynote address to the Trollope and Gender conference in Exeter, “(Agenda Trouble and the Lot Complex: Older Men-Younger Women Relationship in Trollope” has just been published in Trollope and Gender, edited by Deborah Morse and Margaret Marwick. Polhemus has given two lectures in Europe to be published soon as articles: one, “Devices to Root Out Evil: Religion vs. Art, and George Eliot’s Bonfire of the Vanities,” in Genoa at the Dickens, Victorian, and Italy conference, and the other, “Rebuilding the Tower of Babel: the Art of James Joyce and Pieter Bruegel” in Tours at the James Joyce International symposium last summer. These will become chapters from the book he’s now writing: Device to Root Out Evil: Religion vs. Art.

Christopher Rovee spent the last year at the Stanford Humanities Center, working on a book about British Aestheticism and the rise of English studies. While there, in addition to writing chapters on Christina Rossetti, Oscar Wilde, and William Morris, he finished a related essay, “Trashing Keats,” which recently appeared in ELH: A Journal of Literary History; he will present a version of this at the 2008 MLA convention in San Francisco. Rovee also wrote a long piece on William Morris’s socialist aesthetics, which he presented at the SHC's Workshop on Poetry and Poetics, and he began work on a verse-biography about Morris’s voyages to Iceland in the 1870s. With the help of several research assistants, he began collecting data on the fortunes of late-Victorian poetry within the history of anthologies, an undertaking that he hopes will show with great specificity the changing shape of the late-Victorian canon and the various forces that have influenced this. His ongoing interest in literature and photography—about which he taught an honors’ seminar in 2007—resulted in an article titled “After Ruin,” on Tennyson, Victorian photography, and Roland Barthes; he presented a version of this at the Southeast ASEC's conference at Auburn University and at the North American Victorian Studies Association conference at Yale University. Rovee is very excited to be back in the classroom this year, teaching seminars on Oscar Wilde; on Aesthetics and Society; on the 19th-century Lyric; and on Roland Barthes.

In August 2007-08, Ramón Saldívar concluded his three-year term as Chair of the Department of English. Aside from the pleasures of guiding the department, he has also enjoyed a productive year in his teaching and scholarship.

Saldívar’s most recent book, The Borderlands of Culture: Américo Paredes and the Transnational Imaginary (Duke UP in Fall 2006), was awarded the fifth annual Modern Language Association Prize for best book in the area of US Latina and Latino and Chicana and Chicano Literary and Cultural Studies. He has just had word from Duke University Press that, having sold out its first production run, the press is preparing a second printing of the book, scheduled for Spring 2009. At the 2007 MLA meeting in Chicago, he was named Distinguished Scholar (career achievement for leadership and scholarship) by the Division on Chicana and Chicano Literature of the Modern Language Association, recognizing his life work in the field. In addition to a variety of talks and conferences he attended, in June 2008—he was invited to lecture and offer a seminar at the Bavarian American Academy annual four-day Summer Institute, sponsored by the Bavarian Ministry of the Sciences, Research, and the Arts, Munich, Germany. With completion of his Borderlands book, Saldívar has now begun work on two new projects: “The Ethnic Bildungsroman and Historical Novel” and “Américo Paredes and the Post-war Writings from Asia.” The first of these projects poses the question whether a case can be made for defining the classical stage of US “minority” novels (early twentieth century) in formal rather than thematic terms. Normally, we think of “minority” novels as those narratives that tell a story of the immigrant experience, of slavery and its aftermath, of the relocation of Indians, of Asian exclusion, or of the imperial incorporation of Mexicans into the US after 1848. He considers whether the way the story is told, the shape and kind of narrative pattern that an author chooses, can tell us something about the meaning of ethnicity and race in the American experience. In this work he looks at a range of contemporary “ethnic” novels to establish a formal definition for ethnic and minority narratives.

The second project returns to the subject of his newly published book, namely, the writings of the great US/Mexico border intellectual, Américo Paredes. In the course of completing the research for the Borderlands of Culture, he uncovered a treasure-house of previously unpublished materials that Paredes wrote during the period that he was serving as political editor for the US
Army newspaper Pacific Stars and Stripes and as a features columnist for the Mexico City newspaper El Universal during the immediate post-World War II years. These writings reveal the fascinating recreation of Asia after World War II in an American image and, more importantly, the emergence of a postwar global culture. Paredes’s writings link, moreover, the issues of the US/Mexico border with the themes of the transPacific region after 1945. Both books are in preliminary stages but form the core of the research Saldivar plans to complete during his sabbatical year of 2008-09.

Carol Loeb Shloss spent the academic year as the Ellen Andrews Wright Senior Fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center where she continued to work on the second volume of her trilogy: Modernism’s Daughters about the issues of inheritance faced by the families of James Joyce, Ezra Pound and Sigmund Freud. During the year, she received a Collaborative Research Grant from the Humanities Center, which will enable her to work with a team of international scholars—Anne Fogarty, Robert Spoo, Michael Groden, William Brockman and Paul St. Amour—on “Researching the Unpublished James Joyce”. With Robert Spoo, Paul St. Amour and Michael Groden, she published “Facts and Questions about Joyce and Copyright” in the James Joyce Quarterly, and another essay, “Legal Issues, Moral Issues and Unresolved Issues in the Publication of Lucia Joyce: To Dance in the Wake” in the Joyce Studies Annual. She completed three other essays: “Copyright and the Claims of Privacy in ‘Shloss vs. The Estate of James Joyce,’” for a volume about Modernism and Copyright, edited by Paul St. Amour, to be published by Oxford University Press; “A Mother: Cultural History and the Birth of a Nation” to be published in New Essays on Dubliners edited by Vicki Mahaffey; and an essay on the first series of cultural responses to Finnegans Wake, edited by Tim Conley. She gave two lectures, one at Hamilton College and one at the Jacques Rabelais University in Tours, France, on a new, ongoing project that will involve an interdisciplinary team of archaeologists, anthropologists, and computer technologists: Visualizing Finnegans Wake.

Alice Staveley completed an article on the marketing of Virginia Woolf in the 1930s, presented new work on the ‘lost’ archive of professional women’s periodicals at the 18th Annual Virginia Woolf conference, and sponsored a panel, “Beyond the Little Magazine,” for the upcoming Modernist Studies Association (MSA) conference. She is co-organizing a celebration of J. Martin Evans’ career, “Milton@400: A Symposium in Honor of J. Martin Evans,” to be held at Stanford December 4-5, 2008, including a marathon public reading of Paradise Lost and a Milton symposium. See events page on the department website for more details.

Professor Emeritus Wilfred Stone received the Monroe K. Spears prize for “the best essay published in the Sewanee Review for 2007.” The piece was a kind of anecdotal memoir entitled “The Balloon Man” and appeared in the Winter 2007 issue. The essay was a true experience laced with abundant fictional inventions.

Jennifer Summit’s book, Memory’s Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England, was published in July by University of Chicago Press. She was interviewed about the project for the new Stanford Humanities outreach website, The Human Experience [https://humanexperience.stanford.edu/]. In 2008, she also delivered papers at the Huntington Library (on Thomas Elyot and early modern libraries), the New Chaucer Society conference at Swansea, Wales (on crusaders and Amazons in Chaucer’s Knight’s Tale), and Harvard (on the active life vs. the contemplative life debate, the subject of a new research project). With Stanford alumna Caroline Bicks (Boston College), she is co-editing the Palgrave History of Women’s Writing: volume 2: The Early Modern Period (Palgrave Macmillan). For a BBC radio documentary on John Leland, she was interviewed by David Wallace on site at Titchfield Abbey, Hampshire. She chaired the MLA’s William Riley Parker Award committee and finished her term on the board of the International Spenser Society. With Paula Findlen (History), she is co-director of Stanford’s new Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (CMEMS), which has benefited from the presence of its new Associate Director, Stanford alumnus Michael Wyatt. She is the newly-appointed Eleanor Loring Ritch University Fellow in Undergraduate Education, and is proud to be the new Chair of the English Department.

Blakey Vermeule’s book, Why Do We Care About Literary Characters? is forthcoming from the Johns Hopkins University Press. She has embarked upon another bookish adventure, this one on the cognitive poetics of satire.

Michael Wyatt has been appointed Associate Director of the new Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at Stanford. With Deanna Shemek (UC Santa Cruz) he has edited Writing Relations, American Scholars in Italian Archives Essays for Franca Petrucci Nardelli and—Armando Petrucci, published by Olschki in Florence (2008). This fall, he participated in two international conferences: The Italian Renaissance and the British Isles at the Istituto Nazionale per gli Studi sul Rinascimento in Florence; and “Interacting with Eros: Erotic Mythology in Early Modern Drama and Renaissance Literature and Arts” at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Université Paul-Valéry, in Montpellier.

Professor Elizabeth Tal lent was named one of four winners of the Phi Beta Kappa Northern California Association’s Excellence in Teaching Awards for 2008.

Elizabeth Bradfield, a second-year Stegner Fellow in poetry, published her first full-length collection, Interpretive Work (Red Hen Press/Arktoi Books, 2008). The book was reviewed widely, including in the San Francisco Chronicle. Her poems appeared this past year in New Madrid’s “Emerging Poets Feature” as well as in Ploughshares; she has work forthcoming in Orion, The Believer, and elsewhere. In addition, her press, Broadsided www.broad-sidedpress.org celebrates its fourth year.

Keith Ekiss spent the summer working as the Acting Artistic Director for the Center for the Art of Translation, a non-profit dedicated to
As the Center for the Study of the Novel entered its eighth year, Alex Woloch took up the reins of the directorship. In a busy and fruitful year, the Center continued past programs while advancing new projects.

We were very fortunate in our visitors. For our first Book Discussion, we hosted Peter Brooks of Yale, who spoke on his new volume *Henry James in Paris* with respondents Sianne Ngai, D.A. Miller, and Alex Woloch. Catherine Gallagher joined us from U.C. Berkeley for the second Book Discussion, in which John Plotz and Franco Moretti spoke with her on *The Body Economic*.

Fredric Jameson accepted the invitation of Stanford’s graduate students to give the annual Ian Watt Lecture on the History and Theory of the Novel. He lectured to an overflow audience at the Stanford Humanities Center on “Realism: A Theoretical Problem.”

Michele Elam and Alex Woloch co-organized the Center’s conference, an innovative all-day event on “Race and Narrative Theory,” where we were joined by Ulka Anjaria, Vilashini Cooppan, Dorothy Hale, Carla Kaplan, Ernesto Martínez, James Phelan, and Kenneth Warren, in addition to our own Paula Moya and Ramón Saldívar.

Last year also saw the launch of a new project, the Working Group on the Novel. The WGN, which develops graduate student work on the outer reaches of novel history and theory, featured discussions of nine graduate works, together with a special event with Narrative editor James Phelan and a roundtable with John Plotz on his work on William Morris. Our graduate student work ranged from the 18th-century proto-novel, as conceived by Matt Garrett, Miruna Stanica, and Karen Leibowitz (Berkeley), to the extreme contemporary explored by Lee Konstantinou, to the philosophical approaches of Felicia Martinez and Nir Evron, and the Russian novel analyzed by Luba Golburt (Berkeley), and the 19th century quasi-novel *Sartor Resartus* discussed by Kara Wittman. For the upcoming year, the Working Group on the Novel will have been accepted as a Humanities Center Workshop, and has been awarded the Marta Sutton Weeks workshop endowment for 2008-09. The Working Group is pleased to have integrated with the English department’s Contemporary Literature group organized by Mike Benveniste.

As 2008-2009 gets underway, we look forward to an exciting year. Graduate coordinator Kenneth Ligda is delighted to be joined by Lupe Carrillo and Mike Benveniste. We bid a fond farewell to Miruna Stanica, who has taken up her assistant professorship at George Mason University, and hope for many visits from Ed Finn, who begins his dissertation work in Arizona, and from James Wood as he launches into dissertating and continues his work at the Seminar on Enlightenment and Revolution.

Our first event this year was a Book Discussion with Suzanne Keen, who spoke with respondents Blakey Vermeule and Deena Weisburg on *Empathy and the Novel* (November 7). Nicholas Dames will join us on January 16th for a discussion on *The Physiology of the Novel* with Leah Price and Franco Moretti.

This year’s conference is on “Politics and the Novel.” The event, on April 10th, will feature Amanda Anderson, Amanda Claybaugh, Pericles Lewis, Sean McCann, John Plotz, Bruce Robbins, Michael Szalay, and Harvey Teres.

Finally, we have the privilege to announce this year’s Ian Watt speaker. On April 9th, Bruce Robbins of Columbia University will give a lecture on the History and Theory of the Novel.

For a full list of CSN events and more detailed information, please visit us at novel.stanford.edu.

The Physiology of the Novel promoting international literature in translation. His poem “Pima Road Notebook” will appear in the anthology *Best New Poets 2008*.

Creative writing lecturer and former Stegner Fellow, *Skip Horack*, has won the 2008 Katharine Bakeless Nason Literary Publication Prize in Fiction for his short-story collection *The Southern Cross*. The Bakeless Prize is sponsored by the Middlebury College Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, and the 2008 guest judge was Antonya Nelson. In connection with winning the Bakeless Prize, *The Southern Cross* will be published in July 2009 by Mariner Books (a division of Houghton Mifflin-Harcourt), and Horack will receive a fellowship to attend the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference next summer.

The paperback edition of *David MacDonald*’s novel, *Laughlin of the Bad Heart*, was published as a Harper Perennial.

Former Stegner Fellow and Jones Lecturer, *Sara Michas-Martin*, joined the Creative Writing faculty at Goddard College. This year she received a scholarship from the Squaw Valley Community of Writers, a full fellowship to the Vermont Studio Center and published poems in: *Bird Dog, Court Green, DIAGRAM, Field, Gulf Coast, Harp & Alter, jubilat, Pool, Prairie Schooner* and *New Zoo Poetry Review*.

**Shimon Tanaka**, a Jones Lecturer in the Creative Writing Program, won *Glimmer Train’s* summer Fiction Open contest. His short story, “The Suit,” will appear in their Fall 2009 issue. Poet and novelist, Cecile Oumhani, of the University of Paris recently translated a story of his for an upcoming French anthology. He also continues to co-edit a series of Japanese ESL text-books.
It’s sad, sweet task is to reflect on Diane Middlebrook as a former colleague in our Department. But of course the great thing about Diane is that the categories of colleague, friend, teacher, scholar, brilliant student of humanity, and admirable striver in our hard labor of living and loving, were all wonderfully fused and fusing in her. She was my colleague for almost 40 years and in the 1960s when we both came to Stanford, there was an extraordinary conflation of collegiality and friendship among the young people in the English department.

A little while ago I got this email from a journalist from the San Francisco Chronicle: “I’m writing a piece about Professor Diane Middlebrook, late of the English department, and it would be really helpful if you could answer this question: ‘What are the highlights of Professor Middlebrook’s career at Stanford?’” I thought about it. There were many things of I could say, and several of you reading this would have your own list. I said something like this: As a colleague, she has been a writer and scholar of distinction whose books are widely read. I said she’d been a wise and successful administrator. I said that as a teacher she has earned Stanford’s highest award for excellence in teaching (the Gores Award) the Dean’s award for teaching in Humanities & Sciences. I said I once teamtaught a lecture course with her, and by turns I would be slack-jawed with admiration and meanly envious. I would watch her, like the students, spellbound at her conversational eloquence; Diane had the powers of clear articulation and impromptu, warm, intelligent precision in speech that the rest of us professors would sell our souls for.

I tried to get across to the reporter that my colleague Diane was fascinated by, and part of, the social transformations of her generation and time, this fabulous time of change when the relations and lives of men and women, their roles and interaction, have become and are becoming a kind of global Ovidian metamorphosis.

But here are some things I did not say:

Her very coming and presence here really did represent a major highlight in the life and time of a whole academic generation at Stanford. I remember meeting her in 1966 in front of Green Library when I was a fairly new Assistant Professor and Diane had just been appointed. What we tend to forget amidst the nasty little plagues of every-day life and the outrages of history is the reality—the extraordinary reality—of our lives. When the new chairman of the department, Tom Moser, decided to hire Diane and Anne Mellor in 1966, there were exactly no women faculty members in the English department—not one. Tom’s predecessor, a stoutish Shakespearean scholar who became the University Dean of Graduate Education, had, so he thought, suffered as a young man in the department in the 1930s at the hands of a woman, one of only two in the department, a dramatic, outspoken female colleague, who terrorized him. He made it his tacit policy never again to have one of that gender on our faculty if he could help it. But he couldn’t help it.

I met Diane that September and hit it off right away—though I must say it struck me then that she looked pretty heavy round the middle. Or, as that former Chair, the Shakespearean Dean, put it so eloquently a few years later, “You have a baby on your hands and then you just lose good work-time!” Well, he was right about the physical condition, at least, and that condition over the years became the distinguished human being and Professor of Comparative Literature, Leah Middlebrook, whom I had the pleasure of meeting when she was 2 days old. Leah was indeed a highlight for me of Diane’s career because I learned first hand that a tenure-line colleague could give birth and still be terrific teaching and lecturing three weeks later.

To the reporter I didn’t speak much about particular memories of Diane moving through those good old, bad old days of the late 1960s early 1970s when bliss was it to be alive, but to be young could be very heaven—and sometimes hell too for the self and others that self could hurt. I listed Diane’s books, but I didn’t say how personal they were or the way a colleague eventually can and does come to see how individual, how creatively narcissistic, is the beautiful work done by the talented people around this place. I mentioned her fine first book, Walt Whitman and Wallace Stevens (1974), but I didn’t say how combining those twin, polarizing subjects get at two defining sides of Diane’s being: passionate, unconventional, non-conformist, ecletic, eros-driven, mad-for-poetry American and also elegant, cerebral, wonderfully aesthetic and coolly rational citizen of the world. Among the list of books I included but said nothing about was her fine, gutsy book of poems, Gin Considered as a Demon (1983). Colleagues and friends and selves do have demons, and living—and even dying—our demons never leave us alone. They delight and hurt us and they hurt and delight others and they make us interesting and sometimes scary and unpredictable. If we consider and recognize the demons that we face and try to overcome in our professional and personal lives, we can get beyond the tameness and fear and false bromides that distort and ultimately lower the value and the bravery of the struggle not to give in to demons—to try to get better and better. Not many people do become better and better over a lifespan, but Diane did, and it was a thrilling thing to see and it’s a thrilling thing to think about. Life is hard, hard, and Diane’s battles and truces with her demons gave her heroism, made her fascinating—and take us beyond the euphemisms of eulogy and the pieties of panegyric to real courage and noble accomplishment.

Especially in the humanities and in writing, our demons drive us to do the work we do, and one of the best things about being someone’s colleague is to see them
n March, the English department and the Department of Comparative Literature, with generous support from the Dean’s office, sponsored a two-day conference celebrating the career of Stephen Orgel. Over a hundred former graduate students, colleagues and friends from five decades of teaching came, many from Britain and some from as far away as Australia—Stephen has directed over sixty dissertations. The papers were related to Stephen’s work and interests in Shakespeare, the court masque, the intersections of literature and history, and the history of the book—the last was the subject of a panel of three antiquarian booksellers on the development of his rare book collection. The final session included personal reminiscences by Edmund White, a close friend for over forty years. An Ode after Marvell’s Horatian Ode on Cromwell’s Return (Stephen did not consider this the happiest of analogies), composed by Peter Stallybrass and Anne Rosalind Jones, was brilliantly recited by Anston Bosman and Richard Preiss; and a masque written by Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson, professors at the University of Aberdeen, with computer generated staging by Kim Hayworth (of Academic Computing) and Terry Castle, was performed by Michael Wyatt. The event concluded with a grand banquet for 150 people at the Arrillaga Alumni Center.

The program booklet for the Celebration was designed by Terry Castle.

History of the Book

or its project this year, Stephen Orgel’s History of the Book course studied two culturally significant pamphlets that have never been edited: the Book of Sports, an attempt to address the vexed question of what recreation could legitimately be enjoyed on the Sabbath, promulgated by James I in 1618 and reissued in 1633 and 1634 by Charles I; and Sundry Horrible Conspiracies, an anti-Catholic tract published in 1594, most notable for the fact that it includes the first account of the trial of Rodrigo Lopez, who since the late nineteenth century has been taken as the model for Shakespeare’s Shylock—erroneously, as our editorial group decided. The projects were offered as alternatives, but half the group preferred one and half the other, and the class decided to do both. They were complex projects, involving both a great deal of textual and contextual work, and archival work in British collections—Jodie Greenwood, who is British, went home for Christmas and was able to do the necessary research. The design and all the technical work were done by MA student Dove Pedlosky, and the resulting pamphlets are not only exceptionally beautiful but valuable scholarly achievements as well.
The Creative Writing Program enjoyed a productive 2007-2008 academic year. We accepted ten new Stegner Fellows to join the program: William Boast, Ammi Keller, Rob Ehle, Jesynward Harriet Clark in fiction and Chanda Feldman, Peter Kline, Dina Hardy, John Evans and Jennifer Foerster in poetry. They will join ten of our current fellows, who have enjoyed a fruitful year and been particularly active in the Bay Area literary community.

We are also glad to have some of last year’s fellows staying with our program as Jones lecturers: Josh Tyree, Molly Antopol-Johnson, Skip Horack, and Mike McGriff. Their varied expertise will be a welcome addition to our classes.

Creative Writing continues to be an attractive area of study for undergraduates. In order to keep up with ever-increasing enrollments, we added several new academic options. We have updated our curriculum to include creative non-fiction with our fiction and poetry courses. We have also responded to students’ interest in nontraditional genres by offering classes such as “Fiction into Film” and “The Graphic Novel.” In the latter class, Stanford students actually produced an entire graphic novel called Shake Girl, a groundbreaking achievement.

Because these new classes were so successful, the Creative Writing Program is continuing to offer them as well as adding even more options for undergraduates. Thanks to the generosity of William and Phyllis Draper, we have expanded the role of our Draper Lecturer Maria Hummel, who will be teaching a class called “Writing the Believer.” In this class, students will be constructing their own literary magazine. Also this year, Tom Kealey will be teaching “Technology for Artists and Writers,” which will cover new media and other topics relevant to writers in the 21st century.

Thanks to the generosity of Elliott and Rhoda Levinthal, we were able to continue offering an increased number of Levinthal Tutorials. The tutorials are designed to allow motivated undergraduate writers to work one-on-one with Stegner Fellows in poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction. In 2007-2008, our undergraduates began these tutorials with already outstanding work, including portions of novels, travel essays, and other ambitious projects. Under the tutelage of our Stegner Fellows, they were able to produce publishable work. Some of their work can be seen in Stanford’s undergraduate literary magazine, entitled Leland Quarterly.

As always, we are excited about another dynamic group of Stegner Fellows. With so many undergraduates interested in creative writing, we are also excited about our new and diverse course offerings. The Creative Writing program is looking forward to another successful year!

During 2007-2008, the Creative Writing Program hosted two visiting writers, Robert Bly and Colm Tóibín. Bly came to us as the Mohr Visiting Poet, an endowed lectureship made possible by Lawrence & Nancy Mohr. Tóibín was our Stein Visiting Writer, a lectureship graciously endowed by Isaac and Madeline Stein.

Robert Bly’s early collection of poems Silence in the Snowy Fields was published in 1962, and its plain imagistic style had considerable influence on American verse of the next two decades. Among his most famous works is Iron John: A Book About Men, an international bestseller which has been translated into many languages. Bly was the University of Minnesota Library’s 2002 Distinguished Writer, and he received The McKnight Foundation’s Distinguished Artist Award in 2000. Bly engaged audiences at Stanford with readings of his own work, as well as other poets including Hafez.

Colm Tóibín is the author of The Blackwater Lightship, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1999. He is also the author of the recent short story collection Mothers and Sons, which the New York Times called “a book to be offered to anyone who savors some of the most accomplished and nuanced soundings contemporary fiction has to offer; the opening portrait of the robber and his mother sets the tone for what is really a stunning series of variations on a theme. Tóibín is obsessed with people in hiding, often from themselves, and from their acts and feelings.” Tóibín’s presence in the classroom delighted Stanford undergraduates and graduate fellows alike.

In 2008-2009, we will welcome back Mark Doty as the Mohr Visiting Poet. Doty is the author of several collections of poetry, most recently School of the Arts (HarperCollins, 2005), Source (2002), and Sweet Machine (1998). The Winter 2008 Stein Visiting Writer will be Mary Gordon. Gordon’s latest work is Circling My Mother: A Memoir which was published in 2007. It marks her return to nonfiction after two works of fiction.
Not so long ago, in a scenario that resembles many Stanford classes, fifteen ambitious students, one unsuspecting Knight Fellow, and two dedicated instructors met in a small classroom. What made this class different? The rest of the story.

In spite of having only one quarter, the class set out to do something that no group had done before: create a fully collaborative graphic novel with 18 voices involved from start to finish. While having varying degrees of familiarity with the genre, the scope of the collaboration was new to all. And as if that wasn’t challenging enough on its own, the class felt it imperative that the project do real good in the world. With that in mind, the students decided on a humanitarian issue based in real events: the coming of age story of a young Cambodian girl at odds with a corrupt nation.

As dialogue and character sketches materialized, students quickly found that while results of collaboration were incredibly fulfilling, the path to completion was far from easy. For every decision, there was a myriad of opinions and no clear right option. Should it be told in third-person or first? Should Frankie look sympathetic or sleazy? Through the next six weeks, the class furiously argued, read, drew, wrote and sometimes re-drew, re-wrote, and even re-argued their way to a full-length graphic novel.

A small print run occurred last spring and received fanfare from comic-aficionados and traditional press alike. It was recently picked-up by comic-giant Vertigo.

Friends of Ruth Watt, the widow of Ian Watt, former Department Chairman and first Director of The Humanities Center, have arranged for the posthumous publication of Ruth’s novel, Murdering Friends, a tale of murder in the Stanford English department. Now available in the Stanford Bookstore, it is billed as a “compelling journey through Stanford’s academia... rich in the quibbles and jealousies of a department known more for its research than its intrigue.”

High Country, the award winning novel of Willard (Bill) Wyman (M.A. ‘62, Ph.D. ‘69), has gone through four printings and is now available in paperback. Published by the University of Oklahoma Press and winner of the Western Writers of America awards for Best Novel of the West and Best First Novel, it is a story of a West in transition—and the winding down of one of its oldest professions.
The Writing Student

by Jeanne Althouse

Jeanne’s notes from Nancy Packer’s Continuing Studies class “Toward a Final Draft” writen à la “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid (a one-paragraph short-short in which one person is giving instructions to another, ending with a question).

We all want to see heads cracking at the beginning of the story and whatever is important, you should introduce it early. Right at the beginning you should establish the who-what-where-when-why. In your story I thought the thief, Chris, was a woman until page 3 when I discovered he was a man. Imagine my surprise! And the reader cannot put up with a character like this who is both dull and corrupt— you better give Christopher a redeeming characteristic or why would I want to go on a journey with him? Whatever you do, don’t end with a rape or murder. Your story is perfectly nice but ending with murder—I don’t believe it. Shows a lack of confidence. Rape or murder should happen at the beginning and then you can describe how it changes your characters. What about Flannery O’Connor? Yes, she had a murder at the end of A Good Man is Hard to Find but are you Flannery O’Connor? I think not. Start over and start writing close to the end of the story, or try taking the story you have and throw away the first half. Or put it in a desk drawer for a year. And for God’s sake write about things that matter. This bug crossing the road, do I care about that? Think about the reader. The reader wants to imagine pictures out of your words so give him some details. Your protagonist, Chris. Don’t just say he got up late, say he got up late and his wife left him oatmeal on the stove. Now you’ve got a scene. And your characters—you have to nail those characters with the right details. Don’t just say he saw china and silver—say those silver bowls and candlesticks looked good to him. Don’t just say he walked through the woods. Say he fled through the woods past the evergreen trees. But don’t describe every tree. You can’t afford to be boring. A short story has no time for grandiose staying of the scene—you have to suggest something instead of spending pages on it. What’s a good length for a story? Before computers people wrote 12 page stories, now they’re writing 18 pages. So write 15. It’s got to be long enough to cover the subject, short enough to be interesting. Oh, and a semi-colon is the ugliest mark in the world—take those out. Use a dash. I have a mystical feeling about writing stories. Every story we write we should leave a little of ourselves on the page. Put yourself in Chris’s place—and in his wife’s place too. You’re the writer—you are all your characters. If we get it right, we open a door to our soul. Write a story that embarrasses you. Write until it hurts. And another thing. You have too much indirect discourse—you’re supposed to use it to carry us across the uninteresting bits in a quick way, but here, on page 5, you skipped over the sex scene. In bed together—that’s exactly where Chris should think about telling his wife he stole the silver bowl. Never slam the bedroom door in the reader’s face. Ask yourself, what’s at issue here, what is this story about, what’s your central concern? Is it about the increasing thievery in your neighborhood or about this man’s conscience after he steals? Will he confess to his wife? That is what’s interesting. Kill your statistics about crime in Los Altos. Who cares? That story isn’t going to reverberate into the future. Kill everything that doesn’t help bring the real story about—it’s like dominoes, try taking one thing out and if everything else doesn’t fall down, you didn’t need it. Present tense? Stay away from that. It makes the character a victim of his feelings in the moment—you can’t get enough scope. And Point of View—that’s the most important decision. This story doesn’t work from their daughter’s point of view—after all, she’s only seven years old. You can’t go into her parent’s bedroom with her, can you? Should Chris commit suicide? For God’s sake, no suicide-endings either. Oh dear—please don’t cry—your story, it’s very lively. It’s over-determined, too much foreground and stiffly written in parts, but here, on page 7, it’s lively. Besides there are no rules. Didn’t I tell you that nothing I say here is more than seventy percent true? 

Undergraduate

Poetry

FRONTIER SPIRIT

By Francie Neukom

You wouldn’t understand this painting of Yosemite. You’d find it too histrionic, too American—the swooping, jagged rocks erupting from the soil, a few brave settlers scaling the dizzying heights of Half Dome, range upon range of saw-toothed mountains, darkened with pine.

You always told me England was “God’s Country”—a realm of gently rolling pastureland, trees that lose their leaves promptly every fall, cows lowing softly on the hillsides.

But you are a descendant of the ones who stayed home, the ones who questioned who would want to live in such dreadfully primitive places, as they sat in their gilt-edged drawing rooms, dresses buttoned up to the throat, their leaded-glass windows shut tightly against the breath of spring.

Outside, the gas lamps blazed far into the night, drowning out the stars.
MILLEDGEVILLE HAIBUN

Beat. Beat. Beats beat here. The sound of the train on the Georgia road, the measured claps of the wheels at the gaps of the joints of the rails is the beat of the hammer on iron and anvil at the smithy, Sol’s shop, shaping shoes for mules and horses; and the sizzle of red metal in water is the train’s whistle, and all echoes resound and effuse, and the last word returns like watermelons here with summer heat, beat with a hammer, beat when he, a boy, broke into the garden at the county jail at night when the beat men were asleep because theirs were the sweetest, so burst one open, the dull thud just before the crack, and eat the heart and move on to the next; and he moved on to women and settled eventually on one and finally busted her with finality, thud before crack, and he measured time raising the sweetest watermelons for a time and time served he returned, a man, and he lay on the tracks of the Georgia road cradled by the rails. Heart stopped.

Old railroad, abandoned
between crossties trees grow,
a feral pig roots because theirs were branches.

Sean Hill is currently a Stegner Fellow at Stanford University. His book, Blood Ties & Brown Liquor, is published by The University of Georgia Press.

ENDURANCE

There’s a woman now swimming the English channel or the Bering Sea or across some other impossible water between unimportant shores. Miles of it. She sips from cups extended over the waves on a pole. She cannot hear voices and measures time in breaths.

I’d love to see her entering the water, capped and suited, greased for the psychological edge of speed and warmth and to save her skin from the pickling brine. I’d love to see her stumbling out on the other shore, knees unused to weight, buckling.

Of course this is how I see love—something of endurance and unreasonable calm. Harder to attempt once you’ve known the numbing tiredness, the unrelenting salt, the safe boat unable to gather you up if you want the miles to count for anything. And you wade in anyway.

Liz Bradfield is currently a Stegner Fellow at Stanford University. Her book, Interpretive Work, is published by Red Hen Press.

We are deeply grateful to these individuals and other anonymous donors, who have contributed to the English Department in academic year 2007-08.

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Richard Blumenfeld
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Van A. Burd
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Victory Van Dyck Chase
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Gary J. Cordova
Dolora G. Cunningham
Roger G. Dahood
David Alan Dahl
Jeffery Lee Dangl
Thalia S. Deneen
Margaret Colter Donovan
Victoria Ann Dowling
Morgan Entrekin
Anne MacGillivray Franke
Shirley Nelson Garner
John Roy Octavius Garner
Alex Gold
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Elaine Y. Smith
Merrill S. Snyder
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James Alfred Steck
Robert Lee Stuart
Marguerite B. Troster
Samson Ullman
Gretchen Van Meter
Edward Vasta
Randolph Wadsworth
Elisabeth West
Mark Raymond Wolfe
Jane F. Wyman
Willard Gordon Wyman
Stephanie Young
last year, Claire Bowen presented work from her dissertation at the Modernist Studies Association and at the Stanford Workshop in Poetics. Her article on Elizabeth Bishop, “Frames of Reference: Paterson in ‘In the Waiting Room’” is forthcoming in Twentieth-Century Literature. Claire also received the 2008-09 J.G. Lieberman Fellowship in the Humanities.

In September 2007, Lee Konstantinou sold his first novel Pop Apocalypse to a publisher; it will be released in May 2009 by Eco/HarperCollins. During the 2007–2008 academic year, Lee worked as the fiction editor of the Stanford Storytelling Project, a radio/podcast program dedicated to telling stories by and about the Stanford community. In this capacity, he interviewed Stanford writers and helped produce several audio segments. At the 2008 ALA Conference in San Francisco, Lee presented a paper entitled “The Brand as Cognitive Map in William Gibson’s Pattern Recognition,” which was based on his research on the marketing figure of the “trendspotter.” This paper will appear in a longer form in a forthcoming issue of *boundary 2*. In June 2008, Lee completed a draft of an eighty-page dissertation chapter about the ironic, postwar figure of the “hipster” in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and Thomas Pynchon’s *V*. In May and June of 2008, he taught creative writing summer camps in Singapore for the Educational Program for Gifted Youth (EPGY). Lee is currently hard at work on a chapter about the postironic figure of the “believer” in David Foster Wallace’s *Infinite Jest* and Dave Eggers’ *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*. He taught a PWR course in the fall, based on his research, called “Wipe That Smirk off Your Face: The Rhetoric and Politics of Irony.” Lee hopes to finish his dissertation during the 2008–2009 academic year and will maybe even get a job, if he’s lucky.

Kenneth Ligda and his wife Molly are partying all the time with their new daughter Rosalind. Kenneth received a research grant from the Dean’s Office that is allowing him to do research in the UK and Los Angeles. He attended the 2008 Dickens Universe, served on the African Diaspora search committee, and worked at the Center for the Study of the Novel.

Natalie Phillips attended three conferences during the past academic year. She gave a paper on single-minded characters in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* for the “Theory of Mind and Literature” conference at Purdue; she presented on scattered attention and *Tristram Shandy* at the American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS) in Portland; and she gave a talk on “Absorption and the Eighteenth-Century Reader” at a conference on the history of reading at University College, London. Her article, “Distraction as Liveliness of Mind: A Cognitive Approach to Jane Austen” is forthcoming in a collection of work by cognitive scientists and literary critics in 2009. A second article, on memory slips in *Tristram Shandy*, was solicited for *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 2009. In addition, she served as a graduate student co-coordinator for the “Seminars in Enlightenment and Revolution.” Awarded a Geballe Fellowship for 2008-9, she hopes next year to complete her dissertation, “Distraction: Problems of Attention in Eighteenth-Century Literature.”

At MLA 2007, Anton Vander Zee presided over a panel, “Late Formalisms: Some Twilights of Twentieth-Century Poetry,” on which he presented a paper on Walt Whitman and Robert Creeley’s late work. The talk formed the base of a dissertation chapter that he presented to the Stanford Workshop in Poetics in November 2008. In the spring, Anton co-edited and co-introduced (with Emily Rosko, a former Stegner Fellow) “A Symposium on the Line: Theory and Practice in Contemporary Poetry,” a collection of twenty-seven microessays by a diverse selection of poets that was featured in the 2008 issue of *Center: A Journal of the Literary Arts*. The University of Iowa Press has expressed their keen interest in publishing an expanded version of the symposium with a new scholarly introduction. That prospective project, tentatively titled *A Broken Thing: Thoughts on the Line in Contemporary Poetry*, is currently in the works. Over the summer, Anton taught a course in expository writing to rising seniors through Stanford’s Educational Program for Experimenting constantly with new pedagogical formats and curricular offerings in both traditional fields and cross-disciplinary endeavors, such as the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE), American Studies, and the digital humanities. Our vibrant Creative Writing Program, under the inspired direction of Eavan Boland, energizes young writers both within and outside the English department. And our students are breaking new ground with their own writing projects, whether through award-winning poetry and prose, honors theses, or new genres like the graphic novel.

All the same, today the study of English and literature face special challenges. In 2004 and 2007 the National Endowment for the Arts found that literary reading faces a dramatic decline among Americans: fewer than half (forty-six percent) of American adults read novels, poetry, or plays at all, down ten percentage points (from fifty-
Gifted Youth (EPGY). At the end of the three-week course, he edited, introduced and published a collection of their superb creative non-fiction essays. That collection, *Talking to Myself* (2008), was published through lulu.com and is now available on amazon.com and elsewhere. In other publishing news, Anton’s essay, “Milton’s Mary: Suspending Song in the Nativity Ode,” which began as a paper for Roland Greene’s Milton seminar, is forthcoming in *Modern Philology*.

**Ema Vyroubalová** spent a productive year as a Geballe Fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center. She made major progress on her dissertation on linguistic diversity in early modern England between 1509-1623. In March, she attended the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America in Dallas to present a paper on Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *Henry VIII* based on a section of her dissertation. She has also translated (from Czech into English) a chapter in *From Samizdat to Tamizdat: Independent Media Crossing Borders before and after 1989*, edited by F. Kind-Kovács and J. Labov, forthcoming from Northwestern University Press at the end of 2008, and is currently working on the entry on Edward Topsell (a Renaissance zoologist) for *The Shakespeare Encyclopedia* edited by professor Patricia Parker, forthcoming in 2009. Ema has been awarded an Early Career Fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which will enable her to complete her dissertation and search for jobs during the academic year 2008-09.

**James Wood** served as the graduate student representative on the British Literature 1660-1914 search committee, which appointed Claire Jarvis and Hannah Sullivan. He also helped coordinate the Seminar in Enlightenment and Revolution and the CSN Working Group on the Novel. In October he presented a paper “Romantic Cretins” at the ICR Romantic Objects conference in Baltimore.

Four percent) from 1992. Decreases are sharpest among the young, with fewer than a third of all teens and young adults regularly engaging in literary reading. Among thirty-one industrialized nations, American youth ranked fifteenth in average reading scores, behind Poland, Korea, France, and Canada. Perhaps reflecting these apparent trends away from literary reading among the American public, English departments at our peer institutions report declines in their overall numbers of students and majors.

The Stanford English department’s great strengths and many successes do not immunize us from these conditions; but they do empower us—and, I believe, invest us with a special responsibility—to make a powerful, public case for the continued importance of literary reading, writing, and the academic study of literature. The age in which we live makes the English major more, not less, necessary. Our world is swimming in writing—whether in print or online—and we in the English department are in the business of producing advanced literacy: an ability to appreciate and interpret complex texts, with attentiveness to and awareness of their multiple levels of meaning. The English major is not a pre-professional degree; instead, it is the foundation of a liberal arts education, whose ideal is the production of students with supple, broad, and inventive minds. Literature, as the great literary scholar Kenneth Burke observed, is “equipment for living.”

Today we have a special opportunity to sharpen our mission and our ability to communicate it. I’d like to seize this opportunity through a series of plans I’ve set for the year ahead, aimed at helping us take stock of who we are and where we are going. Its centerpiece will be a department retreat, planned for the early spring in Hidden Villa Farm (not far from Wallace Stegner’s home in Los Altos Hills); I am grateful to John Bender and Gavin Jones for agreeing to co-organize it. In preparation, we are currently gathering and analyzing data on our English students and majors, an intensive effort headed up by Director of Undergraduate Studies, Nicholas Jenk-
**Graduate Student Awards**

**PHDs AWARDED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH 2007-08**

- **Allison Carruth** “Global Appetites: Literary Form and Food Politics from World War I to the World Trade Organization”
- **Noam Cohen** “Speculative Nostalgias: Metafiction, Science Fiction and the Putative Death of the Novel”
- **Jennifer Floyd** “The Writing on the Wall: John Lydgate’s Architectural Verse”
- **Matthew Garrett** “Episodic Poetics in the Early American Republic: The Politics of Writing in Parts”
- **Michelle Rhee** “Slant in Asian American Poetry and Fiction”
- **Miruna Stanica** “Movable Goods and the Novel Before Realism”
- **Kara Wittman** “States of Wonder in the Nineteenth Century British Novel”

**2008 ALDEN DISSERTATION PRIZE WINNERS**

- **Christopher Phillips** – “The Uses of the Epic Impulse in American Culture, 1770-1876”

**2008 ANDREW SMITH MEMORIAL PRIZE WINNER**

- **Sarah Perkins** – “Characterization as Competition: Narrating ‘The Carpenter’ in Moby-Dick”

**DEPARTMENT DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS 2008-09**

- **Colin Higgins Dissertation Fellowship**
  - **Steffi Dippold**
  Dissertation in progress: “Plain as in Primitive: The Figure of the Native in Early American Language of Dissent”

- **Killefer Dissertation Fellowship**
  - **Jessica Weare**
  Dissertation in progress: “Competing Narratives: British Memoirs and Fictions of the First World War”

- **Killefer Dissertation Fellowship**
  - **Ruth Kaplan**
  Dissertation in progress: “Rethinking Rhetoric: English Poets and Rhetorical Practice in the Sixteenth Century”

- **Whiting Dissertation Fellowship**
  - **Hanna Janiszewska**
  Dissertation in progress: “Literary Forms as Forms of Life”

- **Geballe Dissertation Fellowship**
  - **Natalie Phillips**

- **Lieberman Dissertation Fellowship**
  - **Claire Bowen**

- **Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity (CSRE) Dissertation Fellowship**
  - **Jolene Hubbs**
  Dissertation in progress: “Revolting Whiteness: Race, Class, and the American Grotesque”

- **American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Fellowship**
  - **Ema Vyroubalova**
  Dissertation in progress: “These Confusions of Lewd Tongues’: Linguistic Diversity in Early Modern England, 1509-1625”


Mrs. Carolyn Killefer
For the first time in its seven-year history, the Hume Writing Center (HWC) has collaborated with the Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education (VPGE) to support the writing of Stanford graduate students by offering three new pilot programs: Dissertation Bootcamps, writing workshops, and graduate tutoring.

Established in 2001 through a generous endowment from George and Leslie Hume, the HWC has long received its primary funding from the Office of the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education to focus on serving undergraduate students through one-on-one writing consultations and classroom workshops. With additional support from the School of Humanities and Sciences, the HWC offered limited tutoring for graduate students during the last three years. When VPGE was created in 2007 to support over 8000 students in Stanford’s seven graduate schools, its mission coincided with HWC’s growing interest in expanding writing consultation and service to graduate students. In spring of 2008, the HWC and VPGE agreed to initiate three pilot programs over the summer.

The Dissertation Bootcamp was developed to help students through the difficult writing stages of the dissertation process. The program provides writers with a setting conducive to focused writing time. The 10-day Bootcamp begins with an initial day of workshops. For the remaining nine days, participants spend four hours on their dissertations. Bootcamp participants in the two summer sessions in June and August provided overwhelmingly positive feedback on their Bootcamp experience, with almost all participants reporting that the program helped them achieve their goal of finishing their dissertation.

The seven Graduate Workshops spread through the summer months attracted 84 students. The workshops included, “Establishing an Effective Dissertation Writing Group,” “Writing and Publishing the Journal Article,” “Writing the Dissertation, Writing Fellowship Proposals,” and “How to Get the Most Out of Academic and Professional Conferences.” Summer Graduate Tutoring was offered between July 8 and September 11. The majority of the one-hour appointment sessions were filled with graduate students from six schools, including the Graduate Schools of Business, Medicine, and Earth Science.

Evaluation forms and steady attendance demonstrated that all three pilot programs were popular and well-received by graduate students. Moreover, graduate feedback reveals an immense demand for writing help. The HWC and VPGE will continue discussing the prospects for developing these pilot programs.

**Hume Writing Center Reaches Out to Graduate Students**

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**JOB PLACEMENT**

**2007-2008**

**Allison Carruth** – University of Oregon

**David Colon** – Texas Christian University

**Matthew Garrett** – Wesleyan University

**Christine Holbo** – Arizona State University

**Christine McBride** – Visiting Assistant Professor – Reed College

**Jesse Molesworth** – Indiana University

**Bradley Pasanek** – University of Virginia

**Michelle Rhee** – Skidmore College

**Miruna Stanica** – George Mason University

**Amanda Walling** – Visiting Assistant Professor – Amherst College

**Kara Wittman** – Visiting Assistant Professor – Mills College

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**NEWSLETTER EDITORS:**

Katie Dooling

Judy Candell

**EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE:**

Dagmar Logie

Colleen Boucher

**PHOTOGRAPHY:**

Katie Dooling, Dagmar Logie, Colleen Boucher

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Joanna McClean, MACWORKS GRAPHICS STUDIO
The Department of English seeks to teach the significance and the history of British and American literatures and to foster an appreciation of the richness and variety of texts in the language. In the undergraduate program, it offers rigorous training in interpretive thinking and precise expression, teaching students to invent ideas, organize them, draw deductions and make connections to new ideas, and articulate them in eloquent and convincing ways.

In addition, the English department prides itself on its active and outgoing undergraduate community. Camaraderie between students and faculty extends beyond the classroom and faculty office hours in undergraduate community events organized by the English department Peer Mentors. The Peer Mentors are social and intellectual pillars who not only promote events, but also provide guidance throughout the declaration and graduation process.

In the Autumn quarter student faculty lunch, students battled it out against their professors and TAs in the first-ever installment of “Are you smarter than an English major?” In this trivia game, both teams were asked the same questions to see who really knew more about Stanford, literature, and geography. The students won.

In Winter Quarter, English majors and fans enjoyed an exclusive performance by Andrew “MC Lars” Nielsen, a Stanford English alumnus and touring rapper whose lyrics are inspired by literature.

Perhaps the most exciting development for English majors was the opening of the Undergraduate Lounge. Located on the 3rd floor of Margaret Jacks Hall, the café-style setting of the new lounge is the ideal place for students to meet with classmates to discuss group projects, curl up in a lounge chair to catch up on reading, or have lunch between classes. The English department celebrated the opening of the space with an open-mic night which unveiled a gallery of student art displayed in the lounge.

And as always, English majors produced three outstanding publications: literary magazine The Leland Quarterly, critical review Glosses, and the new and improved undergraduate newsletter The Major Issue.
IN MEMORIAM

(Mary) Jeane Chambers Bulotti (BA 1942), died at the age of 87 on September 30th. Relative to her major, she edited the Junior League magazine (The Spectator) in ’52–’53. She was an avid reader, and two of her favorite books were John Brown’s Body and The Once and Future King. She leaves two daughters and a son —no English majors, unfortunately, but all voracious readers—seven grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. (Nature or nurture, vestiges of literacy permeate the tree.)

John McCormick (BA 1973) died on November 24, 2007 after a year long battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 56. McCormick was a practicing, board certified orthopedic surgeon. In fact, even while undergoing chemotherapy, he studied for and passed his boards to remain board certified until the year 2017.

At Stanford, McCormick was part of Delta Tau Delta and the Stanford Football and Rugby teams. He went on to graduate from the University of Southern California’s Medical School in 1979. He was most recently employed by Proliance Surgeons, Inc. Evergreen Orthopedic Clinic. McCormick was instrumental in the development and construction of the Evergreen Orthopedic Center, which includes a state-of-the-art surgery center, physical therapy, and every other facility needed by an orthopedic patient.

Douglas L. Peterson (BA 1949, MA 1950, PhD 1956) died on June 27 as the result of a stroke. He was Professor Emeritus of English at Michigan State University.

Peterson taught literature for 42 years at six different Universities after receiving his PhD from Stanford. He transferred to Stanford University from Santa Clara University earning his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in English and returned there briefly in 1967 as a visiting professor of English.

From 1960-77, Doug was a member of the Department of English at California State University at Hayward (now CSU East Bay), which honored him with a Distinguished Professor Award in 1965-66. He chaired the English Department from 1971-77. Before his service at CSU East Bay, he held faculty appointments at the Universi-

Martha Collins (BA 1962) won an Anisfield-Wolf Award for her book-length poem Bluefront, which focuses on a lynching her father witnessed when he was a child. The book was also chosen by the New York Public Library as one of “25 Books to Remember from 2006.” Martha retired from Oberlin College in May 2007, and is now a full-time writer. A new chapbook of her poems, Sheer, was published by Barnwood Press in 2008.

The book Anthony Dangerfield (MA 1981) co-authored with James Engell (Chair of the English Department at Harvard), Saving Higher Education in the Age of Money, was awarded the Frederic W. Ness Book Award by the Association of American Colleges and Universities at their meeting in New Orleans in January 2007. The Ness award is given annually to recognize the book that best contributes to our understanding and/or advancement of contemporary liberal education. Dangerfield has continued to be active in Boston-area theater, performing in four professional productions in 2007. He is currently acting in Lee Blessing’s A Body of Water at the Charlestown Working Theater. And, finally, his own play, The Price of Liberty, was awarded Top Prize for a full-length play in the Firehouse Center for the Arts’ 6th Annual New Works Festival, and received a staged reading at the Center in Newburyport, Mass. in January of 2008.

Richard Dean (BA 1960, MA 1962) returned to graduate school in 1964 at the University of Wisconsin (PhD English, 1968) with a doctoral minor in the history of science. Besides his teaching career, Dean has also been a prize-winning and prolific scholar. He is the author of more than two hundred publications, including seven books: James Hutton and the History of Geology (Cornell, 1992), Gideon Mantell and the Discovery of Dinosaurs (Cambridge, 1999), and five others in a series on the earth sciences that he both writes and edits. Of these latter, the most important is the just-published Romantic Landscapes (2007), which in 604 pages documents the cultural influence of geology on literature, art, music, and other humanistic fields. Citing primarily British examples from between 1765 and 1835, Dean also provides splendid color plates of major Romantic art. The whole edition consists of fewer than 200 copies, each of which sells for $200; Stanford’s art gallery owns a pair.

Annie Finch’s (PhD 1991) 1994 anthology A Formal Feeling Comes: Poems in Form by Contemporary Women, begun while she was editing Stanford’s literary magazine Sequoia, was reissued in winter 2007 by Wordtech Editions. Also this year, Letters to the World: Poems from the Women’s Poetry Listserv with a preface by Annie, who founded this international listserv in 1997, was published by Red Hen Press. This year her poems appeared in journals including Barrow Street, Feminist Studies in Religion, and Prairie Schooner, and in anthologies including Not For Mothers Only (Fence); Poetry of the Eastern World (Norton), and Conversation Pieces (Everyman). Finch is now co-editor, with Marilyn Hacker, of the Poets on Poetry Series for University of Michigan Press.

Erica Funkhouser’s (MA 1973) fifth collection of poetry, Earthly, received praise for her lyrics about what it means to be of the earth.

Sarah Getty (BA 1965), a poet and fiction writer, was awarded a residency at the Ragdale Foundation in the winter/spring season of 2008. Ragdale is a nonprofit, internationally acclaimed artists’ community located thirty miles north of Chicago in Lake Forest, Illinois. During her February residency, she will research and work on her next major fiction work, a historical novel set in Chicago and based on her family’s history.

Greg Jacobs (BA 1970) received a JD from
Hastings College of the Law in 1973. He started his career as a professional prosecutor in the Sonoma County D.A.'s office in 1974, and retired in 2005. Jacobs continues to work, however, in that office helping young attorneys find their way to court, express themselves as clearly as possible, and as persuasively as possible. This past year he was honored for a Career of Distinction from the Sonoma County Bar Association, and was the first prosecutor to receive the award. Jacobs says he has very fond memories of the English professors that he had as an undergraduate, particularly Diane Middlebrook. He believes he was in one of her very first classes, if not the first, in the Spring of 1967.

Dane Johnson (PhD 1994) was promoted as of Fall 2007 to full professor in the Comparative and World Literature Department at San Francisco State University. He also serves as graduate coordinator for their MA program. In May, Johnson delivered a paper called “I’m Me: The Hidden History (or Open Secret) of Being America(n)” at the Narrative Conference in Austin, Texas.


While at Stanford University, Paul Lake (MA 1979) held the Mirrielees Creative Writing Fellowship in poetry. His new novel *Cry Wolf: A Political Fable*, a satirical animal tale, has just been published in June 2008 by BenBella Books of Dallas. Lake is currently the poetry editor of *First Things* and a professor of English and creative writing at Arkansas Technical University.

In 2007, Ashley Lodato (BA 1991) co-authored a book published by Mountainners Books, Inc. called *Leadership the Outward Bound Way*; it has a forward written by Jimmy Carter. Lodato wrote three chapters for the section called “Leadership in the Outdoors.” Lodato also has two daughters: one born in 2004 and the other in 2006.


Her next book on Ted Hughes, *Her Husband*, again analyzed the difficulties of the creative woman (Sylvia Plath) in the post-war, mid-century world, the difficulties of marriage, and the difficulties and glories of poetry. She examined and dramatized impulses to self-destruction in astonishingly gifted people, and the appeal and achievement and danger of the strong, brilliant, charismatic man and poet.

Diane Middlebrook’s career has coherence and consistency as she moves from Anne Sexton, great talent, self-destructive alcoholic, feminist icon from the mid-20th century; to the sex-changing, metamorphic, yet somehow oddly stable music-maker Billy Tipton; then onto the marital and poet-ic career of Ted Hughes, who projects language on and from many striking, metamorphosed forms of life; and then at last on to her great, unfinished project on Ovid. Ovid was, in a sense, her first and last love—the ultimate bard of mutability and the master scribe of the transformations and
Randi Rubenzik (BA 1990) is a dermatologist and a mother of two boys, Benjamin (5) and Sammy (2). These days, Rubenzik’s patients are her unofficial book club—and her reading usually takes place between 11 pm and 2 am! Dermatology is a rich linguistic field, full of descriptive Latin terms such as “lichenoid,” “pityriasis,” “umblicated,” and “guttate.” The antique descriptions of lesions paint pictures of disease which conjure up metaphors daily such as “tiny footprints in the snow” and “dew drops on rose petals.” What a busy and colorful world her patients can occupy in her imagination!

Marianne Villanueva (MA 1985) won the 2007 Juked Magazine Fiction Prize, judged by Frederick Barthelme, and is working on completing her third book, with the working title The Lost Language. Her second collection, Mayor of the Roses, was the inaugural publication of the Miami University press fiction series. She has work forthcoming in The Chattahoochee Review, Isotope, and The Rambler.

Mary Ann Whittier-née Van Berckelaer (BA 1957) went to Pakistan, north east of Islamabad to teach English and American Literature to students in a boarding school (grades 4-12) at 8,000 feet. Their parents are mainly doctors (particularly women doctors) and translators. The school had been attacked by Islamic terrorists in 2002, so secrecy was and is vital. Van Berckelaer volunteered to teach for a 9 weeks quarter, but walking to school, a slip on the ice cut short the project. Her broken ankle has healed.

Nancy Willard (MA 1960) released her third book, The Left-Handed Story: Writing and the Writer’s Life, a collection of enlightening and entertaining essays and personal narratives on topics such as the craft of fiction, children’s literature, fairy tales, and art.

Susan Hepperle Peterson (BA 1945) celebrated 25 years with the City of San Mateo Public Library.

Autumn Stanley (MA 1967) has a book in press at Lehigh University Press. Titled Raising More Hell and Fewer Dablias: The Public Life of Charlotte Smith 1840-1917, it is the first biography of a 19th century magazine editor and reformer and champion of women inventors, who was once so famous her pronouncements were reported—and replied to—in newspapers from the New York Times to the Hawaiian Gazette, but dropped into obscurity after her death. She called for equal pay for equal work in the 1870s, warned of the cancer danger from cigarettes in 1889, lobbied for pure food and ingredients listed on labels more than a century ago. The intent is to restore Smith to her small but rightful place in US history, and perhaps to get her image on a stamp, a headstone on her unmarked grave, or even a place in Arlington (in connection with her nursing service in the Civil War).

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cialist, Matthew Jockers. When you visit it at [http://english.stanford.edu], you will be able to stay in touch with student and faculty activities and other department events.

We are also instituting a new department tradition by celebrating the publication of faculty books, beginning with Ursula K. Heise’s Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: the Environmental Imagination of the Global. With several new faculty books in press, we anticipate a year full of celebrations.

We are also proud to announce the institution of The Jay Fliegelman Archival Research Award, in honor of our late colleague to support graduate student research at archives and special collections, a topic close to Jay’s heart. We are grateful to the many colleagues, students, and alumnae and alumni whose donations support this new fund.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the department’s new officers: Gavin Jones, vice chair; Blakey Vermeule, Director of Graduate Studies; Nicholas Jenkins, Director of Undergraduate Studies; Alex Woloch, Director of Honors; Denise Gigante and Saikat Majumdar, Directors of Placement; Blair Hoxby, Director of Graduate Admissions; Franco Moretti, Director of Curriculum. I would also like to extend special acknowledgement to the English department staff, Dagmar Logie, Alyce Boster, Judy Candell, Katie Dooling, Nelia Peralta, and Colleen Boucher, who keep the department office in Margaret Jacks Hall efficient and lively, together with the wonderful staff in Creative Writing, Mary Popek and Ryan Jacobs.

The English department is made up of a diversity of individuals, passions, affiliations, and histories, but we are joined by a common identity as readers and writers who believe in the continuing necessity of these activities. Let us seek to understand, affirm, and communicate this shared commitment as we chart the department’s future together.

With best wishes,

Jennifer Summit