



FROM THE HEAD



Bob Hasenfratz
Department Head

As you'll quickly see in the pages of this *English Channel*, the 2014-2015 academic year was a busy and momentous one for the English Department. Our graduate program continued to show its strengths: several of our PhD students got full-time academic jobs, and there was a bumper crop of dissertation defenses this year (17 in all). The department passed other significant milestones: two senior professors, Lynn Bloom and Richard Peterson, retired, and we mourned the passing of two former faculty members, Charles Boer and Thomas Jambeck. Finally, we are grateful to Kathleen Walsh and Jim Carrington for generously establishing the "Tribute to English Professors Fund" to commemorate English professors past and present and to support the graduate program.

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GRAD LANDINGS

- Kimberly Armstrong** ('15) has a full-time position at Metropolitan Community College in her hometown of Omaha, where she will build and run their Technical Writing program.
- Joseph Darda** ('15) has a tenure-track position at Texas Christian University. He will teach 20th- and 21st-century American literature.
- Jeremy DeAngelo** ('13) accepted a postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for Cultural Analysis at Rutgers University.
- Brandon Hawk** ('14) secured a tenure-track position in Digital Humanities and Medieval Studies at Rhode Island College after a one-year appointment at the University of Tennessee.
- Christina Henderson** ('15) accepted a tenure-track position at Georgia Regents University.
- Mary Isbell** ('13) accepted a tenure-track position at University of New Haven.
- Michelle Maloney-Mangold** ('15) has a renewable position as Visiting Assistant Professor in the English Department at Franklin College, Indiana.
- Rebecca Nisetich** ('14) secured a permanent position as Assistant Director of the Honors Program at University of Southern Maine.
- Matt Salyer** ('14) accepted a two-year position at the United States Military Academy as an assistant professor in the Department of English and Philosophy.

PHDS EARNED

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Kimberly Armstrong, 2015 | Tiffany Itsou, 2014 | Abbye Meyer, 2014 |
| Kofi J. Adisa, 2014 | Patrick Lawrence, 2014 | Matthew Mroz, 2015 |
| Christopher Bertucci, 2015 | Pamela Longo, 2014 | Jennifer Ryer, 2014 |
| Joseph Darda, 2015 | Michelle Maloney-Mangold, 2015 | Matthew Salyer, 2014 |
| Ramon Elinevsky, 2014 | Chantelle Messier, 2015 | Matthew Simpson, 2014 |
| Brandon Hawk, 2014 | | Pamela Swanigan, 2015 |

Editor: Claire Reynolds
Assistant Editor: Megan Krementowski



NOTABLE EVENTS

Annmarie Bonin, **Noah Bukowski**, and **Tory Sylvestre** were accepted to present at the 2015 Society for Disability Studies Conference in Atlanta. The Society's Student Interest Group organizes a panel of the most exciting undergraduate research done in disability studies programs across the country.

Common-place, a premier online journal of early American history and culture sponsored by the American Antiquarian Society, is now produced and edited by an interdisciplinary team of UConn scholars: Associate Professor of English **Anna Mae Duane** and Associate Professor of History and Connecticut State Historian **Walter Woodward**.

The New Yorker listed "Puppets & Poets," a performance extravaganza started by **Dr. Amber West** while she was doing her PhD here with us, in its "Above and Beyond" events section.

Undergraduate **Marya Fratoni** ('15) received Honorable Mention for the UConn Intern of the Year Award.

On December 5, **Joel Kaye** of Barnard College presented "The History of Ideas, c. 1250-1375, through the Lens of the History of Balance." The discussion centered on Kaye's new book, *A History of Balance, c.1250-1375: The Emergence of a New Model of Equilibrium and Its Impact on Thought*.

Tom Dulack's new play, *The Road to Damascus*, premiered January at the off-Broadway theater 59E59. The play, directed by Michael Parva of The Directors Company in New York, ran for six weeks through March 1. It is set in the near future and is about big issues, including Islam vs. Roman Catholicism and the US policy of endless war in the Middle East. The protagonist, the first black African pope, is determined to thwart a projected US invasion of Syria. This sixth of Dulack's plays to be produced in New York was favorably reviewed in the *New York Times*.

Rigoberto González, Aetna Celebration of Creative Nonfiction speaker, visited UConn on April 16. The celebration honors the student winners of the Aetna Creative Nonfiction prizes, and the featured speaker gives a lecture about the genre and a reading. González's memoir, *Butterfly Boy: Memoirs of a Chicano Mariposa*, won the American Book Award; his other honors include the Lambda Literary Award, the Lenora Marshall Poetry Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts, and the Poetry Center Book Award. He is the author of four books of poetry, two bilingual children's books, three books of nonfiction, and a book of short stories, and is the editor of two anthologies.

On February 26, UConn's **English Graduate Student Association** presented "A Clash of Cooks: Cook-off Fundraiser." Faculty and students enjoyed many eclectic, tasty foods. The winning dishes included bacon/tomato pastry cups, Polish goulash on freshly mashed potatoes, and melt-in-the-mouth madeleines. **Melissa Rohrer**, EGSA Community Committee Chair, noted that the cook-off "is a chance to do a little socializing in a large group. We see each other all the time, often in passing; sometimes lunch is a rushed affair, and we don't always get a chance to socialize with faculty during the semester. The cook-off is a nice break from the daily routine."

WRITING INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Our Department's Writing Internship Program broadens student's skill sets, creates opportunities in their fields of study, and establishes a strong work ethic. **Ruth Fairbanks** matches students with internship positions that not only capitalize on their strengths, but also challenge them with fresh experiences and responsibilities.

One of the most important aspects of an internship is its real-world connection. Fairbanks makes sure that interns work in departments and organizations that offer them the opportunity to have an active voice, in work such as writing articles and press releases, making blogs, and creating website postings.

Undergraduate writing intern **Marya Fratoni** ('15), who received Honorable Mention for the 2015 UConn Intern of the Year Award, says, "The best part about the Writing Internship Program for me was the flexibility it gave me to explore different kinds of job opportunities I was considering. Out of the four internships I had, no two were the same. I am grateful for that because it allowed me to see which types of jobs were a good fit for me, and which were not. I definitely feel well prepared for future job positions because of the program."

To further enrich their experience, writing interns keep journals where they document their shifts, along with portfolios of the projects they complete. "I feel that those journals were what helped me grow the most," Fratoni reflects. "I was able to think about the job from an objective point of view and analyze what I learned and what I should take away from the internship." Fratoni adds that documenting her internships was the most helpful part of the learning experience.

Through its writing-intensive focus, the Writing Internship Program gives students experience in their fields of study that better prepares them for a choice of careers.

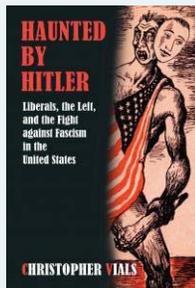
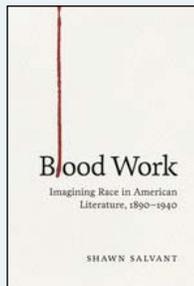
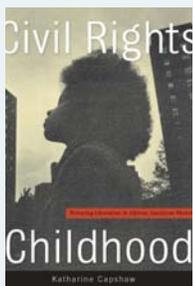
— Megan Krementowski



The Connecticut Poetry Circuit holds a yearly contest for undergraduate student poets. Each college in Connecticut is eligible to nominate one poet for consideration for the Poetry Circuit reading tour. This year, our own **Kate Monica**, winner of the Collins Literary Prize for Poetry and second-place winner of the Wallace Stevens Poetry Prize, was selected for the tour and gave a public reading in the Stern Lounge on February 3. Kate's work has been published in the *Long River Review*, *Holey Scripture Magazine*, and *Orchid Children*.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Bercaw Edwards, Mary K. "All Astir." *Leviathan*.
- Capshaw, Katharine. *Civil Rights Childhood: Picturing Liberation in African American Photobooks*.
- Carillo, Ellen C. *Securing a Place for Reading in Composition: The Importance of Teaching for Transfer*.
- Darda, Joseph. "MLK at the LA Riots: Civil Rights, Memory, and Neoliberalism in Charles Johnson's *Dreamer*." *Twentieth-Century Literature*.
- Deans, Tom. "Sacred Texts, Secular Classrooms, and the Teaching of Theory." *Mapping Christian Rhetorics: Connecting Conversations, Charting New Territories*.
- Franklin, Wayne, ed., introduction, and notes. *The Pathfinder*, by James Fenimore Cooper.
- Fraser, Gordon. "Yellow Bird and the Thunder: On Finding the Earliest Known Poem by John Rollin Ridge, the First Native American Novelist." *Common-place*.
- Higgonet, Margaret R. *Letters and Photographs from the Battle Country: The World War I Memoir of Margaret Hall*.
- Hogan, Patrick. *The Death of the Goddess: A Poem in Twelve Cantos*.
- . "The Sacrificial Emplotment of National Identity: Pádraic Pearse and the 1916 Easter Uprising." *Compaso: Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology*.
- Igarashi, Yohei. "Keats's Ways: The Dark Passages of Mediation and Why He Gives Up *Hyperion*." *Studies in Romanticism*.
- Salvant, Shawn. *Blood Work: Imagining Race in American Literature, 1890-1940*.
- Sánchez González, Lisa. *Puerto Rican Folktales*.
- Schlund-Vials, Cathy J. "Ecological Imaginations, the Vietnam War, and Vietnamese American Literature." *Asian American Literature and the Environment*.
- . ed. and introduction, with Linda Trinh Võ and K. Scott Wong. *Keywords for Asian American Studies*.
- Seger, Maria. "Ekphrasis and the Postmodern Slave Narrative: Reading the Maps of Edward P. Jones's *The Known World*." *Callaloo*.
- Shaw, Fran. *Lord Have Mercy: Waking Up in the Spiritual Marketplace*.
- Somerset, Fiona, and Nicholas Watson, eds. and preface. *Truth and Tales: Cultural Mobility and Medieval Media*.
- Vials, Chris. *Haunted by Hitler: Liberals, the Left, and the Fight against Fascism in the United States*.
- Winter, Sarah. "The Magistrate, the Camp, and the Novel: J. M. Coetzee and the Subject of Human Rights." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*.



EMINENT GUESTS



Claire Kilroy, this year's **Elizabeth Shanley Gerson Irish Literature Reader**, visited in March. One of Ireland's most prominent contemporary writers, Dubliner Kilroy is the author of four novels. She was awarded the 2004 Rooney Prize for Irish Literature and has been short-listed for the Kerry Group Novel of the Year Award.

Jo-Ann Mapson, **Aetna Writer-in-Residence**, read her work for an appreciative audience at Konover Auditorium on October 28. She is the author of eleven novels and a book of short stories. Her work is widely anthologized and her literary papers are being collected by Boston University's 20th-Century Authors' Collection. She is core faculty and co-creator of The University of Alaska Anchorage's low-residency MFA Program in Writing.

Fiona McCulloch, this spring's **Lynn Wood Neag Distinguished Visiting Professor**, taught a graduate course on British children's fiction and delivered a public lecture titled "Mapping Scotland's Future: Contemporary Children's/Young Adult Fiction and Cosmopolitanism." She has taught at the University of Liverpool, Edge Hill University College, and the University of Manchester, among others. At Manchester Metropolitan University she was the Head of English and taught "Children's Literature Since the Victorians." From 2010-2014 McCulloch was employed at the School of Social and international Studies, University of Bradford.

Susan Stewart, Avalon Foundation University Professor in the Humanities and Director of the Society of Fellows in Liberal Arts at Princeton University, gave readings at the 52nd Annual **Wallace Stevens Poetry Program** on April 1 and 2, 2015. Stewart is the author of award-winning books of poetry, as well as critical studies of literature and the visual arts. She is also a noted translator of contemporary Italian poetry. Her awards include the National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry, the Christian Gauss Award for Literary Criticism, and the Truman Capote Award for Literary Criticism. The Wallace Stevens Poetry Program began in 1964 with funding from The Hartford to honor Modernist master poet Wallace Stevens, a former Vice President of The Hartford. In the last half century, the Program has brought a roster of the most important national and international poets to Connecticut.

Poet **Camille Dungy** spent March 10 and 11 at UConn as **Aetna Writer-in-Residence**, offering one-on-one writing tutorials for selected student writers. Camille Dungy is the author of three books of poetry; her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Callaloo*, *The Missouri Review*, and *Crab Orchard Review*. Her honors include fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Virginia Commission for the Arts. She is the recipient of the 2011 American Book Award, a two-time recipient of the Northern California Book Award, and a two-time NAACP Image Award nominee. She is Professor of English at Colorado State University.





AWARDS AND HONORS



Lynn Bloom was selected to serve on the Fulbright Specialist Program Peer Review Committee for the disciplines of American Studies and American Literature.

Bruce Cohen was awarded the Green Rose Poetry Prize from New Issues Press for *Imminent Disappearances, Impossible Numbers & Panoramic X-rays*.

Emily Cole ('17) won a UConn IDEA Grant for Spring 2015.

Jason Courtmanche was appointed to the MLA Working Group on K-16 Alliances.

Serkan Görkemli's book *Grassroots Literacies: Lesbian and Gay Activism and the Internet in Turkey* won the CCCC Lavender Rhetorics Award for Excellence in Queer Scholarship.

Nathaniel Herter won the Aetna Translation Award for his translation of "Ovid-Amores, 11.13—Ovid (Naso) Prayers for his Lover's Life."

Donna Hollenberg was short-listed for the Modernist Studies Association Book Award for *A Poet's Revolution: The Life of Denise Levertov*.

Clare Costley King'oo received a Council for Christian Colleges and Universities 2015 Planning Grant for her research project "Religion Without Shakespeare: Staging Faith in Early Modern, Non-Shakespearean Drama."

Joanna MacGugan was awarded the UConn Humanities Institute's Dissertation Fellowship for 2015-16, and she received the Fred Cazel Fellowship from the Medieval Studies program.

IN MEMORIUM

Professor Emeritus **Charles W. Boer** (1939-2014), who taught in our department for many years before retiring in 1992, died on November 18. He was an avid Red Sox fan and proud member of the 1984 Champion English Department softball team. In addition to being a gifted translator of Ancient Greek and Latin, he taught mythology, poetry, and 20th-century writers, and he helped to establish the Charles Olson Archives in UConn's Special Collections at the Dodd Center, where his own papers will now be held.

Samuel Charters, (1929-2015), whose work led to the revival of blues and influenced folk music of the 1960s and '70s, died on March 18. Charters's first book, *The Country Blues*, created a tradition of blues scholarship to which Charters contributed throughout his life. His work inspired folk performers such as Bob Dylan and he recorded artists such as Joseph Spence, who influenced the Grateful Dead, Taj Mahal, and others. His wife and long-time collaborator **Ann Charters** is a Professor Emeritus of the English Department.

Professor Emeritus **Thomas J. Jambeck** (1936-2014), who taught in our department from 1969 to 2013 and served as head of the Medieval Studies program, specialized in Medieval English Literature and Drama and had a passion for linguistics. He is remembered by colleagues as a remarkably upbeat and kind "gentleman scholar of the old school" who could answer any question about the English language. An entertaining storyteller, he brightened our hallways with unflinching good cheer.

Brenda Murphy was awarded the Eugene O'Neill Medallion for her dedicated work on O'Neill.

Giorgina Paiella ('16) was named a 2015 University Scholar. She also won a UConn IDEA Grant for Spring 2015.

Christiana Salah was awarded the UConn Humanities Institute's Dissertation Fellowship for 2015-16.

Cathy J. Schlund-Vials was elected President of the Association for Asian American Studies.

Rachel Silvia's essay "'tween aleph and beta i': Crossing Lines of Difference with M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong*" won first prize for Aetna Graduate Critical Essay.

Bob Tilton's play *The Sequence* won top honors at the 2014 Connecticut Artists and Writers Festival.

Kathleen Tonry was awarded the Beatrice White Prize for "Reading History in Caxton's *Polychronicon*."

Christina Wilson (PhD '15) won a Fulbright Research Grant for Archival Research at National University of Ireland.

OUTGOING FACULTY

Two revered members of the department retired this year. With much appreciation for many years of service and friendship, we bid adieu to **Lynn Bloom** and **Richard Peterson**. We wish you the best and hope to see more of you in the years to come.

2015 CREATIVE WRITING PRIZES

Edward R. and Frances Schreiber Collins Literary Prizes

Prose Winner/\$4,000: Catherine Hires
Poetry Winner/\$4,000: Zachary Bradley
Honorable Mention in Poetry: Kathryn Eichner

Jennie Hackman Memorial Prize for Fiction

First place/\$1,000: Lorian Dozier
Second place/\$300: Stephanie Mei Koo
Third Place/\$200: Joshua Couvares

Wallace Stevens Poetry Contest

First place/\$1,000: Abigail Fagan
Second place/\$500: Marissa Stanton
Third place/\$250: Michael Stankiewicz

Aetna Creative Works in Progress Grant

Winner/\$500: Miller Oberman for "Ruin"

Aetna Children's Literature Award

Winner/\$250: Christiana Salah

Aetna Translation Award

Winner/\$250: Nathaniel Herter

Aetna Creative Nonfiction Awards

Undergraduate First prize/\$250: Eleanor Hudd
Graduate First Prize, /\$250: Abigail Fagan

Long River Graduate Writing Award

Winner/\$250: Kristina Reardon

TURNING THE LENS ON CIVIL RIGHTS CHILDHOOD



Ralph Hattersley, noted author and teacher of photography, said of his lifelong passion: “We are making photographs to understand what our lives mean to us.”

In *Civil Rights Childhood: Picturing Liberation in African American Photobooks* (2014), **Katharine Capshaw** examines the importance of children’s photographic books and the image of the black child in social

justice campaigns for school integration and the Civil Rights Movement in a way Hattersley would appreciate.

Capshaw, associate professor of English, began studying children’s photobooks and their impact on the Civil Rights Movement after completing *Children’s Literature of the Harlem Renaissance*, which won the 2006 Children’s Literature Association award for best scholarly book.

“I got interested in the range of photographs of black children that were used during the Civil Rights Movement,” Capshaw says. “What immediately springs to mind for people are Emmett Till images and the photographs around the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. When you think about children in civil rights you think about the martyred-child photograph. But I learned through working on this project that there were many different approaches to representing childhood during the Civil Rights Movement.”

A photo of the smiling 14-year-old Till was widely published in black newspapers and magazines in 1955 adjacent to another image of his disfigured and mutilated body. Less than a decade later, images from the 1963 bombing of the church in Birmingham, which killed four young girls, were linked to children as martyrs in the struggle for civil rights.

Capshaw traces the history of photobooks focused on black children from the 1940s, examining their use in both fiction and nonfiction. As the Civil Rights Movement began gaining momentum in the 1950s and 1960s, its leaders began to visualize the reality of black life through the use of photographs, including the violence against children, something that would help spur activism of emerging leaders.

Capshaw found that the 1956 book *A Pictorial History of the Negro in America*, by Langston Hughes and Milton Meltzer, can be linked directly to inspiring social activism in a major event in the Civil Rights Movement.

“A group of African American college freshmen were reading it in their dorm and talking about the way black people have struggled against oppression historically,” Capshaw says. “They talked about doing something to contribute to social change and they created the idea for the Woolworth counter sit-ins in response to that book. I was able to interview one of the four men that launched the sit-ins, Joseph McNeil. It was a fantastic experience to hear him talk about how that book helped change the world.”

In her research for the book, Capshaw also discovered that many of the founders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) said that seeing the photos of Emmett Till when they were young was a factor that propelled them into activism.

“The thrust of all of the texts I study has to do with inspiring children to take action in their communities. These books ask children to reflect on how the world sees black childhood and to respond to those representations,” she says. “The books all have that kind of participatory

bent—they all call to children to get involved in the world—but *A Pictorial History of the Negro* is the one text that we can see particularly inspired people to take a stance.”

Capshaw says the field of children’s literature has been dominated by fiction and illustrated books, but in recent years has increasingly pursued books about children of color. One of her hopes for her book is to prompt more interest in books aimed at covering topics of diversity and photography.

Capshaw notes that one of the discoveries she made while researching the book is the range of people who were involved with mobilizing photography for social change, from major figures such as Hughes, novelist Toni Morrison, and photographer Matt Herron, to previously unheralded figures such as Doris Derby, who worked with Herron on *Today*, a 1965 volume produced by the Child Development Group of Mississippi, and the eight-year-old poet Kali Grosvenor of the Black Arts Movement.

The book comes full circle in the face of history in Capshaw’s concluding chapter. Sixty years after the photos of Emmett Till appeared in the national media, there are the contrasting images of Trayvon Martin—one of a smiling child wearing a T-shirt and the other of the 17-year-old wearing a hoodie—seen nationally after he was shot and killed in Miami.

The Martin images also appear in a photo of a young African American man holding up a poster with three of the Martin images taped together, while wearing a Hollister shirt similar to the one Martin wore during a protest. Capshaw says the contrasting representations conjured by each youngster contribute to public opinion about them.

“You can see by thinking about those four pictures [of Till and Martin] that representation matters,” she says. “Representation helps control public opinion and the conversation about black childhood’s possibilities. We are able to consider the ways that our culture imagines black youth through conflicting narratives of innocence versus aggression, of profound loss versus disposability. This protestor seems to be saying: I’m aware of how culture represents black youth, and through assembling those images, I’m saying something about the need to control and respond to these constructions.”

Capshaw sees more work to be done in the area of scholarly research on the subject. “African American children’s literature offers such a rich and complex history that has not been attended to in scholarship. There’s so much wonderful territory to sink into,” she says. “These poems, narratives, and picture books have been tremendously important and influential within black communities.”

—Kenneth Best, *UConn Today*, 19 January 2015



The “obedient children” described in this image’s caption run exuberantly down the street. From Louis B. Reynolds and Charles L. Padlock, *Little Journeys into Storyland: Stories That Will Live and Lift* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1947). (Figure 2.10 from *Civil Rights Childhood*. Courtesy of University of Minnesota Press)



**THROUGH A MEMORIAL FUND, A
GREAT ENGLISH PROFESSOR'S
MEMORY ENDURES**

Students sat up when Milton Stern entered the classroom. He would recite poems, pace up and down the aisles, and ask probing questions. He'd read passages aloud with dramatic flair and leap across the room in order to prove a point.

Milton—better known as “Mickey”—Stern was a longtime professor of English at UConn. He kept company with some of the greatest minds of his generation—even inviting writers like Saul Bellow and Norman Mailer to classes—and advocated tirelessly for public education, turning down invitations from top-tier private colleges to stay at UConn. He was one of those professors you recall fondly well after graduation.

“I’ll never forget the first class of his I was in,” said Kathleen Walsh ('77). “I remember being spellbound by his first lecture.”

Walsh, along with former classmate Jim Carrington ('78), have established an endowed fellowship in memory of Stern and other extraordinary English professors. “I really wanted to create something that will live on, so that his name will live on [and] live forever through the English Department,” she said.

Stern, who passed away in 2011, taught at UConn for 33 years. His obituary in the Hartford Courant speaks of him as an authority on American literature, particularly Hawthorne, Melville, and Fitzgerald, and a tough but passionate professor. He served a term as department chair, wrote and edited more than 25 books and monographs, and helped found the Connecticut Humanities Council. An article in UConn Today spoke of his love of travel, exotic foods, and department-wide poker games. But teaching remained his top priority.

Walsh remembers a time when she worked up the nerve to comment in lecture and Stern disagreed with her. She went to his office hours to debate—and ended up talking for more than an hour. That set off a friendship between Walsh and Stern that lasted decades, exchanging letters and meeting up occasionally for lunch.

She and Carrington were just a few of the many students and colleagues Stern affected profoundly. “He was a spectacular teacher with an astonishing commitment to teaching and studying American literature,” said Michael Meyer, a former student and colleague. “He really believed that teaching literature was an important activity that could change people in an important way.”

This belief carries through the English department at UConn. Professors have joined Walsh and Carrington to honor other colleagues by making gifts to the memorial fund. Donations to date have honored Stern, Hans Turley, Roger Wilkenfeld, and Tom Jambeck.

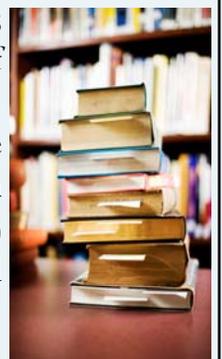
“When you’ve read something amazing, heard a phenomenal lecture, you just feel so uplifted,” said Walsh. “My English degree was a labor of love.”

The fund benefits English graduate students, some of whom will themselves go on to be educators. And it’s a fitting tribute to Stern. Throughout his teaching and activism ran a clear theme: We’re all in this together. “It’s as Faulkner said: ‘Man alone of all creatures has the ability for compassion and endurance,’” said Walsh. “And we do. So I carry that with me, and that’s all from studying American literature. Mickey really helped me find that out.”

SUPPORT ENGLISH

We are grateful for the generosity of our many donors—students and their parents, faculty, staff, and others—which allows us to fund scholarships and bring a rich array of learning opportunities to the community. You may donate to the English Department on the secure giving page for [CLAS](#); click “Other Gift Designation,” and type in English Department and the [specific fund](#), if any.

This year we are excited to introduce a newly endowed fund (see above) thanks to the generosity of two of our alums, **Kathleen Walsh** ('77 '79 '84) and **Jim Carrington** ('78). The **Tribute to English Professors Fund for Graduate Education (31438)** provides financial support, including fellowships and travel to conferences, seminars, and symposia, for English graduate students in honor or in memory of English professors.





ALUMNEWS

Courtney Antonioli ('07) is a playwright and actress in New York City. She debuted a new play, *The Mount*, about Edith Wharton. The play premiered at the Mount, Wharton's former home in Lenox.

Mary Isbell ('13) presented a "Conversations in Digital Scholarship" workshop here in April on digital classroom tools. She focused on two digital tools she uses in her English courses at University of New Haven: Annotation Studio and Oxygen.

Jay Livernois ('91) spoke at the Gloucester Writers Center on 29 April on **Charles Boer** and **Charles Olson**.

Rebecca Nisetich ('14) is assistant director of the Honors Program at the University of Southern Maine, where she is in charge of the Honors Thesis writing program. She also administers the Honors Leadership Development Scholarship, oversees the Honors Learning Community, and designs curriculum for the program. Nisetich is faculty chair of "Thinking Matters," USM's student research symposium. The event took place on April 23, where about 180 students presented their work.

Jorge Santos ('14) wraps up his first full year at the College of the Holy Cross. He taught a course based on his dissertation research, which helped him to revisit the work in an "exciting way." He will be teaching a year-long, two-part seminar that looks at superheroes as metaphors for the self and personal ethics. His article on *Pablo's Inferno*, which tied for first place in the Aetna Critical Writing Course, was just accepted in *Image/Text*. In June he presents at the Word/Image Conference in Paris, and then plans to "bounce around Europe. . . Because, why not!"

Aaron Sanders ('08) will have his novel, *Speakers of the Dead*, published by Plume (Penguin-Random House) in March 2016.

Leah Schwebel ('14) writes from Texas State: "Austin is an amazing city to live in, and my university is treating me so well. I taught Chaucer both fall and spring semester, and taught my first grad class in the spring, on the two traditions of Troy." She is currently working on a monograph, "Re-telling Old Stories: Chaucer's Italian Poetics of Intertextual Commentary," and is co-editing a special issue of *The Chaucer Review* on *The Legend of Good Women*, which will appear in 2017.

Amber West's first book of poems, *Daughter Eraser*, was released by Finishing Line Press.



AMBER WEST OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO



Amber West (PhD '14) capitalizes on her English degree in exciting ways. West founded "Puppets & Poets," a performance extravaganza begun while she was doing her PhD at the University of Connecticut.

She co-founded *Alphabet Arts*, a collective of poets, puppeteers, actors, musicians, and other artists that creates innovative performances and programs; she is also a grant writer for *Girls Write Now*, a community of women writers and digital media makers who provide guidance, support, and opportunities for underserved high school girls.

West's interest in puppetry began in the early 2000s in San Francisco. Her friend and co-founder of *Alphabet Arts*, Kirsten Kammermeyer, was performing with a found-object puppetry company called Lunatique Fantastique. This show was where West first began to consider how much poetry and puppetry have in common in their use of imagery, symbol, and lyric density.

"I chose to attend UConn because it's one of the few universities in the country with a puppetry program, and our English department allows students to pursue creative dissertations," West reflects. Her dissertation mixed puppetry, intersectional feminist theory, and performance studies. "The *Puppets & Poets* festival that I created and continue to direct was a sort of praxis-based component of my dissertation," she adds. "I was lucky to have a committee that was open to supporting such an interdisciplinary, non-traditional project."

West considers *Girls Write Now*, the first organization in the country with a writing and mentoring model exclusively for girls, to be "a nonprofit with a mission that is well-aligned" with her interests and beliefs. This feminist poet and arts educator believes that "grant writing and nonprofit development/communications work can be a great career option for English majors. Part-time grant writing has been a good option for me; I've got time and energy left over to pursue my real vocations, but enough dough to feed my family. Grant writing can be fun for writers who have a competitive streak—it's sort of an Olympic form of writing."

Amber West's advice for English majors? "Try a variety of jobs, internships, and volunteer work while in college to learn what you do and don't like and to build your resume. There is a lot you can do with an English major. Be proactive about exploring your options and cultivating your skills."