Since the 2016 US Presidential election, I’ve watched and read the news of the day as I try to figure out the truth of things. I ask myself, what do I believe? I believe that we are connected, and that even the most seemingly deep divisions may illuminate a deeper human connection if we are willing to cross the river of misunderstandings. Literature acts as a bridge to help those on either side cross over to understand the other.

In the English Department, we explore with students how writers harness words to reorder the chaos of the universe into beauty and possibility. As readers, we experience through literature another way to see and feel about things. A way to understand. Understanding breeds hope. Hope is not a gloss over toxic elements needing to be cleansed, but rather a quickening to the possibility of change.

Writers use words to help people jump into the skin of the other and live that life for a while to gain insight and compassion. Caring moves us to compassion. Caring becomes a bridge to understanding.

American writer James Agee (1909-1955), author (with Walker Evans) of Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, the story of three sharecropper families, called that work “an independent inquiry into certain normal predicaments of human divinity.”

In the English Department we work with our colleagues, students, and the larger community to understand through literature that we are connected by this “human divinity,” as Agee calls it. This is an important time for the humanities to add that greater truth to the news of the day.

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Editor: Claire Reynolds  
Assistant Editors: Lindsey Lentocha, Anna Stachura

**Incoming Faculty**

Debapriya Sarkar has recently joined the English Department and is teaching at Avery Point. Her special focus includes Shakespeare and Maritime Studies, which she put to use in teaching English and Environmental Studies at Hendrix College prior to coming to UConn. Her recent publications include “Dilated Materiality and Formal Restraint in The Faerie Queene” and “The Tempest’s Other Plots,” and she is currently working on “Possible Knowledge: The Literary Forms of Early Modern Science.”

**Grad Landing**

Eleanor Reeds will start in the fall as Assistant Professor of British Literature at Hastings College, Nebraska.
2017 marked the thirtieth year that Professor Patrick Hogan has dedicated his time and intellectual gifts to the University of Connecticut. Hogan was recently awarded the Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor Award, the highest institutional honor a UConn faculty member can receive. The award, presented to Hogan on November 16, recognizes professors who have demonstrated excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service. For his acceptance speech he read an original poem titled “Three Hundred Seconds of Gratitude,” wherein he touches on the people and circumstances that have guided him toward success.

During his time at UConn, Hogan has been influential in initiating new courses and associations, while simultaneously teaching substantial course loads and publishing extensively. When asked how he has time to accomplish so much within such a broad variety of topics, Hogan explains that, while the diversity of his work may at first seem contradictory, the range of his studies regularly inspires creativity. Understanding procedures, ideas, and theories from one field enables a person to use the structures of thought processing and investigation to solve problems in other fields and to find unlikely connections that have yet to be explored. Hogan’s teaching method helps to clarify the material for his students; before class he often completes the work he has assigned and goes over it in class as an example of the quality and style of work he expects. By envisioning potential difficulties ahead of time, Hogan prepares his students to contend with them.

Two of Hogan’s primary fields of interest are cognitive studies and neuroscience, which are examined in his recent book *Beauty and Sublimity: A Cognitive Aesthetics of Literature and the Arts*. With a long-standing interest in psychology, Hogan was inspired to study the philosophy of psychoanalysis while obtaining his master’s degree at the University of Chicago. For the past 15 to 20 years, he has been interested in the concept of beauty from a cognitive approach, and the neuroscience of aesthetics is most specifically addressed in his new book. As to whether he finds any particular disparities between what is considered socially beautiful versus what we personally respond to as beautiful, Hogan explains that the aesthetic response, or feeling, of beauty and the social judgement of beauty are not identical from one individual to another. Personal experience gives rise to response, and so it is important to examine the principles governing aesthetic response. This topic was not previously well explored.

Hogan’s areas of interest also extend to Indian philosophical and aesthetic traditions. He published a second book in 2016 exploring neuroscientific and psychological phenomena in the context of the literary and cinematic representations of the Indian subcontinent, Kashmir. *Imagining Kashmir: Emplotment and Colonialism* analyzes how narrative, colonialism, and identity affect and are affected by real political situations. Hogan claims, “There are narrative structures that guide the way we think about larger political issues,” and says it is important to examine these structures in order to negate bias. Hogan’s wife, Lalita Pandit Hogan, is a Kashmiri native and writer who recently published *A Country Without Borders: Poems and Stories of Kashmir*, for which Hogan wrote the foreword. Through reading the work of Kashmiri authors such as his wife’s in conjunction with studying mainstream cinema and Anglophone novels, Hogan sculpts his idea of true Kashmir identity.

Currently, Hogan is working on a study of cognition and style, specifically what style is and how to handle its functions. In addition, he has a book on sexual identity coming out soon, and is also working on a book on personal identity. Hogan asks, “You know what it means to say I’m an American man, but what does it mean to say I’m me?” He goes on to explain that the complexity of this question stems from the multitude of factors that go into personal identity, and he hopes to further develop the connections between these components in his upcoming studies. For English majors aspiring to publish works as extensively as his own, Professor Hogan recommends that they find a balance between what they are passionate about and excited to study and what’s currently selling.

Hogan encourages his students to be true to themselves, committing to work they find valuable and enjoyable, as he has done for more than thirty years.

—Lindsey Lentocha, 2017 Writing Intern
**Awards and Honors**

Bloom, Lynn. Fulbright Specialist appointment to the University of Waikato, New Zealand.

Brueggemann, Brenda. Faculty mentor for the Next Generation Bread Loaf Teacher’s Network.

Capshaw, Kate. 2017 Honorary Doctorate from Manhattan College. She gave an address titled “Curiosity, Community, Courage: Building a Life of the Mind and Spirit.”


Hogan, Patrick. 2017 UConn Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor Award. This is the highest honor the institution bestows on faculty, recognizing full professors who have spent at least 10 years at UConn and have demonstrated excellence in teaching, research, and service.


Salvant, Shawn. 2016 C. Hugh Holman Award from The Society for the Study of Southern Literature for *Bloodwork: Imagining Race in American Literature*.

**Sophomore Honors**

Sophomore Honors are awarded to students enrolled in the Honors Program in recognition of their academic achievement, completion of Honors courses, and participation in Honors events during their freshman and sophomore years. The English majors that received the 2017 Sophomore Honors Certificate at the Fall Honors Ceremony include Nicole Gerardin, Kathrine Grant, Alexandra Oliveira, Bailey Shea, Anna Stachura, and Clarissa Tan.

**Idea Grants**


Amelia will write a post-apocalyptic young adult novel that features diverse characters who explore topical issues.

Arianna Diaz (’18, English/Global Studies). “Combating Xenophobia: Bridging the Gap Between the Public and the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Process Using Data Visualization”

To decrease xenophobia toward refugees, Arianna will collect data and narratives that dispel misconceptions.


Taylore will write a fictional graphic novel based on personal experience, exploring LGBT adolescence.

Carly Martin (’20, English). “The Great Forest Beast.”

Carly will develop a children’s book that addresses environmental degradation.

**Recent Publications**

Bercaw Edwards, Mary K. “Performing the Sailor in Billy Budd, Sailor.” *Critical Insights: Billy Budd.*

Biggs, Frederick. *Chaucer’s Decameron and the Origin of The Canterbury Tales.*

Bloom, Lynn Z. “Feminist Culinary Autobiographies: Batterie de Cuisine to Peaceable Kingdom.” *Food, Feminists, Rhetorics.*

Capshaw, Katharine. “Splintered Families, Enduring Connections: An Interview with Edwidge Danticat.”

Carillo, Ellen C. “The Evolving Relationship Between Composition and Cognitive Studies: Gaining Some Perspective on Our Contemporary Moment.”

Cecchini, Kelly. “Getting Our Students Ready for College and Career: It Doesn’t Have to Be Greek to Us.”

Coubdouriots, Eleni. “Memory and the Popular: Rwanda in Mukoma Wa Ngugi’s Fiction.”


Cutter, Martha J. *The Illustrated Slave: Empathy, Graphic Narrative, and the Visual Culture of the Transatlantic Abolition Movement, 1800–1852.*


Greenwell, Amanda M. “Jesse Jackson’s *Call Me Charley*: Protest- ing Segregated Recreation in Cold War America.”

Hogan, Patrick Colm. “How an Author’s Mind Made Stories: Emotion and Ethics in Tagore’s Short Fiction.”


Lynch, Rachael. “Gina and the Kryptonite: Mortgage Shagging in Anne Enright’s *The Forgotten Waltz.*”

MacLeod, Glen, ed. *Wallace Stevens in Context.*

Moore, George. “Macbeth goes to Carnival: *Otium* and Economic Determinism in Scotland, PA.”

Mootz, Kaylee Jangula. “We Have Not Lost . . .: Anti-Abortion Rhetoric and The Futility of Female Power in Edna O’Brien’s *Down by the River.*”

Pierrot, Grégory, and Tabitha McIntosh. “Capturing the Likeness of Henry I of Haiti, 1805–1822.”


Resene, Michelle. “Replacing Fear with Love: A Closer Look at Disney’s First Disabled Princess.”

Sarkar, Debapriya. “The Tempest’s Other Plots.”

Schlund-Vials, Cathy J., ed. *Flashpoints for Asian American Studies.*


Winter, Sarah. “Literary Genre and Scientific Metaphor in Sigmund Freud’s Writings.”
Creative writing professor Susanne Davis’s novel, *The Appointed Hour*, embodies the triumphs and tribulations of the rural Connecticut demographic.

Reflecting upon her life growing up on a dairy farm in eastern Connecticut, Davis presents 12 interlinked stories that capture the essence of a lifestyle foreign to most.

“It’s all about a changing role in America,” Davis said. “It comes very much from things I have watched people around me struggle with.”

The stories begin through the voice of ancestors from the 1800’s. From there, descendants of those people begin articulating their stories. Plots progress from that of an exotic dancer, to a tattoo artist, to a woman struggling from emotional trauma from a rape.

“As the stories started to accumulate I could see they were saying something altogether about changes in culture along with the goals between people who are very dear to my heart but struggle with opportunities in life and what happens as a result,” Davis said.

Through the experiences of her characters, Davis weaves in a great amount of personal rumination.

“What was going on collided with my own life and people that I know,” Davis said. “It seemed very important that I use my voice to help these people, who are often so marginalized, have their stories and voices heard.”

A significant source of such expression comes from Davis’s brother Andrew. The novel was dedicated to him after he was found dead on his family farm.

“This book was all written before he was found. I think my brother’s spirit helped me find the right publisher,” Davis said.

Davis gives a great deal of thanks to her publisher, Cornerstone Press of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Davis said she was grateful to be involved in each step of the publishing process and found the experience to be seamless.

(continues on page 5)

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**EMINENT GUESTS**

Aetna Writer-in-Residence Jeff Parker spoke at the UConn Bookstore in October. Parker is the author of the nonfiction book *Where Bears Roam the Streets: A Russian Journal* (2015), the novel *Ovenman* (2007), and the short story collection *The Taste of Penny* (2010). He is a professor of Creative Writing at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Co-founder/Director of the DISQUIET International Literary Program in Lisbon, Portugal.


Anita Mannur, Professor of English and Asian American studies at Miami University at Oxford, Ohio, presented “The Tiffin Box, Epistolarity, and Intimate Failure” in October. Her work examines the value of turning to visual culture to reimagine gender roles within the context of gendered household economy. Mannur is Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Asian American Studies*, and her books include *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture* and *Theorizing Diaspora*.

Laura Wasowicz presented “From Cinderella to Little Annie Rooney: My Adventures Curating the History of McLoughlin Brothers Picture Books” in September. Wasowicz is the curator of children’s literature at the American Antiquarian Society, where she assists researchers in accessing relevant titles from the AAS Children’s Literature collection and acquires and catalogs additional titles for the collection. She also promotes the collection through lectures, articles, and the Nineteenth-Century American Children’s Book Trade Directory database.

Visiting Neag Professor from the University of Glasgow in Scotland, Geraldine Parsons is teaching English 6750: “Special Topics in Language and Literature: The Finn Cycle” this semester. This course surveys the most popular genre of story and poetry among speakers of Gaelic languages during the seventh century AD, and discusses its historical and modern scholarly impact. Parsons’s work primarily focuses on the literature and language of the medieval and early modern Gaelic-speaking world.

On December 4, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Junot Díaz came to UConn Stamford for a reading and Q&A with an audience of nearly 200 UConn students, faculty, and staff, as well as local high school students. Diaz spoke about the idea of the American Dream, the challenges of being an immigrant in the US today, and the importance of being socially and politically active. He gave his opinion on the value of education, gave tips and advice to young students, and also talked about the endurance needed to be successful in this day and age. He then read from his novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, which was taught in many English, First Year Experience, and other courses at UConn Stamford last Fall.

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Pulitzer Prize-winning author Junot Díaz reads aloud from *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* to students at UConn Stamford.
(Davis, from page 4)

“Working with this press is amazing and it was so much fun. It came at the most perfect time,” Davis said. “It’s a student-run press and after all the years working with students, having students read the stories and living with characters was amazing. We made every decision together.”

Throughout the writing and publishing process, Davis found a distinct shift in her mode of creation.

“I used to write more from a cerebral place of trying to create a story as opposed to deciphering a story,” Davis said. “At a certain point in time my creative process changed to more allowing myself to be the channel to the story, for it to flow more freely, and that has made all the difference in the world for my writing.”

Along with recognizing one’s creative technique, Davis encourages anyone interested in the realm of fictional writing to never give up.

“Know yourself...You have to navigate by your own North Star and find your material, and it’s not to say don’t take advice from people,” Davis said. “I believed that the dream was possible and I never gave up. I think that it’s so important to follow our dreams.”

—Lillian Whitaker, The Daily Campus, 5 Feb. 2018

**TEACHER CERTIFICATION**

The English majors listed below have been accepted into the Neag School of Education’s MA program for Secondary English Education, the Teacher Certification Program for College Graduates (TCPCG).

Olivia Sheldon, Jennifer Cipriano, McCarthy MacDaniel, Lauren Lagassie, Imani Burrus, Lauren Brown, Kate Campbell, Alexandra Retter, Kimberly Yrayta, Bailey Mahler, and Meghan Pancholi.

**NOTABLE EVENTS**

Carissa Harris presented “Black Feminist Readings of Medieval Lyric: The Personal is Political is Historical” for the Methodologies of Difference Colloquium on Sept. 28.

Sarah Berry presented “Speaking for the Community: The Chorus in Post-War Verse Drama” on Oct. 18.

Chris Vials presented “Reflections on the Russian Revolution after 100 Years” on Nov. 8.

The graduate students of the Medieval Studies program hosted *Medieval Live!,* with readings from ancient texts in the original languages, on Nov. 10.

Laura Wright presented “Multiculturalism at Home and Abroad: The Perpetual Foreigner in Asian American PEN/Faulkner Prizewinners” on Nov. 15.

Dwight Codr and Chris Vials participated in the panel “Did I Pick the Wrong Discipline? Interdisciplinary Research and the Boundaries of the Modern University” on Nov. 18.

**IN MEMORIAM**

Thomas J. Roberts (1925-2017) died unexpectedly on October 21. Roberts had served in WWII and used the G.I. Bill to obtain a PhD. He went on to teach in Cairo, Egypt, and Fairbanks, Alaska, before joining the faculty at UConn, where he taught English for 37 years. A former student notes that his sense of humor and his delight in the material he taught made every class lively and exciting.

David W. McKain (1937-2017) died on December 27, on his 42nd wedding anniversary with Margaret Gibson. He was a poet, writer, and UConn English Professor for 30 years. He led the Creative Writing Program and received numerous awards, including Outstanding Teacher of the Year and the Associated Writing Programs Award for Spellbound: Growing Up in God’s Country. He is remembered as a man of clear vision, well-articulated values, and a keen sense of social justice.

**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. Your gift to the department may be made to honor a department member or student, to support an existing fund or scholarship, or to create a new fund for either current needs or the support of programs into the future. Contribute online through the UConn Foundation secure giving page. Click the search box at the top of the page and type in (or copy and paste) the number and name of one of the following funds that directly benefit the Department of English: The *English Fund (2019)*, the *Tribute Fund (31438)*, the *Connecticut Writing Project (20113)*, *Long River Review (22535)*, or the *Elizabeth Shanley Gerson Fund for Irish Studies (30524).*

Thanks to the generosity of two of our alums, Kathleen Walsh (‘77 ‘79 ‘84) and Jim Carrington (‘78), we introduced last year the *Tribute to English Professors Fund for Graduate Education (31438).* The fund provides financial support, including fellowships and travel to conferences, seminars, and symposia, for English graduate students in honor or in memory of English professors.