

ENGLISH

AT MINNESOTA Vol. 6 No. 1

spring
2005

University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts

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*The Amazing Adventures
of Kavalier and Clay*

by Michael Chabon

At the Bottom of the River

by Jamaica Kincaid

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Lois Cucullu

-Mapping the Shadows

Rita Dove

-One Smooth Lecture

Winter Reading

-New Titles by English Alumni, Faculty, and Friends

Creative Writing

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Cover Image

-The Shoe Tree Beside the Washington Avenue Bridge

SPRING 2005 EVENTS CALENDAR

-Don't Miss Out on This Year's Readings and Lectures

Minnesota at the MLA

The Modern Language Association of America was founded in 1883, fourteen years after Aris B. Donaldson became Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature in the new College of Science, Literature, and the Arts (the predecessor of the College of Liberal Arts) at the University of Minnesota. I joined the MLA in 1963—my first year in graduate school (!)—and gave my first paper at an MLA convention in 1970, in New York. After giving a few more papers and (more to the point) paying dues regularly for the required 40 years, I survived to become a Life Member, at about the same time that I became chair of this department. Doing the math I find that I’ve been a member of the MLA for about 34% of its entire history.

Two MLAs ago, my only duties at the MLA convention in San Diego involved our annual reception for alumni and friends of the department. Last year, in Philadelphia, besides that, I gave two papers and helped our search committee interview 25 candidates for one of our four faculty positions. They were a very impressive group, filling three days with stimulating conversation. Some of these conversations are continuing as I write this: the department has already begun to host twelve campus visits by outstanding applicants. I can’t guess at the outcome now, but I can cite the job description that has guided our search for several months. [See sidebar page 24.]

One of the papers that I gave at the convention was for a Special Session (on Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury*), which, early in the morning on

the last day, needed only a small room; but many in the audience proved to be very knowledgeable and generous in their responses. My other presentation, at a panel sponsored by one of the oldest units of the MLA (the Division on the Victorian Period), drew a larger crew, equally as helpful. One question that I asked—and one that I’ve asked often in other venues—finally got a very informative answer from the floor, which was elaborated only a few hours later by a generous e-mail message—illustrating once again one of the benefits of participating in this association of scholars.



Photo by Tom Foley

Michael Hancher
Professor and Chair

Other professors in our department who gave papers at the Philadelphia MLA include **Tom Augst** (“Aesthetic Taste and the Politics of Virtue in Eighteenth–Century America”); **Tim Brennan** (“Scholars and Pretenders,” in a program honoring Edward W. Said); **Pat Crain** (“What Next? Dictation and Spectral Literacy in The Turn of the Screw,” presented *in absentia*, she also organized the program “American Antipathy” on behalf of the Division on Nineteenth–Century American Literature); **Lois Cucullu** (“Downsizing ‘The Great Divide’: Reconsidering Class in the Modernist Movement”); **Ellen**

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ENGLISH AT MINNESOTA makes a difference.

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Reimagining the world

What do we mean when we talk about *nationalism* or *democracy*? Literary study can help reimagine the world, says **Qadri Ismail**, whose work explores the intersection of culture and politics.

by Kate Tyler

Qadri Ismail had barely completed his undergraduate degree in English at Sri Lanka's University of Peradeniya when he was offered a chance to launch a university teaching career. He turned it down flat, he recalls, opting instead to take a job as a political reporter for a Sri Lankan daily newspaper.

"I thought, I'm going to go with journalism because I want to make a difference in the world, and you know, teaching people about English literature—what difference can that make?" Ismail says during a conversation in his Lind Hall office. A literary scholar specializing in postcolonial studies, Ismail joined English at Minnesota in 1997; now he is both an associate professor and the department's director of graduate studies.

The story of his having once spurned academia for journalism isn't just an amusing bit of biographical irony. Ismail offers the story to explain what motivates him as a scholar.



Professor Qadri Ismail outside 207 Lind Hall

"Clearly, I have changed my views about how to go about it, but what has driven me from the beginning is the need to contribute something in the general direction of a better and less oppressive world," says Ismail.

"I came to see that political and social change occurs slowly, and is shaped fundamentally by how we understand culture and history. Teaching English literature is not a purely intellectual project. At bottom it is, for me, a means of political engagement."

continued on page 18

Mapping the



Photo by Kate Tyler

Professor Lois Cucullu outside Lind Hall

by Kate Tyler

Growing up in New Orleans is apt to permanently alter your way of thinking, suggests literary scholar Lois Cucullu. Set in a swampy bowl of land eight feet below sea level and sandwiched between tall levees, the Mississippi River delta city is, says Cucullu, “a place where the river runs above you, a place where you never get an easy fix on things,” geographic or otherwise.

“You look out the window and never know for certain if something is swamp or land, up or down, liquid or solid,” says Cucullu of her

hometown. “And the culture is much like the landscape.” She explains that in New Orleans, a multicultural urban gumbo famed for its eccentric and easygoing ways, “You have this sense that nearly everything, even race or sexuality, is highly ambiguous, highly liminal—neither one thing nor another. It changes your sense of hierarchy and relationship. All the boundaries seem very fluid.”

As an associate professor of English at the University of Minnesota, Cucullu now lives 1,500 miles upriver from New Orleans, but she clearly remains steeped in its lessons. Not only is she the most fluidly interdisciplinary of scholars, having come to literary studies after first taking a master’s in history and a master of fine arts degree in poetry; she also is a scholar drawn to explore nuance and shadow, liquid and solid, in complex intellectual terrain.

Rethinking modernism

As a literary critic, Cucullu focuses primarily on many of the hot issues of postmodernist scholarship—such as race, empire, and gender—

Shadows

Whether rethinking modernism or positing a new understanding of adolescence, **Lois Cucullu** is a scholar particularly suited to complex terrain.

at their modernist roots. Anglo writers such as Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, Elizabeth Bishop, and James Joyce have figured prominently in her work, which casts a fresh critical eye on the social, cultural, and intellectual context of the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries.

Her work has been fruitful. In August 2004, Cucullu published a book that, she allows, “offers an alternative and revisionary view” of modernism, the transformative cultural movement that began after the first world war as a rebellion against the ordered, absolutist, and nationalistic world view of the nineteenth century. *Expert Modernists, Matricide, and Modern Culture: Woolf, Forster, Joyce* (Palgrave Macmillan) links the leading innovators of aesthetic modernism to the “expert culture” that is central to modernist ideals emphasizing human progress.

Understanding knowledge as an exercise of power, Cucullu shows writers to be far more powerful in shaping modernity than scholars hitherto have perceived. Her book demonstrates how leading modernist writers used technical innovations in the novel to replace reigning Victorian beliefs about marriage, procreation, and the family. Most critics have seen modernist writers as “cultural interpreters” of modernist ideals, Cucullu explains, but to see literary people as cultural experts in their own right—“doing something that was not so different from what experts were doing in the sciences, professions, and the emerging disciplines of sociology and psychology”—is something altogether new.

Cucullu’s analysis also breaks new ground by challenging conventional views of modernism’s gender dynamics. Critics and historians have usually perceived women as “excluded from modernism,” left on Freud’s couch, so to speak, as passive objects of study. Women writers such as Woolf were assumed to be “exceptional women taking part in a masculinist movement.”

Cucullu shows that Woolf was, instead, the very model of a self-consciously modernist woman intellectual, “utterly enmeshed in the process of modernism.” Woolf and other thoughtful women—along with male modernists such as Joyce and Forster—helped “define the cultural logic of modernism,” Cucullu says, “creating space in which actively questioning gender relations was part of modernism’s response to Victorian social and moral norms.”

Long and winding road

Cucullu’s interest in Virginia Woolf is not entirely academic. She’s by no means eager to “reinstall Woolf as the icon of literary studies” she was in the 1970s and 1980s. “As part of a social and literary elite, Woolf is not without difficulties and problems,” Cucullu notes, notably “her failure to bridge differences of class, and of race and nationality, too.”

But while rejecting a stance toward Woolf she wryly calls “all hail the glorious precursor,” Cucullu does want to give the Bloomsbury legend her due. Explains Cucullu: “If Woolf hadn’t carved out the space she did as part of modernism’s expert class—ensuring that women weren’t just objects of study, but shapers of knowledge—I really don’t think there would have been a progressive narrative to be picked up by women intellectuals and feminists who came along after her. I think it’s safe to say that without Woolf, I wouldn’t be part of the English faculty here at the University of Minnesota.”

Exactly how Cucullu landed at Minnesota is itself a highly interesting narrative. As a girl, she first seemed destined to be a poet. She fell deeply in love with language at an early age, “thrilled with how words looked at sounded”—so much so, she recalls, that she would pore over the racing section of the local newspaper “just to read the imaginative names of the thoroughbreds.”

When she wasn’t reading, she was scribbling notebooks full of poems. But amid the old-brick charm of one of the country’s most storied cities, Cucullu also caught the history bug. She went on to major in history at Louisiana State University and completed a master’s program in history at the University of North Carolina before deciding “there just wasn’t enough of the imagination in what I was doing, or so I felt. I craved more critique, exchange—and I especially craved more engagement with language.”

Cucullu’s shift to literary study, however, took some time—nearly another two decades, in fact. In the intervening years, she married, raised two children, published poems in various small literary publications, and enrolled in an M.F.A. program in poetry at George Mason University. When, during her last semester there, she drifted into an elective course on literary theory, “everything suddenly came into focus.”

continued on page 24

One Smooth

The Fall 2004 Esther Freier

Rita Dove

Or rather, it closed with a smooth glide, *American Smooth*, to be specific. The title of Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Rita Dove's latest collection of poetry, *American Smooth*, is a reference to the freer, American version of ballroom dancing. Ms. Dove discussed the six-year road she followed writing this collection, beginning with a fire that burned down her house, which motivated her to take up the dancing she had admired for years but had not made the time to learn. The process of rebuilding a home, dislocation, and learning a new art led Dove back to poetry. Many of the poems in this collection work directly with ballroom dancing and its culture as subjects. Dove read a selection of the poems throughout the lecture and finished with a Q & A. The final question, from up in the balcony, asked if Dove could "show us some of (her) *American Smooth*." When her husband, the novelist Fred Viebahn, stepped on stage she could not refuse, and although there was no music, they closed the lecture with a dance.

If you could not be there, this lecture was recorded by Twin Cities Public Television's Minnesota Channel for future broadcasts.



Lecture

Lecture closes with a twist

The Poet and the Dance

November 7, 2004
Ted Mann Concert Hall



a)



b)



c)



a) Professor and chair Michael Hancher; b) Professor Michael Dennis Browne; c) Rita Dove with Fred Viebahn.

Winter Reading

Robert Schuler (Ph.D. 1989)

In Search of "Green Dolphin Street"

Marsh River Editions (2003)

"Robert Schuler is a poet passionately searching to connect his senses with his sentences, to find words for the enchanted moments of jazz and blues, landscape and painting, love and ordinary experience, even the 'cant and wobble of cobble stones."

—George T. Wright



Sheila O'Connor (B.A. 1982)

Where No Gods Came

University of Michigan Press (2003)

"The various voices ring true. Ms. O'Connor writes of family and love and loss and youth at risk and hard-earned pleasure; she does so with a noticing eye and tone-perfect ear."

—Nicholas Delbanco

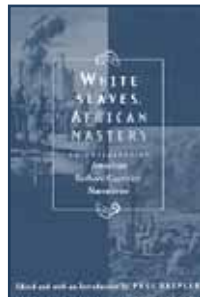


Paul Baepler (Ph.D. 1996)

White Slaves, African Masters: an Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives

University of Chicago Press (1999)

"Baepler has done American literary and cultural historians a service by collecting these long-out-of-print Barbary captivity narratives . . . Baepler's excellent introduction and full bibliography of primary and secondary sources greatly enhance our knowledge of this fascinating genre."—*Library Journal*



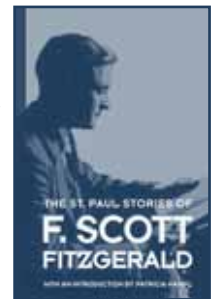
Professor Patricia Hampl, Editor with Dave Page

The St. Paul Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald

Minnesota Historical Society Press (2004)

"These are wonderful stories, including several of the greatest Fitzgerald ever wrote. Anyone interested in Fitzgerald or the importance of place in fiction will want to read this book. And anyone who does will find it a delight."

—Scott Donaldson, author of *Hemingway vs. Fitzgerald*



Anna Cypra Oliver (M.F.A. 1997)

Assembling My Father: A Daughter's Detective Story

Houghton Mifflin (2004)

"Oliver was five years old when her father, Lewis Weinberger, killed himself in Taos, New Mexico, in 1974. She grew up knowing next to nothing about him or about her heritage as the granddaughter of liberal, culturally sophisticated New York Jews until, married too young because of her mother's conversion to fundamentalist Christianity, she felt impelled to investigate."—*Booklist*



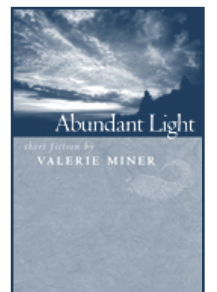
Professor Valerie Miner

Abundant Light

Michigan State University Press (2004)

"Valerie Miner's *Abundant Light* is lit up with a pointed, lucid intelligence. Psychologically precise and richly, beautifully drawn; these stories are addictive and exhilarating. You won't be able to put this book down."

—Diana Abu-Jaber, author of *Crescent* and *Arabian Jazz*



New Books by English Department Alumni, Faculty, and Friends

continued on pp. 12,13

Steve Healey, Graduate Student

Earthling

Coffee House Press (2004)

“Steve Healey’s dazzling first book of poems, *Earthling*, will leave you reeling. Poem after poem, bold imagination coupled with intense passion sets this book ablaze. His very unique sense of humor adds to the delight.”

—James Tate



Gail Langer Karwoski (M.A. 1972)

Quake! Disaster in San Francisco, 1906

Peachtree Publishers (2004)

“Karwoski’s novel conveys very capably the fear, disorientation, and shock of living through a major disaster and coping with the aftermath....the protagonist is appealingly unvarnished, alternately sweet and angry, open-eyed both to the destruction at large and the smaller scale unhappiness at home....”

—from *School Library Journal*



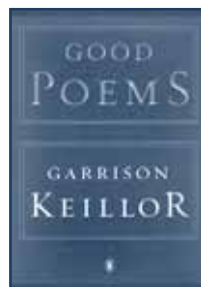
Garrison Keillor (B.A. 1966), Editor

Good Poems

Penguin Books (2002)

“*Good Poems* selects 350 pieces of verse from among the thousands that have been read on the *The Writer’s Almanac* for “Stickiness, memorability.... You hear it and a day later some of it is still there in the brainpan.”

—*Publishers Weekly*



Miracle, The True Story of the Wreck of the Sea Venture

Darby Creek Publishers (2004)

This is not a maritime myth or a sailor’s legend. It is a true story of history, of survival, and of destiny. If this tale seems familiar, don’t be surprised. William Shakespeare, upon reading about this “current event” in his lifetime, used the real event as a basis for his well-known play, *The Tempest*.



Angela Karstadt (Ph.D. 1999)

Tracking Swedish–American English

Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis (2003)

Karstadt’s expanded Ph.D. dissertation investigates the connection between language variation and ethnic identity among older bilingual Swedish Americans. The study traces how Swedish-American communities have created and maintained Swedish-American English, a hybrid language variety.



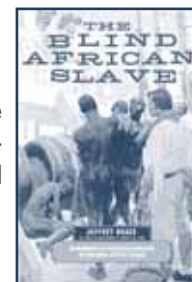
Kari J. Winter (Ph.D. 1990)

The Blind African Slave: Or Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nicknamed Jeffrey Brace

University of Wisconsin Press (2004)

“Winter has strung together Brace’s life through vital records she found throughout New England, Barbados and London.”

—*The St. Albans Messenger*



Faculty News

Thomas Augst's book, *The Clerk's Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago, 2003), was selected as one of six finalists, out of ninety submissions, for the 2004 Award for a First Book of the Modern Language Association. He also received a University Teacher's Award from the National Endowment for the Humanities to work on a new book, *The Sobriety Test: Temperance and the Melodramas of Modern Citizenship*.

Timothy Brennan's recent essays include "From Development to Globalisation: Postcolonialism and Transnational Cultural Studies," in *The Cambridge Companion for Postcolonial Studies* (Cambridge UP, Spring 2004), 120-138; "L'intellettuale meridionale," in *Periferie della storia*, Silvia Albertazzi, Barnaba Maj, e Roberto Vecchi, eds. (Bologna: Quodlibet, 2004), 71-150; and "Edward Said and Comparative Literature," Rashid Khalidi, ed., special issue of *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33:3 (Spring 2004), 23-38.

Michael Dennis Browne has three poems in the Nov/Dec issue of *The American Poetry Review*. His new collection of poems, *Things I Can't Tell You*, was published by Carnegie Mellon in January. He was a participant in the second year of "Igniting Biblical Imagination," a one-week consultation at the Ecumenical Center, St John's University, Collegeville. He was speaker and workshop leader at the conference A Sense-able God, St John's University, Collegeville, October. And he wrote the narration for *The Grand Excursion*, musical work for narrator and orchestra, music by Steven Prutsman, premiere by SPCO, December.

Lois Cucullu helped mark the centenary commemoration of 'Bloomsday' on June 16, 2004 at the 19th International James Joyce Symposium in Dublin with a talk on Ulysses entitled "Molly's Insomnia and the Temporality of Modernist Desire." At MLA annual meeting in Philadelphia, Cucullu presents "Downsizing 'The Great Divide': Reconsidering Class in the Modernist Movement."

Maria Damon's article, "Electronic Poetry Essay: Diaspora, Silliness and ?Gender?" was published in *Cybertext Yearbook 2002-2003*. Her book reviews have appeared in *ANQ (American Notes and Queries)*, *Xcp: Cross-cultural Poetics and American Literature*. She has given papers and/or readings at MLA, Cybertext Poetry Symposium, network collaborations conference, and San Francisco Poetry Marathon. Nine visual poems have been published at <http://www.spidertangle/book/>.

Peter Firchow's essay, "H. G. Wells' Time Machine: In Search of Time Future—and Time Past," has received the 2004 Victor J. Emmett, Jr. Memorial Award. The Emmett Award is given annually to the best article on a literary topic published in the *Midwest Quarterly* for that year. He has also been awarded a Christopher Isherwood Fellowship at the Huntington Library for May–June, 2005.

Maria Fitzgerald's essay, "Limpid Blue Poppy" was included in a *The Genius of Language*, edited by Wendy Lesser and published in July 2004 by Pantheon.

Ray Gonzalez will publish two books in 2005. In January, The University of Arizona Press will publish *The Religion of Hands: Prose Poems and Short Fictions*. The book is part two of the *Turtle Pictures* trilogy. Next fall, BOA Editions will release *Consideration of the Guitar: New and Selected Poems*.

Edward M. Griffin was selected by the Renaissance Associates to write the first Joseph M. Schwartz Memorial Essay, honoring the career of Professor Schwartz, the long-time editor of the journal *Renaissance*. The essay will appear in a 2005 number of *Renaissance*.

Julie Schumacher's young-adult novel, *Grass Angel*, was chosen by the *Washington Post* as a "Kids Post Book of the Week." Her second novel for younger readers, *The Chain Letter*, will be published by Delacorte in March of 2005.

Alumni News

Timothy Sweet (Ph.D. 1988) has received the 2004 Benedum Distinguished Scholar Award at the University of West Virginia. His most recent book is *American Georgics: Economy and Environment in Early American Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

Laura Brady (Ph.D. 1988), Associate Professor of English and Director of the Center for Writing Excellence at West Virginia University, has been named a 2004 State Professor of the Year by the U.S. Professors of the Year Program, which is administered by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Learning and the Council for the Support and Advancement of Education.

Robert E. Kibler (Ph.D. 1998), was recently promoted to Associate Professor in the Department of English, Minot State University, North Dakota. This past June, in cooperation with Horizons Unlimited, MSU's international travel program, he led a group of students to Tanzania to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, and into the Serengeti on safari.



More Faculty News

Madelon Sprengnether's essay "I wooed thee with my sword: Shakespeare's Tragic Paradigms," received its fourth reprinting, in *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945–2000*, ed. Russ McDonald, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. Her book of prose poems, titled *The Angel of Duluth* will be published by White Pine Press, in the Marie Alexander Prose Poetry Series in the spring of 2006. In February, she was interviewed by BBC Radio 4 for a series on how movies impact our lives, and she presented a response to Michele Citron's film *Daughter Rite* at the June meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association in San Francisco.

Drop Us a Line!

We appreciate receiving your news items for the next issue of English at Minnesota, as well as change-of-address notification. Use this form and a separate sheet of paper if necessary and send to:

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Class of _____ Degree _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email: _____

Current position and/or field of interest

Other News:

Graduate

News

Ariane M. Balizet, 5th year Ph.D. candidate, published “Teen Scenes: Recognizing Shakespeare in Teen Film” in *Almost Shakespeare: Reinventing his Works for Cinema and Television*, recently released by McFarland. A second article, entitled “Let Him Pass for a Man: The Myth of Male Menstruation in *Merchant of Venice*” is forthcoming in *Menstruation: A Cultural History from Antiquity to Modernity* (Palgrave).

Sara Berrey presented the paper “My Name is My Password: Revisions of Agency and Authorship in Nancy Drew” in November at the Midwest Modern Language Association’s (MMLA) annual conference in St. Louis, MO.

Reuben M Chirambo’s paper, “Operation Bwezani: the Army, Political Change, and Dr. Banda’s Hegemony in Malawi” has been published in *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 13.2, (2004): 146– 63.

Abigail Davis received a P.E.O. Scholar Award for the 2004-2005 academic year and a Literacy and Rhetorical Studies Minor Summer Fellowship, 2004. She presented the paper “Acceptable Promiscuity: A Comedy of Loose Morals in *The Prisoners of Niagara* (1810)” at the annual meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Boston, March 25, 2004, and the paper “The Role of Artifacts in American Foundation Myth: John Endecott’s Sword” at *Creating Identity and Empire in the Atlantic World, 1492–1888*, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Sept. 17, 2004.

Kelly Hulander presented the paper “The Empire’s Gift to the Parlor: Pleasure, Pain, and the Female Body in English Literary Annuals of the 1830s.” in November at the MMLA annual conference in St. Louis, MO.

Jennifer Johnson has poems forthcoming in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Isotope*, *Flyway*, and *Flint Hills Review*. She completed a writer’s residency at Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming in October, 2004. And she will take part in a Teaching Assistantship Exchange with the University of Salzburg, Austria, in the spring of 2005.

Chang-Hee Kim a third year Ph.D. candidate gave a presentation at the Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities, January 2005.

Rachel Moritz, a second year MFA student, has work recently published or forthcoming in *Court Green*, *CutBank*, *Bombay Gin*, *Blue Mesa Review*, and *Beloit Poetry Journal*. She is the recipient of a 2004 Minnesota State Arts Board Fellowship and is a winner of the 2004 James Wright Award in Poetry. She co-edits WinteRed Press, a poetry chaplet publisher and *Dislocate*, the literary journal published by graduate students in the Creative Writing Department.

Julia Musha’s essay “Exporting the Ruined University: The Story of an American University Abroad” appeared in the spring 2004 issue of *the Journal of the MMLA*.

Emily Odegaard presented the paper “Encountering the Desert: Wilderness Advocacy as Sensual Experience” in November at the MMLA annual conference in St. Louis, MO.

Anca Parvulescu was awarded the Harold Leonard Memorial Film Fellowship for 2004–2005 and the Harold Leonard Memorial Film Study Research Grant for 2004-2005. Her essay, “University of Dissensus / University of Laughter,” was published in the Spring 2004 issue of *the Journal of the MMLA*. Her essay, “To Die Laughing and to Laugh at Dying: Revisiting *The Awakening*” will be published in *New Literary History* in Spring 2005. She presented two papers at the 2004 Modern Language Association Convention—“So We Will Go Bad: Manners, Cheekiness and Woman’s Laughter” and “Ralph Ellison’s ‘Extravagance of Laughter,’ or How to Destroy a Laughing Barrel.”

Daniel J. Riechers presented the paper “Allies in Moderation: Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd Defend True Religion” in October, 2004 at The Northampton Jonathan Edwards Conference in Northampton, MA.

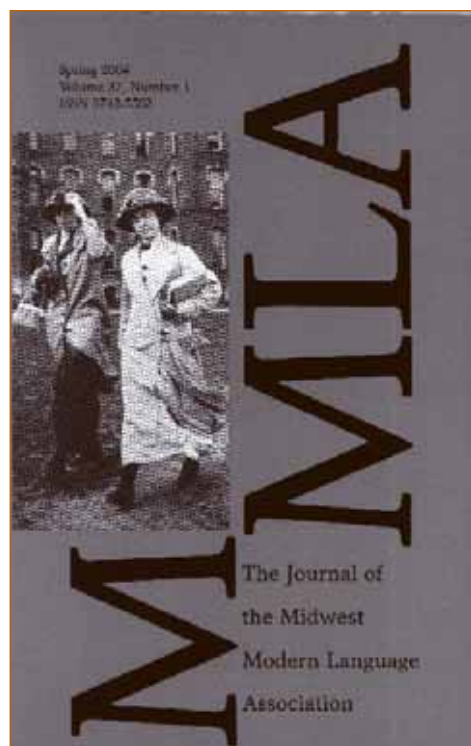
Student

Nicole Roussos, a first year Ph.D. candidate presented a department workshop, "Paths to Success in Freshman Composition."

Karen Steigman's essay, "The Student is a Far Stranger Figure': Managing Literary Studies' Anxiety in the Global University" appeared in the spring 2004 issue of *the Journal of the MMLA*.

Francine M. Tolf, a second year MFA student, was a poetry finalist in the 2004–05 Loft Mentorship Competition. She has poems appearing in the current issues of *Rattle*, *5 AM*, and *Green Hills Literary Lantern*. Her work is upcoming in *New Letters*, *Nimrod*, and *Southern Humanities Review*.

Josh Wallaert, a second year MFA student, has an article on William Carlos Williams forthcoming in *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment*.



Karen Frederickson is Awarded

Civil Service/Bargaining Unit Outstanding Service Award 2004

Each year the College of Liberal Arts recognizes outstanding service by its civil service and bargaining unit employees and by its professional and administrative employees. These awards are intended to honor employees who have gone beyond consistent high performance to make innovations and outstanding contributions to enhance the objectives of their departments, the college, the university and/or higher education. The awards are named in April or May to recognize outstanding service from the previous calendar year.

Karen Frederickson, Principal Secretary for the Graduate Studies Office, came to the Department of English in the fall of 1992 from the Linguistics department, which the university had closed. Frederickson's previous position did not include working with graduate students, but soon she was moving English M.A. and Ph.D. candidates through every

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English Staff Fund in Honor of Shirley Garner

An anonymous donor has presented the department with a generous gift establishing the English Staff Fund in Honor of Shirley Garner. In establishing this fund the donor honors Shirley Nelson Garner's administrative accomplishments and also recognizes administrative staff for their essential contributions to the department as a whole. The donor's goal is to continue building the department's strengths by enhancing administrative–staff development and community. Allocation of awards will be made by the chair of the Department of English, who will be advised by an elected committee of administrative–staff members. Professor Shirley Garner is associate dean in the Graduate School; from 1994 to 2000 she was chair of the Department of English.

Creative Writing

Fall 2004

Reading Round-up: Edelstein-Keller Visiting Writer Series

National Book Award-winner **Gerald Stern** kicked off the fall 2004 Edelstein-Keller Reading Series at Coffman Theatre on September 20 with a poetry reading that showed why he's one of the most vital (and humorous) poets writing today.....Poet and

Renaissance scholar **Linda Gregerson's** October 20th reading at the Bell Museum competed with the most anticipated baseball playoff series in recent history. For those of us in attendance, Gregerson hit a grand-slam (take that, Johnny Damon!).....

Lan Samantha Chang charmed the audience at the McNamara Alumni Center on November 16, reading from her new novel *Inheritance* and discussing her love for all things Applebees.....three debut authors visited the program December 2-3 for a

reading at Open Book and a panel on publishing a first book at the University of Minnesota Bookstore: memoirist (and 1997 MFA grad) **Anna Cypra Oliver**, novelist **Kirby Gann**, and poet **Thomas Sayers Ellis**. Save the date for spring 2005:

Novelist Edward P. Jones will read Wednesday, February 23 at Coffman Theatre, 7:30 pm. Jones won the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for his novel *The Known World*.

<http://english.cla.umn.edu/creativewriting/program.html>

Dislocate

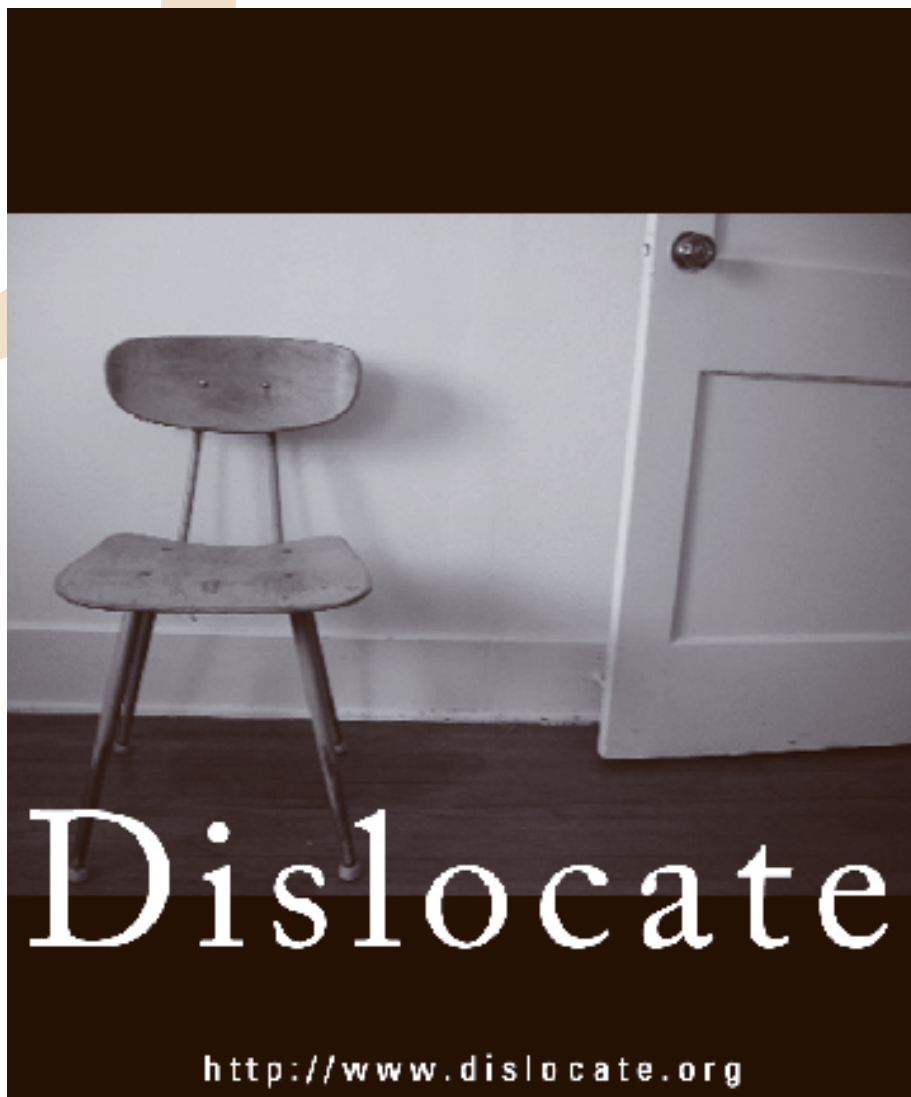
Re-directed

MFA students work to rebuild and expand a literary journal

by Rachel Moritz

What better way to spend the last free Sunday before fall semester than in heated argument over new fiction, nonfiction and poetry from around the country? Editors of *Dislocate* didn't have much choice. We needed to finalize our fall issue by the end of September and spent the good part of our summer in preparation. *Dislocate* is the original brainchild of MFA alums Michael Opperman and Neil Kozlowicz. Last spring, several first-year MFAs started talking about launching a literary magazine within the department. Revamping *Dislocate* seemed like a great plan. Perhaps we didn't realize just how much of our summer would be caught up in editorial meetings, though we did manage to inspect various Uptown Happy Hours along the way (Leaning Tower is way too noisy, but half-price bottles of wine can be had at La Bodega!) Still, our efforts were rewarded when we launched the new web issue on October 13th, thanks to the efforts of Oregon-based designer Jonas Lerman and our editors: Jennine Crucet, Sari Fordham, Jen Johnson, Josh Wallaert, and Shana Youngdahl. That night we held a small but rousing (thanks especially to Mike Mueller) reading at the Loft Literary Center to celebrate.

The fall issue featured work by poets Juan Felipe Herrera, William Reichard, Deborah Keenan and Anne Gorrick and nonfiction by Anna Cypra Oliver (M.F.A. 1997) and our Edelstein-Keller Fellow, Joni Tevis. Now we've turned our efforts toward garnering submissions and raising much needed funds for the spring print edition.



We envision *Dislocate* as an annual print journal directed and shaped by each incoming class of MFAs. Our mission is to publish some of the finest poetry, fiction and nonfiction being written today, both locally and nationally. Each issue will include an interview and new work by a visiting writer to the department. So be watching for the print issue this coming May and spread the word. <http://www.dislocate.org>

Book Review

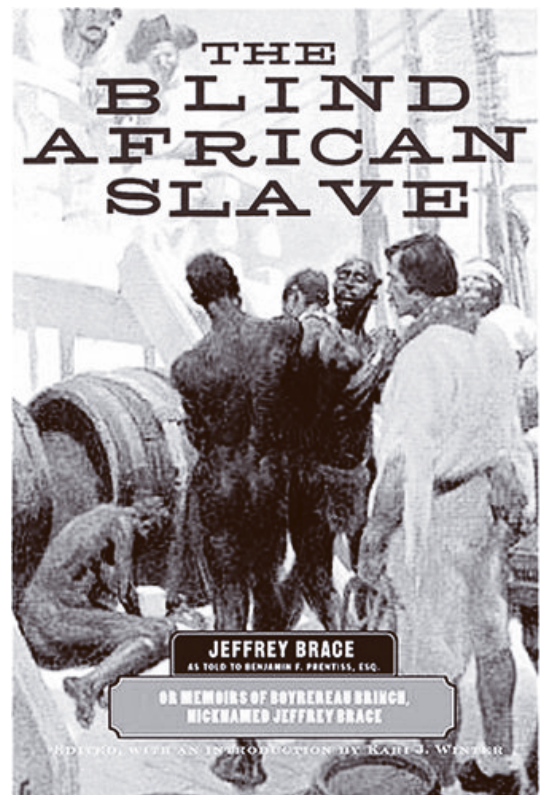
Kari Winter (Ph.D. 1990)

The Blind African Slave, Or Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nicknamed Jeffrey Brace.

University of Wisconsin Press (2004)

One way of measuring the progressive canonization of African American narrative in contemporary literary scholarship might be to point to the proliferating stream of reference texts, like the recent *Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel*, that revolve confidently around a detailed two hundred year chronology of reverberating books, familiar authors, and persistent critical debates. An equally valid perspective might be developed instead around the extent to which both canon and chronos are rooted in highly unstable points of origination and genealogical development that remain merely provisional, pending the discoveries of literary archaeology or of raw serendipity. Despite all the path-breaking revelations by scholars of African American narrative over the past three decades, gaping holes still remain in our understanding of the processes and texts through which the sensibilities of slaves transported from Africa to America were simultaneously preserved and transfigured by literary means.

Kari Winter's newly released, scrupulously edited volume of the early-nineteenth-century memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch provides a stunning new point of reference in the continuing speculations about the nature of the transatlantic African slave experience; and it reminds us, ever so bracingly, of the power of fugitive texts and authors to reinvigorate our understanding of established literary traditions. Born around 1742 in West Africa—in the one of the provinces of the Mali empire most likely—Boyrereau Brinch, who would come to be called “Jeffrey Brace” in Anglophone environs, was captured by European slave traders at sixteen and shipped as human cargo to Barbados. There he was sold into a brutally picaresque life as a domestic servant, an enslaved sailor in the Seven Years War, and subsequently as an enlisted freedman in the Continental Army, whence he exercised his freedom by moving to Vermont, the first state in the new nation to abolish slavery. A pious convert to Christianity, he sought a wife, bought a farm, and raised a family in the face of unremitting efforts by his white neighbors to denude him of all these. Having become literate early through the efforts of an empathetic white slavemistress, he devoted himself to scripture, to destroying slavery and, when advancing years and ophthalmia deprived him of his



sight, to rendering his life story in print—with the aid of Benjamin Prentiss, a white antislavery lawyer. Published in 1810, seventeen years before “Old Jeff” died destitute of property but not without hard-won respect, Boyrereau’s memoirs surfaced quietly from a small Vermont press. They then quickly disappeared from broader visibility in an antislavery movement still at ebb during the decades before emancipation in the British Empire spurred the rise of the Jacksonian era American abolition movement and the flood of mid-nineteenth century slave narratives that have since come to stand as the core artifacts of the genre.

A sense of how thoroughly lost Boyrereau’s memoirs have been can be grasped by noting that they are nowhere alluded to in the nine-volume *Dictionary Catalog of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature and History*, nor in Henry Louis Gates and Randall Burkett’s massive

bio-bibliographic compendium, *Black Biography, 1790–1950*, nor in *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature* or Macmillan’s five-volume *Encyclopedia of African American Culture and History*. Winter’s preface and extended introduction try to answer the question of how to account for the disappearance of *The Blind African Slave* from scholarship and history; and the story of her transatlantic search to reconstruct the biographical and textual traces of the longest pre-Jacksonian slave autobiography in English save that of Olaudah Equiano makes a fascinating tale of scholarly detection in its own right. Equiano’s autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), has long held priority of place among the small cluster of memoirs that offer detailed accounts by Africans of their lives before the Middle Passage as well as after; and it may be the most widely published, quoted, and explicated text by any African in the post-Renaissance, pre-twentieth-century world. Vincent Carretta’s recent scholarship on the ambiguities of identity and authorship in Equiano’s narrative, however, have lately troubled it into scholarly dispute; so that the appearance now of *The Blind African Slave* helps to reframe some of the pertinent issues.

To do so Professor Winter assiduously triangulates the African, New World, and European contexts of Boyrereau’s life in the “house of subjection”; and she explores, with often counter-conventional gleanings, the complex commercial and familial and gendered matrices of what the text announces as his “travels, sufferings, sales, abuses, education, service in the American war, emancipation, conversion to the Christian religion, knowledge of the scriptures, memory, and blindness.” At some points though, Boyrereau’s experiences resonate less with Equiano’s than with those related elsewhere in the still obscure body of Arabic narratives by literate African Muslims, whose religious identity and consecrated family genealogies often served as bulwarks of resistance against the enforced amnesia and psychological dislocations of the slaveholder regime. Again unlike Equiano’s tale—where the auto in autobiography constructs a single narrative voice and persona—*The Blind African Slave* presents instead a manifestly double-voiced tale that alternates between that of the “author”/amanuensis, Benjamin Prentiss, and his transcriptive rendering of the blind, black “narrator,” Boyrereau Brinch. In this respect the memoirs import into the marrow of the narrative itself the tensions between the “authenticating” exposition of white abolitionist and the propulsive interiority of black storyteller that was conventionally confined to the external framing apparatus of the “classic” slave autobiographies. Winter’s gloss on this idiosyncratic dimension of Boyrereau’s life story is incisive but duly restrained, and sustains the broader interpretive balance that complements so gracefully the very impressive labor of literary archaeology that has restored *The Blind African Slave* so knowingly to sight.

—John S. Wright

Morse-Amoco Distinguished Teaching Professor of African American & African Studies and English

Survey

English at Minnesota would like to hear from you. And not only your latest news. In order to better inform our alumni as well as other readers and to open lines of communication we have developed a short survey. Please take a moment to complete the survey and fill in your name and address at the bottom to enter a drawing for two author-signed copies of books by past lecturers from our Esther Freier Endowed Lecture in Literature Series: **Deadline March 20, 2005**

The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay

by Michael Chabon

At the Bottom of the River

by Jamaica Kincaid

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The making of a humanities scholar

Ismail shifted paths after five years as a working journalist covering Sri Lankan politics—and deep-rooted ethnic conflict—for two newspapers and for *Time* magazine. In the 1980s, when “the political situation in Sri Lanka made peace seem impossible,” he found himself drawn to the world of the university to study international affairs, as a Fulbright scholar at Columbia University in New York.

His aims were amorphous; he hoped vaguely to enlarge his journalistic career. A month before he arrived at Peradeniya, he had read *Orientalism*—the groundbreaking elucidation of the Western attitudes toward the East that served implicitly to justify colonialism—by the influential literary critic and theorist Edward Said. Said was a professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia. Ismail wasted no time signing up for one of his classes.

“That was the beginning of a certain kind of alienation from the social sciences,” Ismail says. “I found the humanities more interesting in that they could ask questions about, broadly speaking, ‘culture.’” Taking more classes with Said and hanging out with the internationally diverse range of students who turned up in Said’s classes, Ismail eventually switched altogether from the School of International Affairs to the English department, where he began a Ph.D. program and worked for a time as Said’s research assistant.

For Ismail, Said was both a challenging teacher and a role model. “He had a passionate commitment to not simply being an academic,” Ismail says of Said, who died in late 2003. “What I learned from him was that one couldn’t just read and critique texts in isolation from the world. One had to intervene in the world. Said also had a commitment to being understood when he writes, which, as a journalist, I particularly admired.”

Perhaps even more important intellectually to Ismail was another renowned scholar in postcolonial studies on the Columbia faculty, the critic and theorist Gayatri Spivak.

“She was a difficult teacher, unlike Said; not clear,” Ismail says of Spivak, whose article “Can the Subaltern Speak” is considered one of the signal texts of postcolonialism. “But she strongly influenced the way I think. It often happens even now that something Spivak said will come back to me when I am teaching.”

Postcolonial theory gave Ismail a powerful new language in which to think and write about politics and world affairs. “My interests came to center around the topic of nationalism, which is what the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict is all about—the question of whether two nationalisms can coexist in one country,” he says.

Exploring the logic of *nationalism*

Ismail’s first book, *Abiding by Sri Lanka: On Peace, Place and Postcoloniality* (University of Minnesota Press), due out this fall, draws on texts in anthropology, history, and literature to show the limitations of “the fundamental logic” that shapes debates about nationalism.

The work focuses particularly on the various explanations put forth for the situation in Sri Lanka, the island republic in Southern Asia that was the British colony of Ceylon until 1948. Yet the theoretical significance of Ismail’s work extends far beyond the immediate context of that island. Clearly informed by Ismail’s experience as a political journalist—and marking his emergence as a postcolonial critic in his own right—the book is an intellectually ambitious exploration of what might be termed the “deep structure” of general ideas about politics and culture.

“Essentially, I look at the Sri Lankan conflict—or as I prefer to call it, ‘the question of peace in Sri Lanka’—as a way of exploring how basic concepts such as nationalism or democracy emerged and how they are put to work,” Ismail says. He explains that Sri Lanka, although functionally a democracy, has been riven by deep-seated and often violent conflict between two nationalisms: that of the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils.

The two groups “have competing claims for power and sovereignty,” Ismail says. Yet prevailing conceptual frameworks for understanding nationalism fail to account for the complexity of the Sri Lankan situation.

“From the discipline of anthropology comes a cultural explanation of the conflict in Sri Lanka—‘there’s something wrong with these natives and their culture,’” Ismail says. “For example, some people would argue the Sinhalese, who are mostly Buddhists, are not practicing Buddhism in the way it should be practiced—that the Sinhalese somehow are simply too disposed to violence.”

The field of history, in contrast, offers “a political explanation of Sri Lanka, an explanation that has been picked up by the Sinhalese majority—specifically, that Sri Lanka is a democracy, that in a democracy the majority have the right to rule and to set the rules, and that it’s just tough luck for the minority.”

Interestingly, Ismail says, “The Tamil rebuttal is also historically based: ‘Well, actually, we are not a minority, we are a nation—entitled to all the rights of a nation, including a separate state.’”

“What the two nationalisms don’t realize, of course, is how much they mirror each other,” Ismail observes. “They’re both using history to make nationalist claims.”

Ismail says “the historical point of view on both sides, doesn’t involve culturalist explanations. But the kinds of communities imagined following this historical/political logic are exclusivist. I am opposed to any notion of community based on keeping people out.”

New theoretical questions

Are there alternatives to the faulty logics of culture and politics? Ismail suggests there are. A peaceful Sri Lanka, he says, can be imagined not through the categories and methods of social science but through literature. “Literature can imagine other forms of community that respect difference or are predicated on difference,” he says, explaining the conclusions he reached after turning from anthropological and historical texts to work such as novels and plays.

Ismail is exploring these ideas further in his second book project, now under way. In this work, he is grappling with nothing less than “the question of democracy itself, not just in Sri Lanka but in general.”

“Sri Lanka raises questions about democracy that should be a concern for all of us,” Ismail explains. “If neither culturalistic nor historical explanations work as a framework for intervening in the debate about complex, multiethnic democracies such as Sri Lanka, then what does that mean for the United States or other multicultural societies?”

Ismail’s new project reflects both his concrete political interests and his general intellectual focus. “I would say at the broadest level I’m concerned with the question of what it means to be a postcolonial literary critic today,” he says. Starting with Said and Spivak, the first generation of postcolonial scholars had a huge impact on the humanities and social sciences. Now, Ismail says, “We who were these people’s students need to figure out where we go next.

“It’s not simply a matter of applying Said’s and Spivak’s ideas until we have exhausted all the objects in the world. What are the new theoretical questions we should think about? My work on democracy—and eventually I also hope to focus on culture—is an attempt to begin to chart new theoretical territory.”

Reimagining democracy

Reading texts spanning cultures and centuries—ranging from the works of Aristotle to the U.S. *Federalist Papers*, to Enlightenment philosophers—Ismail intends to lay out the assumptions and logic on which

continued on page 20



The Mystery of the Boot

On the south side of the Washington Ave Bridge, near the West Bank is a tree with hundreds of pairs of shoes hanging from it.

English at Minnesota would like to hear your explanation of how this shoe tree started and why. Historical accuracy is not required, nor necessarily encouraged, but is certainly welcome.

Depending on the number of responses, some or all of these explanations will be included in an upcoming issue of English at Minnesota.



Reimagining continued

Tyler, “Reimagining the World,” *continued from page 3*

democratic ideals and systems rest. Specifically, he aims to investigate “whether structurally, democracy—as it was understood through the twentieth century and as it’s understood today—inherently oppresses minorities because it’s predicated on majority rule.”

“I’m not going to go to political science texts and offer answers,” Ismail explains of his work. “I’m a literary critic: I read texts to trace the logic of ideas and to imagine new possibilities.”

He’s also a dedicated teacher, who brings his quiet enthusiasm for provocative inquiry directly into the classroom. Ismail—who teaches courses ranging from “Culture and Colonialism” to “Muslim Women Writers”—describes teaching “as one of my greatest pleasures, especially here where I have such wonderful students, and such a tremendous variety of students. Teaching is where I learn the most, actually, especially in my graduate classes.”

His classrooms clearly reflect the transnational, interdisciplinary nature of postcolonial studies. Students from many countries enroll in his courses, and they come from fields spanning English and art history, geography and women’s studies, journalism and education.

“What I hope they all take away from my classes is an enriched ability to think critically, to ask provocative questions of their own,” Ismail says. “That’s central to what the humanities are all about: to raise questions about objects we have come to take for granted. To probe things very deeply.”

Ismail introduces his students to complex ideas in part by “turning the discussion to present political and cultural issues,” he says. “For example, we read all the time in the newspaper that Muslims hate the West, or the U.S. specifically, because they are different from us; that everything they stand for is illiberal and everything we stand for is good.

“In a nutshell, that’s a ‘cultural difference’ argument,” Ismail notes. “As I tell my students, I’m sure there are Muslims who have that attitude. But I think most Muslims would say, ‘We don’t hate you; we are just critical of U.S. foreign policy.’”

Raising provocative questions

It’s the role of the critic/theorist, Ismail stresses, “to question the unquestionable.” That includes “concepts or categories that somehow become not only universalized, but universalized as ‘good’ or ‘natural’—like ‘Western-style democracy.’ If we ask probing questions about things like this, where might that lead us?”

“Let me put something outrageous out there,” he offers by way of example. “What if we reimagined democracy taking an example from ancient Greece?” Ismail says, “People in ancient Greece were selected for governance roles—not for every post, but some—by lot. We shouldn’t forget Greece was a slave-owning society. But in this one respect, at least, there was a concern about deference, which I find highly intriguing.”

Suppose, he suggests, “that in this country, today, we selected people by lot, randomly, to be in the U.S. Congress. Instead of a majority of

“I came to see that political and social change occurs slowly, and is shaped fundamentally by how we understand culture and history. Teaching English literature is not a purely intellectual project. At bottom it is, for me, a means of political engagement.”

lawyers—almost all of whom are white, male, and a great many of whom are millionaires—we might have a janitor or two. We might have more Native Americans, single mothers, African Americans, openly gay and lesbian congresspeople.”

An outrageous idea, perhaps, grants Ismail. Yet “even outrageous ideas can inspire us to think imaginatively and deeply about our institutions and ideals,” he says. “Selection-by-lot might produce an arguably more democratic government. Or it might not, you never know. But surely it would be more representative than a government of lawyers and millionaires.”

For this politically engaged literary critic, it remains an article of faith that “provocative questions help us reimagine our world, which is the prerequisite for improving it.

“I mean, not in any tangible, quantifiable, obvious ways,” Ismail clarifies. “Not in any quick ways. But yes, I believe ideas do make a difference. While I do not hold that I will theorize a better world into being, if I can contribute something toward that, I’ll be happy. And if I can teach a few undergraduate and graduate students to think a little more carefully and broadly about the world, I’ll be even happier.”

Background

Education:

Columbia University, M.A. (1992); Ph.D. (1998)
Columbia University, School of International & Public Affairs Master’s Program, 1989-91
University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, B.A., 1984

Teaching Appointments:

University of Minnesota, Department of English
Associate Professor, 2003–present
University of Minnesota, Department of English
Assistant Professor, 1997-2003

Publications

Books:

Abiding by Sri Lanka: On Peace, Place and Postcoloniality.
(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, ‘Public Worlds’ Series, forthcoming.)

Co-editor (with Pradeep Jeganathan), *Unmaking the Nation: The Politics of Identity and History in Modern Sri Lanka.* (Colombo: SSA, 1995). Reprinted (Colombo: SSA) 1997.

—Kate Tyler is a freelance writer based in Minneapolis



Mapping continued

Tyler, “Mapping the Shadows,” *continued from page 5*

“That’s how it happened,” Cucullu recalls of a moment perhaps every bit as wondrous as looking up from a New Orleans street to see a ship suddenly glide by on an unseen river high above the swamps and lakes. “Discovering literary theory was absolutely wonderful, because it allowed me to think an entirely different way. It solved the problem of how to combine history and literature, my two loves. I could be both critical and creative at the same time.”

Fusing the critical and the creative

Entering a Ph.D. program at Brown University, Cucullu was on her way as a literary scholar. The span of disciplines and decades on her resume to some degree set her apart from the other students, but served her well as a scholar—allowing her to cast a fresh and revealing eye on modernism, an area of study that in the last two decades has languished in postmodernism’s shadow.

“I am a product of modernism in many respects,” Cucullu says. “Postmodernist criticism today dominates the landscape of literary study, but when I was an undergraduate, modernism was the dominant discourse.”

A modernist ethos still prevails in creative writing programs, Cucullu notes. “The emphasis is on technique and expertise and creativity. In other words, all the values expounded as ‘modernist’ in literary studies were the ones I absorbed as a poetry student in an M.F.A. program.”

Making this connection in a literary theory course, Cucullu began musing about “modernism as the model that has influenced education at large, and not just in the humanities. I had a conversation with some-

one in chemistry who talked about the aesthetic production of certain diagrams, their technical exactness, their beauty, and symmetry. That’s pretty comparable to how modernists talk about the aesthetics of literary texts.”

What better way, Cucullu thought, “to bring together all the stages of my training, all of my experiences, than to focus on understanding modernism in historical and feminist perspective.”

By 1998, Cucullu was a rising academic star. She easily rose to the top tier in a pool of 1,300 applicants who vied for five faculty positions during a “mega search”—seeking the best and brightest scholars—conducted by Minnesota’s English department.

Happy landing

Cucullu couldn’t be happier about landing at Minnesota. “The University of Minnesota is one of the great research universities,” she says. “I get the sense all the time that people here realize the value of this great institution, both from their own lives and in terms of all that it brings to the state.”

Mention to any Minnesotan that you teach English at the University and you’re apt to get one of two responses, Cucullu says. “First, people will say ‘Let me tell you the latest thing I’ve read,’ which is quite striking because in other places, the response will be something like, ‘Oh, I’ll have to watch my grammar.’

“You’ll also hear about the personal connections people have with the University: ‘My son’s studying history at the U, or ‘my daughter’s going to the U law school.’ My dentist proudly told me she went to the U. Novelists I meet at readings mention they studied creative writing at the U. People from all walks of life—it’s amazing.”

“The University of Minnesota is one of the great research universities. I get the sense all the time that people here realize the value of this great institution, both from their own lives and in terms of all that it brings to the state.”

—Professor Lois Cucullu

Whether “this broad base of support will pan out in legislative support in the next biennial budget session,” Cucullu adds, “I don’t know. We’re clearly at a crunch point.”

Also impressive to Cucullu are the range and high caliber of the students she teaches. That’s true not just at the graduate level, where she teaches on such topics as empire and English masculinity and the culture of modernism. Smart students from across the University turn up in her undergraduate courses, she says—budding political scientists and criminologists joining English majors for discussions of modernist novels or works by women writers, or for poetry workshops, which she also teaches occasionally in the department’s creative writing program.

Cucullu sees teaching as a “way of sharing knowledge. You set the bar high—let students know you expect a lot of them. You’re also their most ardent supporter in helping them get over the bar. You make it possible for them to articulate what they already know, and then to pose questions to get to what they don’t know. I should add that my students do the same for me.”

New directions

Her pathbreaking examination of modernism is barely off the press, but Cucullu already has fixed her sights on the remapping of a new—and no less complex—area of the intellectual landscape. “I’m thinking about ‘adolescence’ as a cultural phenomenon rather than something that’s always been here,” she says. “In a way, it’s an outgrowth of the first book—it seemed like the thing privileged by modernists, but never mentioned. It’s there in works like [Joyce’s] *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or [Woolf’s] *Orlando*. I want to trace how adolescence has been represented in science, history, and literature since the early twentieth century.”

In contemporary society, Cucullu says, adolescence (“which now seems to span the ages of 12 to 34”) “has become the preeminent space. We don’t think of it like that, but look at all the nine-year-old girls dressing like Britney Spears or the adults obsessed with Botox smiles and six-pack abs—they’re all in a sense trying to get back to the space of adolescence. It’s a conceptual space that fills a need in the social and cultural context today. It mediates differences of class, gender, race, and national boundaries in the same way that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, being middle class created a space between the low and high born.”

Cucullu’s new project may be complex, but it also promises also to be a lot of fun. On her reading list so far are texts ranging from Margaret Mead’s *Coming of Age in Samoa* to Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and perhaps even a Britney Spears music video.

For Cucullu, it’s all part of “what being a scholar in the humanities is all about. Medical breakthroughs and high-tech patents may get all the attention, but scholarship in the humanities and in the social sciences does matter. Ultimately, our job is to produce critical and creative narratives that help make sense of our world.

“If we don’t have maps of our history and culture,” emphasizes the daughter of the Mississippi River delta, “how can we not eventually end up at sea?”

Background

Education

Brown University, M.A., Ph.D. (English)
George Mason University, M.F.A. (Creative Writing)
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, M.A.
Louisiana State University, New Orleans, B.A.

Teaching Appointments

University of Minnesota, Assistant Professor, 1998-
Wheaton College, Visiting Instructor in English,
1996-98

Brown University, Teaching Assistant in English,
1990-95

Seoul National University, Visiting Fulbright Lecturer-
Researcher in English, 1988-89

George Mason University, Visiting Assistant
Professor in English, 1986-88; Teaching Assistant
in English, 1982-86

Publications

Current projects

Expert Modernists, Matricide, and Modern Culture: Woolf, Forster, Joyce. Houndsmills, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
(in production)

Essay Collection

“Dating Maurice: Reappraisals of E. M. Forster’s Maurice”



Messer-Davidow (presiding at the special session, "Literary Work, Theory Work, Political Work: In the Tradition of Stanley Fish"); and **John Watkins** ("Shakespeare's *Henry VI* and the Tragedy of Renaissance Diplomacy"; as outgoing president of the International Spenser Society, Professor Watkins also organized two sessions and a dinner at the convention). **Paula Rabinowitz** attended as a member of the Delegate Assembly and the Committee on the Status of Women. **Anca Parvulescu**, a Graduate School Fellow in the Department of English, presented two papers at the convention: "So We Will Go Bad": Manners, Cheekiness, and Woman's Laughter," and "Ralph Ellison's 'Extravagance of Laughter'; or, How to Destroy a Laughing Barrel."

The department's reception was an enjoyable event, an opportunity for many people to see old friends and make new connections to the department. A few of those who attended are **Tom Hanks** (Ph.D. 1976), professor of English at Baylor University; **Maureen Konkle** (Ph.D. 1997), associate professor of English at the University of Missouri-Columbia (her new book, *Writing Indian Nations Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863*, was on display at the University of North Carolina Press booth in the exhibition hall); **Tim Sweet** (Ph.D. 1988), associate professor and associate chair of English, University of West Virginia; and **Kari Winter** (Ph.D. 1990), associate professor of American Studies, SUNY-Buffalo. Professor Winter also presented a paper, "Africans in the British Colonies: Soldiers in War, Slaves in Peace." Her recent book, an edition of the memoirs of Boyreureau Brinch, is reviewed by Professor **John Wright** on p. 16 of this issue.

Faculty Search 2005 Job Description

The field of specialization is open. Applications that show strength in one or more of the following areas are particularly welcome:

African-American, Black British and British postcolonial, and African diaspora literatures, cultures, and theory; comparative studies of race

Anglo-Saxon language, literature, and culture

Literatures and cultures from 1500 to 1800, including Renaissance/early modern, the Enlightenment, and the long eighteenth century

New perspectives for English (composition and rhetoric, disciplinary theory, new technologies and new media, creative nonfiction)

The varieties of English ranging from the history of the language to world Englishes



“Federickson,” *continued from page 13*

“milepost” of their graduate career, from admission to job placement. She schedules thesis defenses, answers questions about the myriad forms required for graduation, helps students navigate policies and procedures, assists committees on fellowships and prizes, and coordinates travel funding for graduate students. Federickson also runs the very important job dossier service for graduates who are seeking academic employment or post-doctoral fellowships.

She says that the least enjoyable part of her job is fielding calls from people who were not accepted into our graduate program. However, over the years, she has found a way to make this less awkward for herself and the prospective student. And frequently she has the opportunity to help readmit a student who has been away from graduate school, or complete their degree at a distance. The circumstances are ever-changing but Federickson says that she especially enjoys finding “solutions to the logistical (and morale!) problems involved.”

Federickson, whose tenure has seen nine different directors of graduate studies, says that her interactions with faculty and students are her favorite part of the job. Whether it is helping a student win a fellowship or a faculty position, or just hearing about the quirks and intricacies of their scholarship, she considers all of this an education of her own. Trained as a historian, she has a certain fondness for the web searching and archiving necessary to keep all of her very dependent clients in order and up to date. She would like to make special note of the support she received from faculty and students when she went out on strike with other civil service employees in 2003.

New Books continued from p. 9

Professor Charles Baxter, Editor with Michael Collier, and Edward Hirsch

A William Maxwell Portrait

W. W. Norton (2004)

Writers who knew Maxwell and were inspired by him—both the man and his work—offer intimate essays, most specifically written for this volume, that “bring him back to life, right there in front of us.”



Mark Spitzer (B.A. 1990)—*translator*

Divine Filth, Georges Bataille

Creation Books (2004)

The latest translation from the author of the novel *Chum*. *Divine Filth* is a collection of long-overlooked erotic prose and scatological fragments rivaled only by Georges Bataille’s most well-known work, *Story of the Eye*. These are the shattered mystic visions of a seminal Surrealist with a deep thirst for the negation of consciousness through ecstasy, humiliation, depravity and pain.



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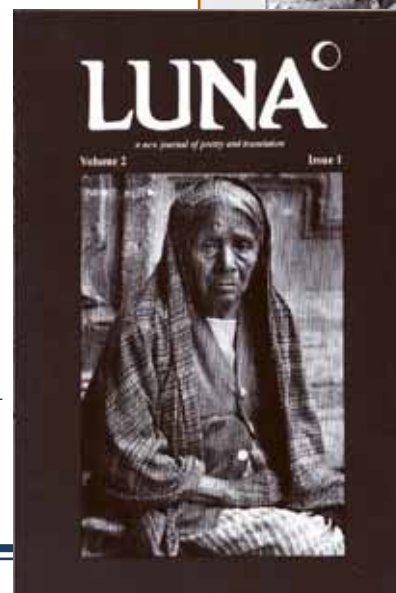
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LUNA #7 will be an all-prose-poetry issue and will feature the work of Robert Bly, Cesar Vallejo, Toni Mirosevich, George Kalamaras, Morton Marcus, Denise Duhamel, Virgil Suarez, Peter Johnson, Amy S. F. Lutz, Gary Young, Brian Clements, and others.



Dislocate is now accepting submissions in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry for its **Spring 2005 print issue**. Dislocate publishes the work of both established and emerging writers, and we are especially interested in unique voices and a wide range of styles. Deadline for submissions to the Spring 2005 print issue is **February 15, 2005**.

Past contributors include: Anne Gorrick, Juan Felipe Herrera, Deborah Keenan, Anna Cypra Oliver, and William Reichard.

Submission Guidelines:

All submissions will be blind. Please include your contact information (including name, address, phone, email, and title(s) of work(s) submitted) in a cover letter only. Poetry: 3-5 poems of no more than 10 pages total in length. Fiction and Nonfiction: up to 5000 words. Simultaneous submissions accepted provided we are notified immediately in the event of publication elsewhere. No previous publications accepted. Submissions which do not meet with our guidelines will not be considered.

Mail submissions plus SASE with correct postage to: **Dislocate (Indicate genre editor to which you are submitting), Creative Writing Department, University of Minnesota, 207 Church Street SE, 207 Lind Hall, Minneapolis MN 55455-0134.**

Simultaneous submissions are permitted provided we are notified immediately in the event of publication elsewhere. No previous publications are eligible. Submissions which do not meet with our guidelines will not be considered.

 **Dislocate.**

Calendar

Spring 2005

Besides the writers who are brought to campus in the endowed series listed below, the department hosts many other scholars and writers throughout the year. Please visit the English department home page for the venue and time of events and for changes and additions to the calendar.

<http://english.cla.umn.edu/>

Edelstein-Keller Visiting Writer Series

2005

February 23 Edward P. Jones

Edward P. Jones is the author of *The Known World*, awarded the 2004 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction. Jones is a two-time National Book Award finalist, Guggenheim Fellow, and winner of the PEN/Hemingway award for his collection of stories *Lost in the City*. He lives in Arlington, Virginia.



Esther Freier Endowed Lecture Series in Literature

2005

April 15 Anna Deavere Smith

Smith is perhaps best known as the author and performer of two one-woman plays about racial tensions in American cities – *Fires in the Mirror* (Obie Award-winner and runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize) and *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* (Obie Award-winner and Tony Award nominee). Smith plays National Security Advisor Nancy McNally on NBC's *The West Wing* and co-starred in the CBS drama, *Presidio Med*. She has appeared in the films *The Human Stain*, *Philadelphia*, *Dave*, *The American President* and on TV's *The Practice*. The film version of *Twilight* premiered at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival.



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