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A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR: LOREN GLASS



Dear Friends of the English Department,

Welcome to Out of Iowa 2022, a record of our gradual and resilient return to normal. Indeed, we're confidently building a new normal in EPB, as we work together to create a more diverse and inclusive community of writers and readers and teachers and learners for a post-COVID world. In the process we are welcoming new members to that community and offering heartfelt farewells to those who have departed. And along the way we document and celebrate the achievements of our remarkable students, faculty, and alumni.

I am particularly proud to welcome award-winning poet and novelist Kaveh Akbar to Iowa as Director of our now not-so-new major in English and Creative Writing, which continues to attract talented young writers from around the world. The arrival of Professor Akbar marks the maturation

of this major, and is a milestone in the transformation of our department as a whole into a pioneering laboratory of critical creativity and creative criticism. Professor Akbar arrives with his partner, the poet Paige Lewis. They join an exciting cohort of new faculty—including Melissa Febos, Donika Kelly, Louisa Hall, and Bennett Sims—all of whom work at the exciting intersection of scholarly research and creative expression. They are the reason we've become a destination major and an anchor of the University's literary reputation.

We are also transforming graduate study as we work to accommodate ourselves to a changing job market. Our PhD track in Book Studies continues to attract promising young scholars, and we're working on introducing a track in literary translation. We also anticipate welcoming new and innovative forms of the dissertation as our graduate students explore diverse career tracks and professional opportunities at the fruitful intersection of critical and creative endeavor.

(continued on page 18)

In Memoriam: Carl H. Klaus (1932 - 2022)



As one of the founders of the prestigious Nonfiction Writing Program, Carl H. Klaus left behind an enormous legacy at the University of Iowa. As a teacher and a scholar of voice and persona in nonfiction writing, he influenced many hundreds of young nonfiction writers, both in the classroom and through his nonfiction craft books. And, as a prolific nonfiction writer in his own right, he touched many lives through his tender, thoughtful essayistic journals.

Klaus arrived at writing literary nonfiction by a roundabout path. His first professional aspiration was to be a rabbi, but after deciding that wasn't right for him, he arrived as an undergraduate at the University of Michigan on track to become a medical doctor. "People might be surprised to know that I once cared so little about reading and writing that in freshman English I was lucky to scrape by with a grade of C," Klaus told *The Daily Iowan* in a 2021 interview. However, after failing a fateful chemistry class in sophomore year, Klaus switched from the MD track, going on to receive a PhD in English from Cornell University. It took even longer for Klaus to discover the literary genre for which he is now best known: "I did not develop an interest in reading and writing literary nonfiction until many years later, until the latter

years of my professional career," Klaus reported. "So, it might well be said that I was 'a late bloomer.'"

Klaus's teaching career began in 1959 at Bowdoin College in Maine and continued when he joined the English Department at the University of Iowa in 1964. In 1976, he chaired the committee that launched the MA in English With Emphasis on Expository Writing. Later, as Director, he narrowed the program's focus to literary nonfiction and it became the MA in Nonfiction Writing. Today, we know it as the Nonfiction Writing Program. Klaus taught until his retirement in 1997, having a profound effect on the writing lives of his students and the direction of the program as a whole in those 21 years. The Nonfiction Writing Program has gone on to have a remarkable influence on the growth of the lyric essay as a recognized and respected genre. Many of the biggest names in the genre's modern history, such as Jo Ann Beard, Yiyun Li, and Eula Biss, just to name a few, are alumni.

As a scholar of literary nonfiction, Klaus's marquee subject was the writer's persona: the authentic but intentionally constructed and highly variable "voice" the writer adopts in order to achieve their desired effect. Klaus devoted an entire book, *The Made-Up Self*, to describing and observing the phenomenon of literary personae.

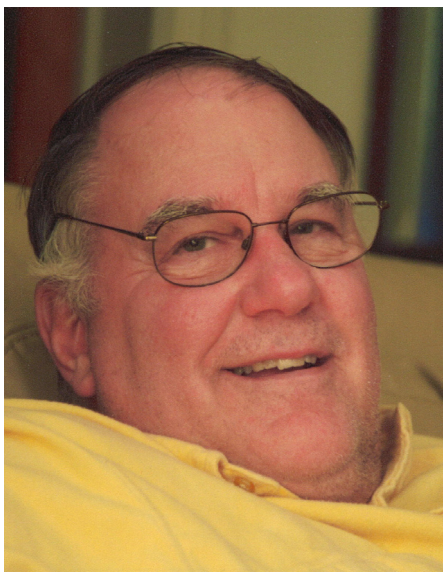
"A personal essay does, after all, put one more directly in contact with the thought and feeling of its author than do other forms of literature... But the 'person' in a personal essay is a written construct, a fabricated thing, a character of sorts—the sound of its voice a by-product of carefully chosen words, its recollection of experience, its run of thought and feeling, much tidier than the mess of memories, thoughts, and feelings arising in one's consciousness."

-Carl H. Klaus, *The Made-Up Self*

He followed it up with a craft book, *A Self Made of Words*, that equips aspiring nonfiction writers with techniques for crafting an effective persona. With Ned Stuckey-French, he edited *Essayists on the Essay: Montaigne to Our Time*, a historically and internationally comprehensive collection featuring essayists writing about the theory, practice, and art of the essay.

In his own nonfiction writing, Klaus favored quotidian, personal subject matter. His writing process drew from a journaling practice taken up to reflect on major life changes or simply to find the profound in the ordinary. The result is a series of essayistic journals written and published in his later years of teaching through his retirement: *My Vegetable Love*, *Weathering Winter*, *Taking Retirement*, *Letters to Kate*, and *The Ninth Decade*. ♡

In Memoriam: Paul Diehl (1944 - 2022)



For nearly three decades, Paul Diehl was an invaluable member of the English faculty at the University of Iowa, a passionate advocate for and director of the Nonfiction Writing Program, and a friend and mentor to many in the department. He was also a model of tireless pedagogical and academic service and a consummate scholar of lyrical structure in both poetry and prose.

Diehl was the son of Iowa farmers but grew up in Dallas, Texas, coming to the University of Iowa later in life by coincidence. He discovered his lifelong love of teaching as an English teacher at Dimmitt High School in Texas. He went on to earn his MA and PhD in English at the University of Texas at Austin, teaching at Grinnell College for two years before arriving at the University of Iowa in 1975. Diehl was strongly associated with the lyric poetry course at Iowa. Brooks Landon, Professor of English and current director of the Nonfiction Writing Program, attests that "Paul was the master of everything lyrical. He was as good a reader of poetry as I've ever known, and he understood prose rhythms as well as anybody I've ever known."

In 1991, Diehl became the Director of what was then the MA in Nonfiction Writing, succeeding one of the

program's founders, Carl Klaus. He was a passionate advocate for the degree granted by the program to be changed to an MFA and for the appointment of professional nonfiction writers as permanent and visiting faculty members. In 1994, Diehl succeeded in both of these goals, transforming the program into the Nonfiction Writing Program we know today.

Diehl rendered a number of other remarkable services to the English Department. He hosted regular "lyric lunches" with faculty and students where he discussed poetry and shared his lyrical expertise. He and his wife Dedra Diehl, then the Medical Librarian and Editor for the Department of Family Medicine at UI, welcomed many faculty members, visiting professors, and students into their Iowa City home for social events. He served on over fifty dissertation committees, as thesis director for many NWP MFA candidates, as the chair of multiple search committees, and as the Summer DEO of the English Department for multiple years.

Outside of Iowa, Diehl contributed to an amazing variety of pedagogical and academic efforts. He was a senior reviewer for the English section of the ACT National Exam, was involved in the development of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and took part in the National Endowment for the Humanities Institute on Writing. He served

as an expert witness on linguistic and literary matters for the U.S. Federal Circuit and contributed to the *World Book Encyclopedia* its entire entry on poetry.

Diehl's life and career were affected by chronic health issues and disability. Days before his 14th birthday, his legs became paralyzed due to a spinal condition that was never fully diagnosed. Thanks to rehabilitation, he was able to walk unaided for much of his adult life, but for a portion of his teaching career at Iowa he used crutches and, later, a wheelchair. Diehl's continued commitment to teaching and service in the face of the increasing challenges associated with his disability is a testament to his dedication, passion, and courage. ♡

"Such things as rhyme and uniformity (meter, stanza form) are not the cause of poetic quality. Rather, poetic quality is the cause, the 'life' of rhyme and uniformity."

- Paul Diehl, *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*

"Many people are first attracted to poetry by the sound and rhythm of a poem's words... Early peoples used poetic language with accompanying music in songs, prayers, and magic spells. The patterns of rhyme and rhythm helped people remember and so preserve oral poetry from generation to generation."

- Paul Diehl, *World Book Encyclopedia*

Construction Complete on New NWP Building

The Nonfiction Writing Program, a three-year MFA program within the Department of English, is a prestigious and widely-celebrated institution, and has produced dozens of the most prominent nonfiction writers working today. For decades, the expanding program was housed in the English Philosophy Building, and plans for a new building were on the backburner since 2008, when an historic flood turned the University of Iowa's attention toward repairing and restoring its existing buildings. The long wait makes it all the more exciting that construction is now complete on the new



Nonfiction Writing Program Building. The building is located on the southeast corner of North Clinton and Church streets, directly across from the President's Residence and a stone's throw from both the Dey House, home of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and Shambaugh House, home of the International Writing Program. The two-story, 3,500 square foot building contains offices for NWP faculty, seminar classrooms, a multimedia lab, and a library with an open lounge space. It will also feature a memorial garden for Carl Klaus, one of the founders of the Nonfiction Writing Program, who passed away this year.

John D'Agata, the director of the NWP from 2013 to 2020, has spearheaded the effort to build a new home for the program. The adaptation of his book *The Lifespan of a Fact* into a Broadway play in 2018, and the notoriety he drew from its success, is a big reason why the construction of the new building was an entirely donor-funded project. "The NWP's new building will give the program a bold new presence on campus, and it will give creative nonfiction writers a greater voice in the collection of gorgeous words already being written under many different roofs at Iowa," said D'Agata. However, he doesn't think the benefits of a new building should be restricted to the NWP, adding: "We have one of the nation's best writing programs in translation. The extraordinary playwriting program that spawned Tennessee Williams. An enormous, vibrant undergraduate creative writing major in English. And one of the only Spanish Creative Writing programs in the country. All of these programs deserve recognition, and buildings too. My dream is for a writing corridor stretching down Clinton Street." ♡

UI Ranked #2 in Writing in the Disciplines

In September, *U.S. News & World Report* released its 2022-2023 College Rankings, and Iowa was ranked #2 in "Writing in the Disciplines," a category related to the teaching of writing in all disciplines and courses of study. The University of Iowa was ranked #13 in 2020, when the category was first introduced, and #10 in 2021. For all three years, Iowa has been the top-ranked public institution. This year, Iowa is tied for the #2 spot with Yale University and ranks ahead of Cornell and Harvard.

This ranking is a credit to every department at the University of Iowa. It is a testament to their commitment to teaching the type of writing and communication techniques that can be applied to every discipline and career path. Of course, the University of Iowa also benefits from a special history in the world of writing, which is upheld and promoted by programs such as the English Department, the Iowa Writers' Workshop, the Nonfiction Writing Program, the International Writing Program, and others. This ranking is yet another demonstration that the University of Iowa is a remarkable epicenter for excellent writers of all stripes. ♡

Irish Writing Program Returns

After two years of postponement due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Irish Writing Program was back in session for the summer of 2022. The well-known and popular study abroad program sees aspiring writers living and learning together for six weeks in Dublin, the capital of the Republic of Ireland and a UNESCO City of Literature, associated with legendary Irish writers like James Joyce and William Butler Yeats.

Students in the program split their time between two classes. The first is a three-part seminar on Irish literature, taught by Irish faculty who are also prominent working writers. This year, the lineup consisted of novelist David Butler, poet Jessica Traynor, and dramatist Gavin Kostick. The second is a writing workshop taught by the Program Director and Iowa Professor of English Dr. Blaine Greteman. This dual focus mirrors the integration of reading and writing practices that's so important to the University of Iowa's own English and Creative Writing major. "We're spending several hours a day both reading and working on writing," Dr. Greteman reports. "It's six weeks of very intensive study and I think the thing that makes it so productive is that integration."

Dr. Greteman also notes the unique community that emerges from the rigorous conditions of the program. "When you take a cohort of students and for six weeks you put them in close quarters living

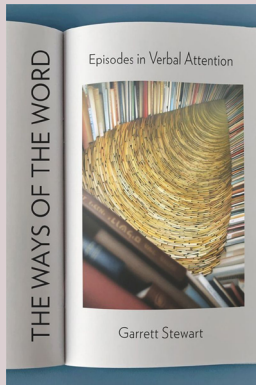
and cooking and reading and writing together like that, they really do seem to bond in a way that's pretty special. I see them carrying on great discussions about one another's work or the things that they're reading... as they're walking back and forth to class or when I would bump into them waiting for the bus." The community is also enhanced by an unfamiliar environment: "There's something about a place that's just a little bit alien, and needing to adapt to a culture and a place that is not your own, that's really healthy for us as writers and just as people. I think that's part of the reason that students bond so well." Of course, spending time in a new place also affects the writing students produce during the program—just not in the way you might expect. "Sometimes people go into it thinking they'll write about Ireland or their experiences there," Dr. Greteman reports, "and that's almost never the case. Typically, students end up producing writing that is rooted much more directly in the places that they are from."

This trip to Dublin was particularly special because the previous two planned sessions were canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic. "There was a lot of disappointment because this is a program that has been around for 25 years now, and you have students who come into the English major as freshman knowing they want to do it before they graduate. It was super exciting this year to be back." ❧



Irish Writing Program participants on a sunrise hike during a rainy trip to the Aran Islands, off the west coast of Ireland. According to Program Director Blaine Greteman, he snapped this photo in "the five or ten minutes of sun that we had the entire weekend we were on Innishmoor."

Faculty Books and Publications



Garret Stewart

The Ways of the World: Episodes in Verbal Attention

(Cornell University Press)

In *The Ways of the Word*, Garrett Stewart steps aside from theory to focus on the sheer pleasure of attentive reading and the excitement of recognizing the play of syllables and words upon which the best literary writing is founded. Emerging out of teaching creative writing and a broader effort to convene writers and critics, Stewart's "episodes in verbal attention" track the means to meaning through the byways of literary wording.

Eric Gidal's article "Industrial Transport and Political Economy in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine" was published in a special issue of *Studies in Romanticism*, "An Inventive Age: Writing of the Industrial Revolution, 1770-1830."

Donika Kelly's poem, "Sixteen Center," was published in *The New Yorker*.

Kathy Lavezzo's essay "Whiteness, Medievalism, Immigration: Rethinking Tolkien Through Stuart Hall" was published in *Postmedieval: a Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*.

Sarah Minor's essay, "Nonfiction's Liquid State," was published in *Full Stop Magazine* and her essay "The Listening Rooms" was published in *Fence*.

William Rhodes' article, "The Apocalyptic Aesthetics of the List: Form and Political Economy in Wynne and Wastoure," was published in *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*.

Harry Stecopoulos' essay "The Heat of Modernity: The Great Gatsby as Petrofiction" was published in *The Cambridge Companion to American Literature and the Environment* (Cambridge, 2022) and his essay "'Warm with Topsy Embraces': Allen Ginsberg, the US-China Writers' Conferences, and Queer Internationalism" was published in *The Oxford Handbook of Twentieth-Century American Literature* (Oxford, 2022).

Jonathan Wilcox's essay, "Imagination at the Edge of the World: Luxuriating Women in Vercelli Homily VII and a Resistant Audience," was published in *Global Perspectives on Early Medieval England* (Cambridge: Boydell, 2022).

Faculty Awards

Matt Brown and **Elizabeth Yale** have received a \$150,000 Humanities Initiatives grant for their project "Global Book Cultures and the Student Laboratory: Undergraduate Education at the UI Center for the Book."

Tara Bynum has been awarded an Early Career Scholars Award from the OVPR to fund her DH project, *Six Degrees of Phillis Wheatley*, as well as a fellowship from the McNeil Center for Early American Studies at the University of Pennsylvania for AY 2022-2023.

Donika Kelly has won the 2022 Anisfield-Wolf award for poetry. She was also a finalist for the 2022 Granum Prize and for the National Book Critics Circle award for Poetry for her collection *The Renunciations* (Graywolf Press 2021).

Melissa Febos Wins NBCC Award, Receives Guggenheim Fellowship, Publishes New Book

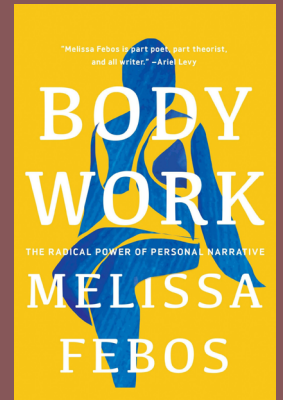


It's been an extraordinary year for Melissa Febos, University of Iowa Associate Professor in the English Department and the Nonfiction Writing Program. This March, it was announced that Febos won the 2021 National Book Critic Circle Award for Criticism for her essay collection *Girlhood* (Bloomsbury, 2021). Each year, the NBCC recognizes only one English language book in each of six categories. *Girlhood* "examines the narratives women are told about what it means to be female and what it takes to free oneself from them." *Girlhood* is also a national bestseller, a LAMBDA Literary Award finalist, and was named one of the best books of 2021 by *Time Magazine*, *NPR*, and *The Washington Post*.

In April, Febos was awarded a 2022 Guggenheim Fellowship in general nonfiction. For nearly a century, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation has awarded fellowships to those "who have demonstrated exceptional capacity for productive scholarship or exceptional creative ability in the arts." Each fellowship, of which fewer than 200 are awarded each year across all disciplines, comes with a grant which fellows can use to take time away from their duties and pursue creative projects.

Also this year, Febos released a new book with Catapult: *Body Work: The Radical Power of Personal Narrative* is a hybrid memoir and nonfiction writing craft book that "tackles the emotional, psychological, and physical work of writing intimately while offering an utterly fresh examination of the storyteller's life and the questions which run through it." *Body Work* has already been named one of the best books of 2022 by *NPR*.

Rounding out this year of remarkable publications and accolades: Febos's essay, "Jeannette Winterson, My Therapist, and Me" was published in the *New York Review of Books*. Her essay "The Wild Sublime Body," published last year in *The Yale Review*, has been selected for *The Best American Essays 2023* by editor Alexander Chee. She has been awarded a 2022 National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship and a 2022 Shearing Fellowship from the Black Mountain Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where she is currently in residence. She additionally received an Eccles Centre Visiting Fellowship from The British Library. This Spring, she will travel there to research her fifth book, tentatively titled *The Dry Season*, which is under contract with Alfred A. Knopf.



The University of Iowa English Department is incredibly fortunate to have as a faculty member such a decorated, prolific writer as Melissa Febos, not to mention one whose work is so essential to the modern nonfiction landscape. The University of Iowa English Department extends its deepest congratulations to Professor Febos, and wishes her the absolute best in all her current and future endeavors! ♡

(See graduate student, staff, and alumni awards and publications on pages 12 and 13)

Welcoming New Faculty

Kaveh Akbar is the new Director of the English and Creative Writing major, as well as an Associate Professor of English. He comes to the University of Iowa after teaching at Purdue University, and also teaches at low-residency MFA programs at Randolph College and Warren Wilson.

Akbar is the author of the poetry collections *Pilgrim Bell* (Graywolf, 2021) and *Calling a Wolf a Wolf* (Alice James Books, 2017), as well as the chapbook *Portrait of the Alcoholic* (Sibling Rivalry, 2017). In 2024, Knopf will publish *Martyr!*, Akbar's first novel. He is the editor of *The Penguin Book of Spiritual Verse: 110 Poets on the Divine*, and the founding editor of *Divedapper*, an online home for interviews with major voices in contemporary poetry. Since 2020, he has served as poetry editor for *The Nation*.



Akbar is the recipient of the Levis Reading Prize, multiple Pushcart Prizes, the Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellowship, and the Civitella Ranieri Fellowship. Akbar's poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Poetry Magazine*, *Best American Poetry*, *The New Republic*, *Paris Review*, *PBS News Hour*, *Tin House*, and elsewhere.



Paige Lewis joins the English Department as an Assistant Professor of English. They come to the University of Iowa after teaching at Purdue University, and also teach at the low-residency MFA program at Randolph College.

Lewis is the author of the poetry collection *Space Struck* (Sarabande Books, 2019) and co-editor of *Last Call: Poems on Addiction and Recovery* (Sarabande Books, 2023). With author John Green and the Poetry Foundation, they created the YouTube channel *Ours Poetica*, which features poems read by their authors and others and aims to make poetry more accessible. Their poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Gulf Coast*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Rumpus*, *The Iowa Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Ninth Letter*, and elsewhere. ♡

Welcoming New Staff

Andrea Cramer joins the English Department as an Administrative Services Coordinator, as well as a TA and RA Coordinator and the Assistant to the Directors of GEL and the English and Creative Writing Major.

Christine Norquest joins the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences as an Academic Advisor.

Shannon Yost joins the English Department as an Administrative Services Coordinator, as well as the Curriculum Coordinator and Assistant to the DEO. ♡

The English and Creative Writing Major: Six Years In



The English-Philosophy Building is the administrative home of the English Department. Photo by Grace Smith.



The Dey house is home to the famous Iowa Writer's Workshop, which manages many undergraduate classes required for the English and Creative Writing Major. Photo by Kathryn Mickelson.

It might be difficult to imagine today, but there was once a time when the University of Iowa did not have a full course of study dedicated to creative writing at the undergraduate level. What's more, that particular innovation came much more recently than many incoming students might realize: the English and Creative Writing (ECW) major debuted at the University of Iowa in 2016.

The University of Iowa is home to the world-famous Iowa Writers Workshop, a graduate program that was the first of its kind when it was founded in 1936 as part of the Department of English. The Nonfiction Writing Program, also the first of its kind and also housed in the Department of English, was founded in 1976. The designation of Iowa City as a UNESCO City of Literature came in 2008, and around this same time, the University of Iowa came to be known as "The Writing University." There was no question as to the University of Iowa's literary reputation, and that reputation was increasingly attracting young undergraduates who wanted to participate academically in the tradition of writing at Iowa.

For many years, the program of choice for these students was a creative writing track offered within the English major. The track was a great choice

for many students, but it had its limitations. Admission was limited and determined by application, and students couldn't enroll until their junior or senior year. English Department Academic Advisor Kate Torno recalls the dilemma faced by prospective undergraduates who wanted to come to Iowa for writing: "They could not know before committing to Iowa if they were, in fact, going to be admitted to that track." What's more, the track didn't require extensive coursework in writing, leaving many of those students who were admitted wanting more.

Fortunately, the University and the English Department were attentive to student demands, and in 2016, the English and Creative Writing major was created. The new program was designed to be both more open, guaranteeing any number of students the opportunity to declare as soon as they arrived at the University, and more rigorous, including an introductory creative writing course and allowing students to take multiple writing courses throughout their undergraduate careers. What's more, they ensured that students in the new program would still enjoy the benefits of a traditional major in English by splitting coursework requirements between writing and literature courses.

The Fall 2022 Semester marks the English and Creative Writing major's sixth year at the University of Iowa. The major also has a new director in Kaveh Akbar, an accomplished educator and renowned poet. It's the perfect time to take a look back on the program's initial goals, what it's accomplished so far, and, most importantly, what its future holds.

Students are the core of any academic program, so the first place to look is enrollment and admissions. The program's initial goals were modest: 200 undergraduates enrolled by the program's seventh year. This projection was shattered almost immediately when the Fall 2017 Semester, which was the beginning of the program's second year, saw 526 students declare an ECW major. Six years in, the cohort is still strong—according to CLAS Admissions Manager Kyle McEvily, there are 683 ECW majors at Iowa this fall. This makes English and Creative Writing one of the most popular majors at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and indeed the University as a whole.

One big reason why is that group of incoming students who choose to come to Iowa specifically to study creative writing. ECW is a “destination major” in that it attracts many out-of-state students, especially students from states that are not contiguous with Iowa. Of course, this means that the major is a focus for undergraduate recruitment. CLAS Admissions Manager Kyle McEvily attests: “The University of Iowa prides itself as being *the* writing and communications university. CLAS places high

“Iowa is a, maybe the... lodestar university for our discipline. We have the privilege of working with many of the finest undergraduate creative writers in the country. This informs everything we do: our exceptional writers deserve a truly exceptional major.”

- Director Kaveh Akbar

value on its English Department and the English and Creative Writing major continues to be a priority recruitment focus.” Dr. Akbar feels similarly; under his leadership, the major's academic makeup is duly influenced by the history of the program and its importance to the University as a whole. “Iowa is a, maybe the... lodestar university for our discipline,” Dr. Akbar says. “We have the privilege of working with many of the finest undergraduate creative writers in the country. This

informs everything we do: our exceptional writers deserve a truly exceptional major.”



Students in an EPB Classroom prepare for Foundations of Creative Writing, a course designed specifically for the ECW major. Photo by Katie Goodale.

What exactly do those exceptional writers want out of their time at the University of Iowa? According to Academic Advisor Kate Torno, who works year-round with incoming students, “the majority hope to gain writing skills so they can get published as an author at *some* point in their life. About 10-15% want that publication to happen within 2-3 years of graduation.” For many, this focus on writing craft is intense. Kate attests, “Many of our writers ‘fight’ the literature side of things...” But Dr. Akbar is a huge believer in the ‘English’ part of English and Creative Writing. “Every great writer, in the history of any language, has also been a great reader,” he says. “There is not a single exception in our several millennia of evidence.” Kate can verify that most students come around on this point: “I think alumni express that they were surprised at how valuable the literature courses proved to be, giving them skills in attention to detail, familiarity with what makes a good story, and a context for their writing that they hadn’t appreciated when they were in the classes.”

When it comes to what he wants ECW majors to get out of their time at the University of Iowa, Dr. Akbar has some larger goals that encompass the writing, the reading, and much more: “Mentorship, peers with whom to grow, a sustainable creative practice built on a solid bedrock of critical scholarship. The ability to communicate clearly, concisely, and persuasively in all arenas of their lives, whether professional or creative. Substantive encounters with real practicing literary artists, scholars, and professionals from both inside and outside academia. The ability to think critically about their own metabolization of language. A library card!”

With all that in hand, what sorts of opportunities can English and creative writing majors expect after they graduate? First, Admissions Director Kyle McEvily can help dispel a pervasive myth that’s followed English majors for decades: “Will [an ECW major] lead to a meaningful career after graduation?... I believe excellent writing skills will

always be important, especially in an increasingly interconnected world. Also, in most workplaces, people must clearly communicate their ideas to be effective contributors. The pursuit of a degree with ‘English’ in the title is more practical than people might imagine.” Indeed, Kate Torno attests that “70% of [ECW] students who answer the career services survey are in a job they consider ‘something real putting them on the path towards somewhere they want to go’ within 6 months of graduation.” And what are those jobs? Kate has the breakdown: “Statistically 21% of our students go to graduate school but that ranges from law, finance, public health, library science, MFA, PhD, higher education/student affairs, social work/counseling, etc. 18-20% teach high school English. The rest [59-61%] go to work. They are split between administrative work, working for non-profits that align with their values, working for the publishing industry in publicity, marketing, or editing, or going into the business world for marketing/sales/advertising in some way.”

Six years in, the ECW major is an admissions powerhouse, a well-balanced and enriching academic program, and an asset for a diverse range of career seekers and graduate students. What’s next? Dr. Akbar has some big goals for the future of the program.

First: “We want to make sure our undergrads are knowledgeable about, and taking robust advantage of, all the resources our UNESCO City of Literature has to offer...Iowa City has the workshop, the Nonfiction Writing Program, Prairie Lights, and an extraordinary collection of libraries... It’s such a lucky and rare thing, what exists here.” Second: “Our English department has one of the most accomplished, impressive faculties in the nation. Its writers include many of the brightest stars in the contemporary literary firmament. Ensuring all our undergraduate majors have meaningful access to that faculty is a major priority for us.” This goal is related to a third major initiative Dr. Akbar is pursuing with the help of the faculty: “We want to ensure we’re creating programming specifically

“Mentorship, peers with whom to grow, a sustainable creative practice built on a solid bedrock of critical scholarship. The ability to communicate clearly, concisely, and persuasively in all arenas of their lives, whether professional or creative. Substantive encounters with real practicing literary artists, scholars, and professionals from both inside and outside academia. The ability to think critically about their own metabolization of language. A library card!”

- Kaveh Akbar on what he wants ECW Majors to get out of their time at UI

for the undergrads themselves...Just this semester, one of our visiting fellows, Michaeljulius Idani, has started a monthly lunch-with-writers program for undergraduates to get to speak with practicing, publishing creative writers from the community on the last Wednesday of every month. Pizza, laughter, good literary conversation. Dr. Donika Kelly installed a recurring literary craft talk series for our undergraduates. Our first one was with Professor Bennett Sims on October 26th. We're starting a new visiting writers series specifically for our undergraduate majors – our first visiting writer was superstar Carmen Maria Machado on November 4th. It's incredible. Our faculty has done all this (and much more!) in just the past few months!"

Who can say what more the ECW major, its faculty, its students, and its alumni will accomplish in the future? Congratulations to Dr. Akbar, and best of luck to this year's cohort of new ECW majors. Here's to another six years and many more! ♡



Author, Writer's Workshop graduate, and Visiting Assistant Professor Michaeljulius Y. Idani. Photo by India Downes-Le Guin.



Award-winning author and Writer's Workshop graduate Carmen Maria Machado. Photo by Art Streiber.

Graduate Student Awards & Publications

Maria Capecchi was awarded a Marcus Bach Fellowship for Graduate Students in the Humanities to support the completion of her dissertation, "Performing Early Modern Women: 1620-1680."

Jamie Chen's paper "The Ends of Imagination: Trauma Narrative in Arundhati Roy's Prose and Politics" won the MMLA's 2021 Graduate Student Paper Prize.

Mason Hamberlin was awarded a Marcus Bach Fellowship for Graduate Students in the Humanities to support the completion of their dissertation, "The Queer Mormon Suicides."

Jessie Kraemer's essay "The Wright Brother" was named a 2021 Best American Essays Notable.

Jamila Osman won the *Black Warrior Review* Flash Contest for her piece "Sunday School."

Darius Stewart's first full-length book of poems, *Intimacies in Borrowed Light*, is out from EastOver Press. His essay "Dearest Darky" was listed among the Notable Essays and Literary Nonfiction of 2021 in *The Best American Essays 2022*.

Spencer Wilkins was awarded a Diversity Scholarship to the Elk River Writers' Workshop.

Staff Awards & Publications

Kate Berta's poem, "[To be a child again]," was published in *The Cincinnati Review*. In July, she was resident at the Hambidge Center.

Corey Campbell's short story "Everybody's Good," was published in *The Gettysburg Review*. She was also awarded a fiction residency at the Vermont Studio Center for summer 2023.

Alumni Publications

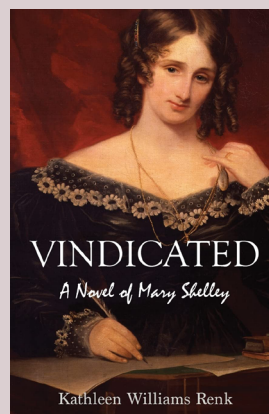
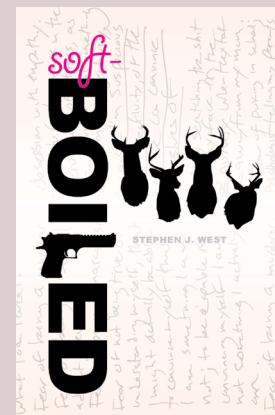
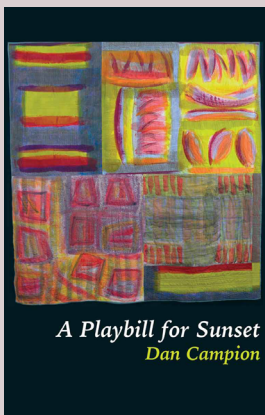
Dan Champion's (Ph.D. 1989) poetry collection *A Playbill for Sunset* is out from Ice Cube Press.

Myriam J. A. Chancy's (PhD 1994) novel, *What Storm, What Thunder*, is out from Tin House Books, and was a finalist for the Aspen Words Literary Prize.

Sarah Fay's (PhD 2013) memoir *Pathological: The True Story of Six Misdiagnoses* is out from HarperOne.

Kathleen Williams Renk's (Ph.D. 1995) book *Vindicated: A Novel of Mary Shelley* is out from Cuidono Press.

Stephen J. West's (MFA Creative Nonfiction) book *Soft-Boiled: An Investigation of Masculinity and the Writer's Life* is out from Kelson Books.



Farewell to Dr. Ed Folsom

The English Department extends its gratitude and congratulations to Ed Folsom on the occasion of his retirement. Dr. Folsom is Professor Emeritus of English and, for decades, has been one of the world's foremost authorities on Walt Whitman.

Dr. Folsom began at the University of Iowa as an Assistant Professor in 1976. In his five decade-spanning academic career, he has been both an F. Wendell Miller Distinguished Professor of English and a Roy J. Carver Professor of English. He is the winner of Iowa's Collegiate Teaching Award, the Graduate College Outstanding Mentor Award, the University's President and Provost's Teaching Award, and the Regents' Award for Faculty Excellence.

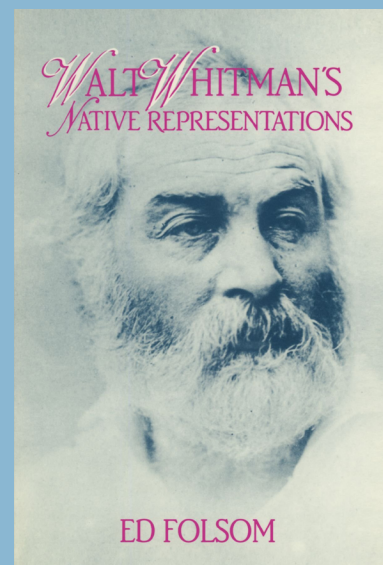
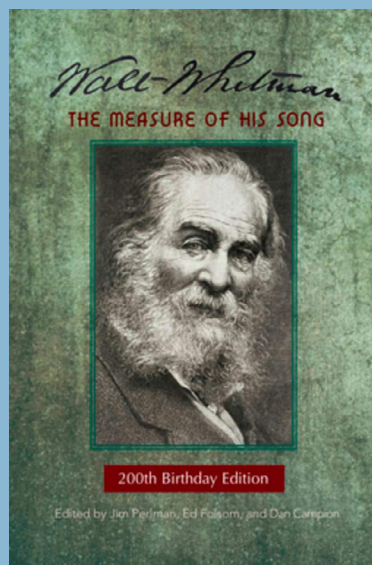
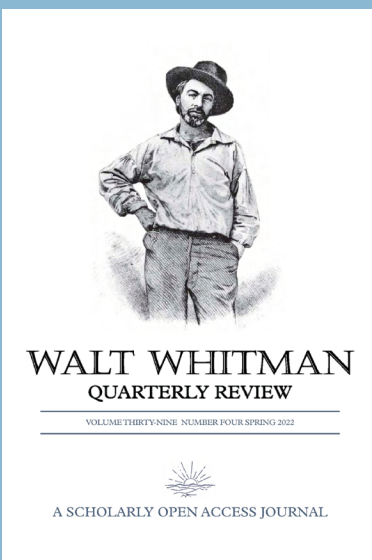
Dr. Folsom is the founder and Editor-in-Chief of the University of Iowa Libraries' *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, as well as the editor of the Iowa Whitman Series for the University of Iowa Press. He is the co-director of the online *Walt Whitman Archive* with Iowa Digital Humanities. He taught two of

the University of Iowa's first massive open online courses, both on Whitman.

He has written, edited, or co-edited a number of books on Whitman, including *Walt Whitman: The Measure of His Song*, *Walt Whitman's Native Representations*, *Walt Whitman and the World*, *Walt Whitman: The Centennial Essays*, *Whitman East and West*, *Whitman Making Books / Books Making Whitman*, *Leaves of Grass: The Sesquicentennial Essays*, *Walt Whitman's Democratic Vistas*, *Re-Scripting Walt Whitman* (co-authored with Kenneth M. Price), and *Walt Whitman's Song of Myself, with a Complete Commentary* (co-authored with Christopher Merrill).

He has directed or given keynote talks at many of the major national and international Whitman conferences of the past few decades. He was featured on the 2008 PBS Documentary *American Experience: Walt Whitman*,

as well as many other television and radio programs on Whitman. This fall, Dr. Folsom traveled in France and Germany, lecturing and attending conferences. ♡



Farewell to Dr. Kathleen Diffley

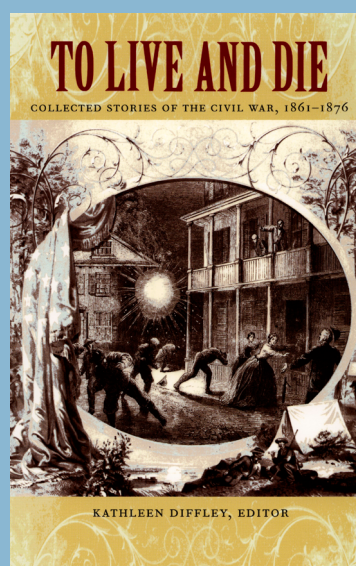
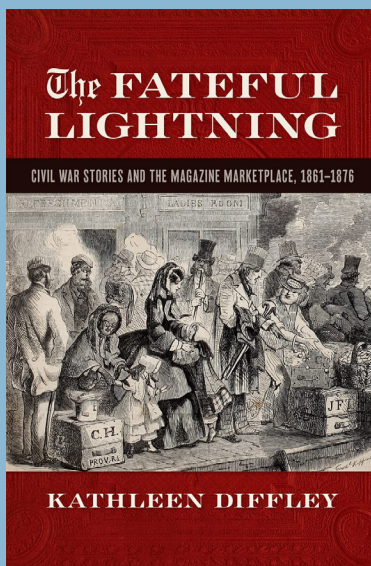
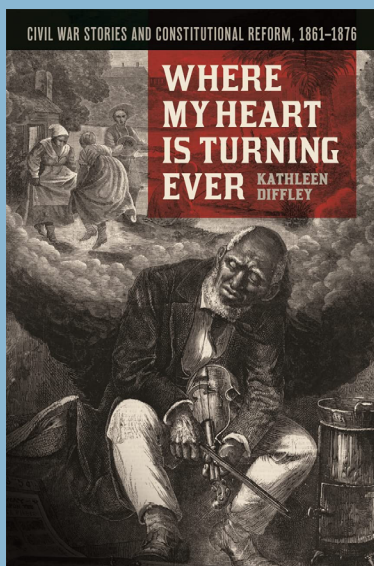
After nearly 40 years of exemplary service, teaching, and scholarship, Kathleen Diffley is retiring with the heartfelt gratitude and best wishes of the English Department. Dr. Diffley is Emeritus Professor of English, a veteran of English Department admissions, advising, and the English Honors Program, and an esteemed scholar of nineteenth century U.S. literature and periodicals, as well as the literary history of the American Civil War.

Since beginning at the University of Iowa in 1983, Dr. Diffley has taught undergraduate and graduate classes on Washington Irving, nineteenth century American literary magazines, and Civil War cultures. She has been the Obermann Fellow-in-Residence at the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies three times.

The primary focus of Dr. Diffley's scholarship is the popular magazines of the nineteenth century and what they can tell us about the American Civil War. She is the author of *Where My Heart is Turning Ever: Civil War Stories and Constitutional Reform* and *The Fateful Lightning: Civil War Stories and the Liter-*

ary Marketplace, as well as the editor of *To Live and Die: Collected Stories of the Civil War, 1861-1876*. She is also the author of numerous published articles and book chapters on the literature of the Civil War. She has served as a Contributing Editor at *American Literary History*, on the Executive Board of the Research Society for American Periodicals, and as the Director & Organizer of the Civil War Caucus at the Midwest Modern Language Association. For her scholarship and professional service, she was the recipient of the University of Iowa Career Development Award in 2012.

Finally, Professor Diffley has rendered tremendous service to the English Department during the course of her academic career. She has served as the chair of both Graduate Qualifications and Graduate Placement, and served two separate stints in Graduate Admissions. She was also the General Education Literature Faculty Advisor from 2016 to 2018. Most recently, she was the Director of the English Honors Program from 2018 to 2019, encouraging dozens of young scholars and writers to elevate their studies and achievement. ♡



UIowa IDEAS Committee Forging an Inclusive, Diverse, and Equitable Future for the English Department

Since the Fall of 2020, the University of Iowa IDEAS Committee has been working to make the UI English Department a more inclusive and equitable place. IDEAS is a cohort of faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates that works to address issues of inequity in the department, disseminate methods and knowledge related to inclusivity and social justice, and facilitate open communication between students and department leadership.

Speaking on the goals and purpose of IDEAS, committee member and Professor of English Dr. Deborah E. Whaley stresses the importance of creating “equitable and diverse environments that support all faculty and students to do their best work,” and says that “A lack of these things creates environments that lead to partial education, exclusion of difference, hostile, passive-aggressive, and microaggressive environments.” Fellow committee member and Assistant Professor of English Dr. William Rhodes adds that “Learning and teaching about how language affects people’s lives always involves confronting issues that intersect with social justice concerns, and it’s important for the English department, as a community, to be engaged in reflecting on how better to speak to those issues.”

The IDEAS Committee was established in the fall of 2020 following several public statements demanding change from groups and organizations with close ties to the English Department: the Change UIowa English letter and petition regarding the hiring and retention of Black faculty members, organized by leadership from undergraduate literary organizations, a letter from the students of the Nonfiction Writing Program to its faculty regarding support for Black students, and statements from Black at Iowa Writers, “a platform to amplify the voices of Black students, alumni, faculty, and

staff in all the writing programs at Iowa.” The formation of the IDEAS Committee, which acts as a conduit for further communication between students and Department leadership, was among the Department’s actions in response to these

statements. Dr. Rhodes attests: “There’s clearly still a need for open lines of communication between faculty and students, especially the growing community of undergraduate majors. We’d like the committee to be a place where students can be heard and enable those concerns to be transmitted to the faculty as a whole.”

The committee currently consists of four faculty members, selected by the DEO, two elected graduate representatives from the Nonfiction Writing Program and the English PhD program respectively, and two elected undergraduate representatives. There are plans to bring two members of the English Department staff onto the Committee next year. Dr. Whaley says that meetings, which are held every two weeks, “follow an agenda where we generate ideas about DEI, plan events, discuss our meetings with other stakeholders, discuss inclusive pedagogy, create and discuss climate surveys about DEI, check in with and about DEI issues in classes, in the department, in the College, and University.”

One major IDEAS Committee initiative is encouraging English Department faculty to embark on various forms of DEI and inclusive pedagogy training in order to affect positive change in both the climate of the department and in classroom practices. One example is a free online course on inclusive pedagogy from Cornell University. Engaging with the course has been a community effort: last year, most members of the IDEAS Committee itself took the course, and this year the focus has shifted to members of the English Department Executive Committee. After finishing the course, Executive

INCLUSION
DIVERSITY
EQUITY
ACCESSIBILITY
SOcial JUSTICE

Committee members have discussed it in small groups and reported back to the English faculty on their experiences with it, encouraging further participation. Another example is the Building University of Iowa Leadership for Diversity (BUILD) program, which has been empowering employees to contribute to the University of Iowa's DEI vision since 2015. The IDEAS Committee has been active in encouraging faculty to participate and become BUILD certified. Finally, the IDEAS Committee has partnered with the Multicultural Initiatives Research Team (MCI) and has encouraged faculty to work with them in their research on "ways of being in relationships, constructs, and strategies that disrupt dehumanizing practices that perpetuate inequity."

Another area of focus for the IDEAS Committee is advocating for a more inclusive and diverse English curriculum, which assigns more works by underrepresented minority authors. Curricular reform is an ongoing effort throughout the English Department. Dr. Whaley says that the IDEAS Committee has made the English faculty aware of student feedback on the curriculum and developed solution-based ideas to discuss with the English community as a whole.

Finally, the IDEAS Committee has communicated student concerns related to hiring and retaining a diverse English faculty. Dr. Whaley, hand-in-hand with her advocacy on this issue as a member of the IDEAS Committee, collaborates with University Human Resources and faculty from the School of Social Work to conduct implicit bias training for faculty search committees.

What's next for the IDEAS Committee? This coming spring, it will host a workshop for faculty on teaching, learning, and retention of underrepresented minority students and faculty. Dr. Whaley hopes to host even more in the future. This year, Dr. Rhodes hopes to enhance the Committee's ability to facilitate communication by creating "an established schedule for meeting with different constituencies of the English department, from undergraduate majors to graduate instructors to faculty and staff, for regular check-ins on the community climate." Finally, Dr. Whaley says that she wants the IDEAS Committee to continue "raising consciousness regarding how DEI is important to every aspect of the department." ♡

The UIowa IDEAS Committee is:

Faculty:

Dr. Lori Branch, Associate Professor of English

Dr. Jennifer Buckley, Associate Professor of English

Dr. William Rhodes, Assistant Professor of English

Dr. Deborah E. Whaley, Professor of English

NWP MFA Representative:

Grace Morse

PhD Representative:

Jamie Chen

Undergraduate Representatives:

Jarod Cheng

Amritha Selvarajaguru

Finally, we continue our crucial work on diversity, equity and inclusion. I celebrate the continued work of the students and faculty on the IDEAS committee, and plan to add two staff members in the future in order to ensure that our entire community participates in and benefits from our efforts to improve the climate and culture of the department. They have been strengthening our connections to collegiate and university DEI units and leadership, and also working to expand our resources for accommodating disability and neurodiversity in our community. Finally, I want to thank Professor David Gooblar for facilitating faculty enrollment in the eCornell course, “Teaching and Learning in the Diverse Classroom,” which was piloted by our Executive Committee this semester. I’m encouraging all our faculty and TAs to take this course, which uses the latest research to provide useful tools for making our classrooms and curriculum more accessible to students from all backgrounds.

Though the pandemic lingers, we are open for business, and I look forward to meeting and working with the many alumni and friends of the English Department who receive this newsletter. Our students, both undergraduate and graduate, are eager to learn more about what they can do in the world with their English degrees, and, as always, we welcome any and all opportunities for internships, mentoring, or just making connections. Please feel free to reach out to me at any time for further information.

Finally, thanks to English Department alum and former *Iowa Review* intern Nicholas Runyon for his excellent work on this issue.

Best wishes for the Holiday Season and the New Year.

Loren Glass

Professor and Chair of English



Photo by Justin Torner