

Volume 26, Issue 5

A Journal of the Plague Year Volume V

Tell yourself
as it gets cold and gray falls from the air
that you will go on
walking, hearing
the same tune no matter where
you find yourself—
inside the dome of dark
or under the cracking white
of the moon's gaze in a valley of snow.

Mark Strand, "Lines for Winter"

Sometimes it feels like Iowa is just too cold to sustain life, and I start dreaming of California. But then I remember that we have words to keep us warm. Compounded by social isolation and legislative lunacy, these winter months have been particularly challenging for all of us, but it still lifts my spirits to know that all of you are continuing to read and write and teach and learn despite the record-breaking wind chills. Literature continues to mean and move, no matter where you find yourself, and that's what keeps our hearts warm when the night winds wail.

The great thing about the seasons is that they change and I am keen to remind you that we call this the Spring Semester for a reason. Soon the snow will melt, the soil will loosen, and new life will burst forth from the earth. I promise to quote liberally from "Spring and All" and to wear flowers in my hair.

Until then, please find time to celebrate our creativity and productivity, some of which is documented below.

Faculty Matters

Melissa Febos's short story, "[The Cure](#)," was published in *The Cut*. She was also a presenter in the [PEN Out Loud Festival](#) on Feb 9.

Loren Glass's [33 1/3 series study of Carole King's classic album *Tapestry*](#) will be published on March 11. The Book Launch will be on Tuesday, March 9 at noon: <https://untappedcities.com/events/carole-kings-nyc-tapestry-book-launch/>, and he will be doing a reading through Live At Prairie Lights at 7 PM on Friday, March 12.

Donika Kelly's poem "Compromise" appears in the *New York Times* best-selling anthology *Four Hundred Souls*, edited by Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha Blaine.

In December, **Anne Stapleton's** essay "*Recasting Scottish Fisherwomen in Song: Baroness Nairne's 'Caller Herrin'*" was published in *Women's Writing*.

Jon Wilcox's essay, "The Pains and Pleasures of Vercelli Homily IX and the Delights of Textual Transmission," was published in *The Anonymous Old English Homily: Sources, Composition, and Variation*, ed. Winfried Rudolf and Susan Irvine (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 287-311.

Grad Matters

Rajorshi Das' review of Kareem Khubchandani's *Ishtyle: Accenting Gay Indian Nightlife* was published by *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* (Vol 16, Issue 4). They also reviewed Shamayita Sen's *for the hope of spring: Hybrid Poems for Eleventh Column* and Partha Chakraborty's film, *Samantaral for Anthropology Journal*.

Congratulations to **Jeremy Lowenthal**, who was awarded a [Marcus Bach Fellowship for Graduate Students in the Humanities](#).

Sanjna Singh's interview with filmmaker Thomas Balmès, "[The Monk Who Got Addicted to His phone](#)," was published in *Tricycle* magazine.

Undergrad Matters

Congratulations to **Melissa B. Martínez-Raga Navarro** (English major, GWSS and Latina/o/x Studies minor), whose article on contemporary Latinx speculative fiction, "[Imagining Things Better, Practicing Alternative Futures](#)," was published in *Spanglish Voces*. The article includes an account of Martínez-Raga's interview with Matthew David Goodwin, editor of the anthology *Latinx Rising*.

Congratulations to **Mishma Nixon**, whose op-ed article "[Classes on Racial Justice Can End Up Burdening Students, Faculty of Color](#)" was published in *Teen Vogue*.

Staff Matters

The English Department is excited to welcome the new Managing Editor of *The Iowa Review*, **Katie Berta**! Katie has a MFA (Arizona State University) and PhD (Ohio University) in Creative Writing and is currently working as the Supervising Editor of the *Harper's Ferry Review* which is affiliated with Arizona State University. She has over 10 years of experience in the production of literary journals including as a content editor and web editor. Katie's start date is Feb. 24th and she will be working remotely until August when she will relocate to Iowa City.

Corey Campbell reviewed Caroline Kim's short story collection, *The Prince of Mournful Thoughts and Other Stories*, in the latest *Waxwing*. Her review of *Wild Swims* by Dorthe Nors is forthcoming in *Colorado Review*.

Discursive Data Matters

We have plenty of majors – 902 in the last Fall Profile of Students (235 in English, 667 in English and Creative Writing), which is down just a smidgen from our 905 majors in Fall 2019 (250 English, 655 ECW). For course planning purposes, though, it would be useful to predict next year's numbers, but that is distinctly difficult (and all the more so in our pandemic-disrupted times).

One tool for looking at trends is the report by the Registrar's Office available on MAUI, particularly the "Students by Program of Study" report. This provides a daily snapshot of students in terms of declared majors, certificates, and minors and provides comparison data from the previous two semesters. A recent search shows current numbers in both our majors as down from last year (Spring 2021 English 185, ECW 597; total 782; Fall 2020 English 229, ECW 651, total 880; Spring 2020 English 244, ECW 617, total 861). Numbers in this report don't precisely match the official census of students because it reflects daily changes in student declarations. The numbers suggest the continuing drop in declared English majors that we have seen throughout the last decade. More notable, though, this report shows a drop in the number of declared English and Creative Writing majors for the first time since we initiated the new degree five years ago. Is that a reflection of the pandemic, or have we now found the approximately stable demand for the degree, or does it reflect opportunities now offered by surrounding writing programs?

For pondering the latter, it is possible to trace the number of declared majors in the new Screenwriting Arts degree, namely 77 in Spring 2021, 78 in Fall 2020, 53 in Spring 2020 (see [Screenwriting Arts, B.A. < University of Iowa \(uiowa.edu\)](https://uiowa.edu/screenwriting) for the requirements), as well as in longstanding programs like Theatre Arts (155 in Spring 2021, 172 in Fall 2020, 177 in Spring 2020). Most other surrounding writing programs offer certificates or minors, but their numbers show a similar arc. The Certificate in Writing has 126 students declaring their certificate in Spring 2021,

143 in Fall 2020, 178 in Spring 2020; the minor in Rhetoric and Persuasion has 73 declared in Spring 2021, 76 in Fall 2020, 76 in Spring 2020.

The hint here is that we may be seeing a meaningful drop in declared majors for the first time in recent years. Of course, given our far more precipitous drop in faculty numbers, this is no cause for alarm, but it is an interesting puzzle to see if this is another effect of Covid-19 or a long-term trend.

-- Jon Wilcox, Associate Chair

Faculty Senate Matters

Last week the Faculty Senate was debriefed by Peter Matthes and Keith Saunders who expressed confidence that the hailstorm of bills targeting the Regents institutions ultimately will not pass because the business community fears their effect on the state economy. Cold comfort possibly, but it limits the extent to which the state will risk hampering our ability to recruit faculty and students in the future.

In Memoriam

The English Department is saddened to learn recently of the passing of [Marvin Bell](#).

Upcoming Matters

The Krause Series in Contemporary Nonfiction: Reading by NWP Alum Michele Morano - February 19, 2021 | 7:00 pm | Zoom | Register [here](#).

The Krause Series in Contemporary Nonfiction: Reading by Matthew Gavin Frank - March 19, 2021 | 7:00 pm | Zoom

PVW Reading: Micky Hill and Matthew Kelley - March 22, 2021 | 5:00-6:15 pm | Zoom

The Krause Series in Contemporary Nonfiction: Q&A with William Callahan, Agent and Editor at InkWell Management - March 26, 2021 | 12:00 pm | Zoom

PVW Reading: Caroline Froh and Darius Stewart - March 29, 2021 | 5:00-6:15 pm | Zoom

