

## From the Chair

Dear Colleagues and Coworkers,

Welcome to Reading Matters 30.4, the first issue for the year 2025. This promises to be a challenging year for the humanities specifically and higher education more generally, so I want to start off by reminding everyone why what we do is so important. And I can think of no better source to cite than a lecture by our own Elizabeth Rodriguez Fielder which was distributed for our pedagogical lunch on AI in the classroom last semester. In that lecture, Eli used Hannah Arendt's classic study *The Human Condition*, written at the dawn of the information age, to illustrate the difference between mechanical knowhow and engaged understanding, and to celebrate the vital qualities of spontaneity and creativity that make us human. Instead of arguing for or against AI or advising us how to use it in our pedagogy, she eloquently affirms that "we are the generative minds that have the capacity to create something new in the world, and we can take this moment to appreciate what fundamentally makes us human." I want to begin this year by celebrating the generative minds that constitute our creative community. What is documented below represents just a fraction of the contributions you all make to our collective humanity more broadly. What we do is crucial to our survival as a species. Let's Celebrate Ourselves.

Loren

## Faculty Matters

In early December, **Harry Stecopoulos** published "Neanderthal Aesthetics" in *The European Review of Books*. Over the winter break, he taught a genre fiction workshop in Athens, Greece and delivered a paper on William Faulkner and multilingualism at the MLA convention in New Orleans.

**Zara Chowdhary** will be joining the department in Fall 2025 as Assistant Professor in South Asian Studies and Creative Writing. Please welcome her!

**Melissa Febos** published an essay in the Winter 2024 issue of *The Yale Review* called: "My Face."

**Kathy Lavezzo** was awarded funding from the University's Investment in Strategic Priorities.

**Patricia Foster** (Emeritus) has a contract for her new book - *The New World: a Love Story, a Medical Drama, and a Hidden Past* - with the Crux series in Nonfiction, University of Georgia Press, forthcoming early in 2026.

**Sarah Minor's** third nonfiction book *Carousel*, a wily and wide-ranging "lecture" delivered by a professor obsessed with seeing, will be published by Yale University Press in Summer 2026.

**Matt Brown, Donika Kelly, and Bennett Sims** received Professional Development Awards for 2025-26.

**Elizabeth Rodriguez Fielder** traveled to Copenhagen, Denmark, to give a presentation called, "Art/Work: Media Experimentation and Agricultural Justice" for the The Environmental Humanities in Anglophone Literature and Media symposium organized by the Environmental Humanities research group, Department of English, Germanic and Romance Studies at University of Copenhagen. She then did a book launch and Q and A with Dr. Martyn Bone for her book *The Revolution Will Be Improvised: The Intimacy of Cultural Activism* (University of Michigan Press, 2024) to a sold-out crowd at Supertime Books in Copenhagen.

**Kaveh Akbar's** poem "Elegy for a Name" appeared in *the New Yorker*.

## Graduate Student Matters

**Grace Morse** (MFA-NWP) recently finished her tenure as the 2023-2024 Englert Fellow with the final of two community masterclasses for junior high students (delving into the intersection of personal writing and community action). She was also awarded the 2024 Magdalena Award for her essay, an excerpt of her thesis titled "Jackknife" and was announced as a Fulbright semi-finalist with an application that outlines a collaboration with the Museu Marítim de Barcelona doing archival research for a multigenerational memoir.

**Sarah Anjum Bari** (MFA-NWP) published "Shards of Clarity", a book review of the novel *What Kingdom* by Fine Gråbøl, translated from the Danish by Martin Aitken, in *The Daily Star* in January 2025. In November 2024 she published a reading list, "11 Books by Bangladeshi Voices Beyond Its Borders", and in October she published a reading list, "A Literary Guide to Understanding Bangladesh's 'Second Independence'", both in *Electric Literature*.

**Casie Minot** (PhD) presented her paper, "Dearest Gentle Reader: *Bridgerton* as Interactive Media," at PopCRN's Conference, "Love Conquers All": Exploring the Pop Culture Phenomenon of *Bridgerton*" on January 28.

**Darius Stewart** (PhD) was invited to join two other U.S. writers for the International Writing Program's Lines & Spaces Tour, a partnership with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. During the tour, he led a workshop entitled "Pinning the Location: The Language of Place in Creative Nonfiction" and read at the "Fine Lines: Poems from Around the World" event during Literature Live!: The Mumbai LitFest. The writers traveled to Pune and Goa, where they were interviewed by the *Times of India*, mentored students at Chowgule College, and met with acclaimed Indian novelist and critic Damodar Mauzo. In Goa, Darius also read at Goa Brewery Co. for the event "Unfolding Verses: An Eclectic Evening with America's Storytellers" and participated in a panel discussion, "Voices of Expression: Poetry, Identity, and Human Rights," with the LGBTQI community at the Goa Institute of Management.

Darius's memoir *Be Not Afraid of My Body* was named an Israel Fishman Non-Fiction Honor Title by the American Library Association.

## Graduate Student Matters

**Spencer Jones** (MFA-NWP) won the runner-up prize in *Sewanee Review's* annual nonfiction contest. Two chapters of her MFA thesis are forthcoming in *SR* this year.

**Rajorshi Das'** (PhD) article, "JAI HIJRA, JAI JAI HIJRA' Self-Respect and Performance during the 2015 Telangana Swabhimana Walk," which is part of their dissertation, got published in the January issue of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. Das co-chaired Annual South Asian Literary Association Conference, 18-19 January 2025. They also presented at two roundtables, "Queer Theory from the South: Knowledge, Being, and Method," and "Afterlife and Afterlives: Forms of (Un)Making in the Wake of Disasters," at Modern Language Association, New Orleans, 11 January 2025.

**Heidie Senseman** (MFA-NWP) has been awarded a Marcus Bach Fellowship for the 2025-2026 school year. Her essay "Smash the Small Cosmos" recently appeared in *Ekstasis Magazine*, both in print and online, and she has another piece forthcoming in *Plough*.

**Aileen Tierney** (PhD) presented a conference paper, "*Never Let Me Go's* Politics of Empathy", at the Midwest Modern Language Association's 2024 conference, "Health in/of the Humanities" and her visual art piece LADDER appeared in the University of Louisville's literary journal, *Miracle Monocle*.

**Mishma Nixon** (MFA-NWP) was awarded the Fall 2024 Carl Klaus Teaching Award as recognition for her excellence in teaching.

## MLA Presentations

Nine English department faculty and graduate students presented at the 2025 MLA Annual Convention in New Orleans:

**Florence Boos**, chair, Morris, Religion, and Myth

**Jennifer Buckley**, "Paratextual Interpretation and Adaptation in Speechless Drama"

**Tara Bynum**, Obour Tanner's Grief

**Jamie Chen**, Teaching Intertextuality in the Archives: Tracking Down Texts in The Underground Railroad

**Rajorshi Das**, Queer Theory from the South: Knowledge, Being, and Method

**Eli Rodriguez Fielder**, Experimental Media and Activism during the Civil Rights Movement

**Alyssa Smith**, The Transatlantic Slave Ad: Examining the Legibility of the Enslaved from Restoration England to Revolutionary America

**Harry Stecopoulos**, Multilingual Absalom, Monolingual Absalom: William Faulkner's Empire of Language

**Philip Zaborowski**, Making the Book: Curating Textual Communities in the General Education Classroom

## Updates from *The Iowa Review*

*From Lynne Nugent, Editor:*

### New Staff

Over the summer we brought on a new managing editor, **Alicia Wright**, and a new freelance designer, **Julie Leonard**. Both are doing great, and I'm so glad not to be flying solo anymore! Thanks to **Barb Pooley** and **Corey Campbell** for being on the managing editor search committee.

We found an instructor for TIR's fall Literary Editing course (ENGL 3148:0EXV) in previous fiction editor **Natalia Zdaniuk**. She used my and Katie's syllabus from last year and made many improvements of her own, and she reports that the semester went really well. Alicia Wright has agreed to teach the course next fall; hooray! Alicia has also hired four undergrad interns for spring semester.

And last but not least, the **Nonfiction Writing Program** very kindly sponsored a digital editor RA-ship this year at TIR. A graduate student is helping us think through issues involved in projects such as our website (read on for more on this) and possible dream projects such as a podcast.

### Awards

We named the winner of our 2024 David Hamilton Undergraduate Creative Writing prize, senior **Todd Tremble**. Our veterans' contest judge for 2024, Dewaine Farria, named five winners in that contest, to be published in our Spring 2025 issue.

Previously named winners of Best American Essays (Amy Margolis), Pushcart Prize (Kate DeLay), and Eastover Press Rural Stories by Writers of Color (Venita Blackburn) saw the anthologies featuring their work come out.

### Special Issue

We continue to evaluate submissions to a special themed issue on Bodies In and Out of Control. It has been a great experience doing this themed issue with guest editor Gigi Durham. Look for the issue in the fall!

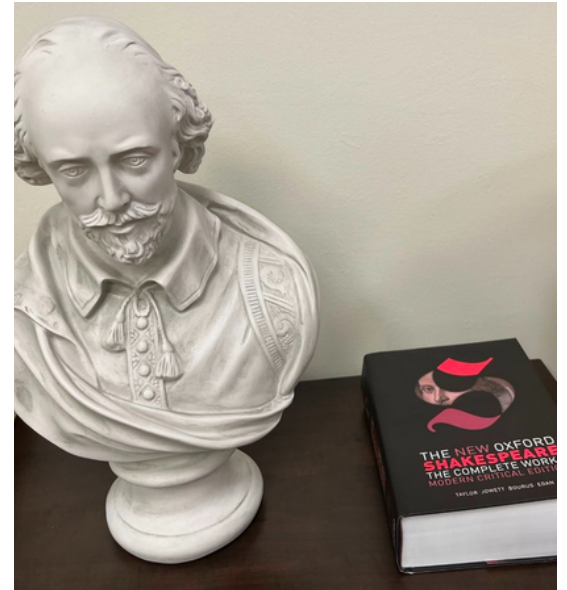
### Appearances

In November, **Lynne** participated in a zoom conversation, “On Editing & Being Edited,” with other lit mag editors, hosted by River Styx magazine. And a couple weeks ago, she spoke on a zoom panel of editors for the New Orleans Saints and Sinners LGBTQ Literary Festival, which was holding a mini-conference on New Year’s resolutions for writers.

And **Alicia** just learned she received a Mary Louise Kelly professional development award to offset travel to the New Orleans Poetry Festival in April. She’ll bring TIR to their small press book fair and also do much learning and networking of her own.

## Building Matters

The Literary Loft has a new Shakespeare bust and book, purchased with E.P. Kuhl Shakespeare Funds.



## Alumni Matters

Deborah Darling, a 1974 graduate of Iowa who was in the undergrad writer's workshop, had her first short book of poetry, Into The Splashing, published by Finishing Line Press.

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