



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

NEWSLETTER

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English.IllinoisState.edu

Message from the Department Chair: Intelligence and Artifice



Professor Katherine Ellison

Last spring, educators were confronted with an old challenge dressed in new fashion: yet another tool created to make critical thinking and writing *easier*. Artificial intelligence companies released Google Bard and ChatGPT to do the hard work of examining texts and composing grammatically correct, well-structured writings so that, thank goodness, us humans don't have to anymore. And how lovely those writings are. Type in a question or assignment prompt, and it gives you a flawlessly predictable paper. On the surface, what

AI-generated headshot (fotor.com) of Department Chair, Dr. Katherine Ellison

this tool taps out for you on the screen looks logical, polished. I asked it to write this newsletter opening, and it did so in under five seconds. "As we traverse the ever-changing landscape of academia and literature," it wrote (assuming we only teach literature), "we find ourselves filled with immense pride and joy to reach out to our cherished alumni." AI hopes that you, our alumni, are in "good health and great spirits" and wants you to know that you continue to inspire it "beyond these walls." It is proud to present this edition of the newsletter: "Within its pages, you will find a tapestry of accomplishments, insights, and stories that reflect the boundless spirit of our alumni and the impact you have made in diverse fields and careers."

My job here is done!

Sincerely,

Dr. Ellison

... but alas, something is off, isn't it? If I had not known the message was written by AI, I would have thought it satirical, even parodic. The welcome seems to smile at me like the giant plastic Ronald McDonald I remember at the entrance of my rural hometown's favorite restaurant. The gut was concave from the many punches it received from adolescents. The grin that never stopped, the hollow promise of hospitality ... it was infuriating rather than welcoming. Here, you will find fun, fatty foods, and futility. Truth be told, AI doesn't know whether you, our alumni, have been inspirational or not. It doesn't know whether we've woven a lovely tapestry here for you in the next pages. It doesn't matter. It is, to

take back the ancient term "artificial," true *artifice*. It plays a clever trick with teasing insincerity.

If it gives you hope, I will note here that the adolescents I know—my three teenage sons—immediately recognized that the headshot I've used in this newsletter is AI generated. "Do NOT post that anywhere, Mom," they pleaded with me. "It is so obviously FAKE," they insisted, "Anyone could spot it a mile away." True artifice. This generation may well become expert in identifying inauthenticity. Will we, as educators, spot AI-generated prose from a mile away? So far, social media posts by writing instructors confirm that yes, they are recognizing AI writing rather easily, with annoyance. Will we become as skilled at parsing AI and human writing as AI becomes better at pretending to be human? Time will tell.

As a scholar and educator, I am fascinated by every new engagement with language, especially those that help me look at writing in a fresh way. AI helps me remember that what we do in the Department of English is about *people*. Even the artificial, etymologically, centers *human* craftsmanship. And I remember too well what Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, and the other male guardians of 18th-century British literature said of any writer who did not look like them and who they found threatening, like Eliza Haywood, the bestselling novelist of *their* time whether they liked it or not: they called them hacks. AI doesn't have feelings like the human Haywood did, or at least not yet, so we can call it what we'd like. However, I'm confident that our department will confront this novelty, and perhaps even welcome it, with the curiosity, creativity, and class that we always approach our glorious language.

Being human is about saying hello to new challenges, but it is also about feeling the deep loss of a goodbye. Drs. Bob McLaughlin and Kass Fleisher passed away in late 2022. We miss them dearly. More recently, we received news of the deaths of Drs. Ralph Bellas, Robin Lee Carr, and Jim Skibo. Professors Jan Susina, Ricardo Cruz, Joe Amato, and Kirstin Zona retired, and Professors Paul Ugor and Sarah Hochstetler settled into new academic homes. We wish them all the best, and we miss them, too. Our students faced challenges as well, as recent mental wellness and food insecurity statistics attest. Last year, we had a campus closure due to extreme cold. Already the first week of fall, the extreme heat was so intense that some of our students could not safely get to class.

The many students who choose to major in the fields of English Studies care deeply about the environment and about the power of language and storytelling to make positive change. There are still over 370 undergraduate English majors and about 100 graduate students in our programs. These students have the highest GPAs in ISU history. These students are the most diverse in ISU history. These students, who have survived a plague, are more driven than any I've ever met. These students will also have the opportunity to learn from new scholars. We welcome tenure-track faculty Dr. Jesús Olguín Martínez in theoretical linguistics, Dr. Shelby Boehm in English Education, and Dr. Maggie Morris Davis in English Education, Visiting Assistant Professor Dr. Katie Landers in women's literature, and Interim Director of English Education Dr. Jay Percell. All fill gaps in our teaching and are poised to help us enter a new era in our department. We have 27 tenure-track faculty, one visiting assistant professor, 14 full-time instructional assistant professors, and 10 part-time instructional assistant professors. Cadie Huber, Katie Fisher, and Brooklyn Vogel joined our staff last year and have already helped countless students and made a positive impact on our program. Our English Education staff, Publications Unit Directors Drs. Steve Halle and Holms Troelstrup, and all of our faculty volunteers for positions like Associate Chair (Dr. Derek Sparby), Graduate Studies Director (Dr. Ela Przybyło), Undergraduate Studies Director (Dr. Tara Lyons), Writing Program Director (Dr. Rachel Gramer, with assistant Maegan Gaddis), and Internship Director (Dr. Elise Hurley) are keeping this department together and moving forward.

You, too, are keeping this department moving forward! Last spring, thanks to the generosity of many of you who read this newsletter, we gave 17 awards and scholarships to 31 recipients. We passed onto our students *over \$35,000* in support. Because of you, our Department of English won the Biggest Boost award during the Birds Give Back campaign, which means that we saw the largest increase in donors of any department. Please keep a lookout for social media announcements for the 2024 Birds Give Back campaign. We will continue to seek support for the Publications Unit, *Obsidian: Literature & Arts in the African Diaspora*, all of our disciplinary scholarships and awards, and the new Alumni Advisory Board Scholarship, given for the first time last year to student DaKylia Henderson. Thank you for all you do for our department. With sincerity, I know that you *are* truly inspiring. Do enjoy reading more about our community and accomplishments in the following tapestry, with content collected, edited, and woven by Ph.D. student in children's literature, Roy Rowan. I think what you will find, across this newsletter, is emphasis on the human, on the creative artistry we have worked hard to hone over decades and across generations and that we continue to develop, always seeking more knowledge and new skills. AI may learn and get better with each passing day, but so do we.



Dr. Christopher Breu

2023 Distinguished Lecturer Dr. Christopher Breu Speaks on Embodiment and Desire

Selection as the College of Arts and Sciences Lecturer is the highest honor that the College of Arts and Sciences can bestow on one of its faculty. Established in 1968, it is a peer-determined award that recognizes the significant national or international reputation of a scholar and teacher in the college, and it can be given to a faculty member only once in their career.

Dr. Christopher Breu joined Drs. Tim Hunt, Bob McLaughlin, Roberta Trites, Curtis White, Ron Fortune, Jan Neuleib, John Shields, Bill Morgan, Elizabeth McMahan, Lucia Getsi, Ray Lewis White, Rodger Tarr, Carol Thomas Neely, William Linneman, Charles B. Harris, Norton B. Crowell, and Dale B. Vetter this year in holding this prestigious honor. This list should remind us of the rich tradition of scholarship that our department has sustained since Dr. Vetter's first award in 1974, when he presented on a topic that is still relevant today: "Likeness, Difference, and the Humanities."

Breu also positions the humanities as key in discussions about identity. On September 28, 2023, he delivered his lecturer presentation, "In Defense of Sex: Rethinking Embodiment and Desire in the Twenty-First Century," to a full room of students, colleagues, family, friends, and visitors from other universities. In his own words, he wonders: "What is the relationship between humans as material beings and the material world in which we live? How are systems of inequality, such as hierarchies around race, gender, class, and sexuality, structured not just in terms of representation, but in terms of the material foundations of social existence?"

Breu is a native of the Chicago area. He completed his B.A. at Northwestern University with honors and then moved to sunny California for his master's and Ph.D. in a joint program at the University of California Santa Cruz. Hired at ISU in 2000, he published four articles immediately in his pre-tenure years, on topics like disruptive economics, racialized masculinity, Frank Sinatra, Dashiell Hammett, and white southern manhood. In 2005, his monograph, *Hard-Boiled Masculinities*, was published with the University of Minnesota Press. In a 2007 review, Ralph E. Rodriguez said that *Hard-Boiled Masculinities* "is a must [read] for those who wish to understand the history and performance of masculinity in the United States." Breu was and is a pioneer in the shift toward cultural theory in literary studies, and his work pushes against the limits of the concept of culture as a way to talk about what Departments of English do in the university and in the world. Cultural theory seeks to understand how meaning is bound up with systems of power and control and produced within historical, social, political, and economic contexts, but to do so, it relies on correlations and relationships as a methodology. Breu questions how cultural theory has been unable to account for material embodiments that cannot be correlated to something else.

Between his promotion to associate professor and then full pro-

essor in 2015, Breu published another groundbreaking monograph, *Insistence of the Material: Literature in the Age of Biopolitics*, also with University of Minnesota Press. This book quickly became the go-to theoretical primer for those interested in what new materialism is and how we can look to it to help us understand late 20th-century and early 21st-century texts. Reviewer T.J. Martinson noted how Breu is changing how we read postmodern literature: he is building a new ethical framework for understanding the narratives of capitalism, biopolitical medicalization, and environmental production.

One of the forms through which we can see Breu doing this work with materialism is with noir fiction and film. This interest in noir weaves through his career. He co-edited a 2020 collection entitled *Noir Affect*, with his wife, Dr. Elizabeth Hatmaker, also faculty here at ISU, who passed away from ALS during the production of the book. We all remembered her that night in September, and we remember her in this newsletter, too, not only as an influence in the direction of Breu's work, but as an accomplished and talented scholar and writer.

Today, Breu's scholarship on theories of materiality and embodiment are internationally celebrated. He is invited to speak and teach around the world, and he has published 39 peer-reviewed articles in the top journals in the field of literary and cultural studies. Recently, he taught the first ever course on intersex and transgender experience offered at the University of Paderborn. In 2022, Breu was awarded the Dialogical Cultures Grant at the Center for Advanced Studies through Katholische (kat-o-lish-e) Universität, Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. He was the recipient of the Janice Witherspoon Neuleib Award for Outstanding Scholarly Achievement of the Year, the 2016 Outstanding College Researcher Award, and the College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Teacher Award. He was also a 2011 Fulbright Research Chair in Globalization and Cultural Studies at the Institute on Globalization and the Human Condition at McMaster University.

Finally, Breu is also known for his tireless mentorship of undergraduate and graduate students, who can often be found attending office hours—which any instructor knows is itself an accomplishment. Breu works with students on big picture, theoretical questions in a way that ignites their critical and intellectual imaginations. For both the undergraduate and graduate students in our large, thriving program in the Department of English, these kinds of experiences—talking about abstract concepts, about identity, culture, sexuality, gender, class, race—may be completely new to them. Yet, their fresh perspectives ensure that our department will continue to be relevant for future generations.

New Directions for Dr. Jan Susina, Professor of Children's and Young Adult Literature

In the fall of 2022, the Dead & Co. announced the retirement of the Grateful Dead after 50 years as a band with a series of farewell concerts as its final tour. Around the same time, but in a much more modest manner, I announced my retirement from the ISU English Department after 30 years and seven department chairs. In both cases, it has been a long, strange trip. But, at least for me, it has also been an eventful trip that has allowed me to meet and work with many remarkable students and colleagues.

The ISU English Department was a much different place when I joined the department in the fall of 1992. At that time the children's literature faculty were Tamia Ranta, Roberta Trites, and Robin Carr and the department was still in the process of proposing the Ph.D. program in English studies. With the Ph.D. program in place, the children's literature program began to flourish and attract outstanding graduate students from around the country and across the globe. Graduate courses in children's literature were quickly developed and added to the robust series of undergraduate course that attracted both education majors and English majors. The department gradually increased tenure-track faculty in children's literature over time to include Anita Tarr, Karen Coats, Nancy Tolson, Natalie op de Beeck, and Mary Moran. With a large faculty cohort in children's literature, the department was able to host the 2008 International Children's Literature Association Conference in Normal. Phyllis Feaster and Eileen Bularzik began to teach multiple sections of undergraduate children's literature courses due to increased demand. The children's literature program was designed so that the advanced Ph.D. students specializing in the field would be able to teach the introductory Foundations in Literature for Children's course as part of their academic training. The Taima Ranta Children's Literature Scholarship program was created to recognize and support outstanding children's literature students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. I enjoyed being able to offer



Dr. Jan Susina

specialized graduate seminars in topics such as "Fairy Tales and Their Revisions," "Comics and Graphic Novels for Children," "Coming of Age in YA Films" and "Children's Literature and the Concept of Childhood." Given my research in 19th century British literature, I was able to offer graduate seminars in "Victorian Children's Literature," "Victorian Illustrated Books," and upper-level courses focused on the works of Lewis Carroll, Jane Austen, and Charles Dickens.

Over the years, I was fortunate to work with many talented graduate students and chaired or served as a committee member for many outstanding Ph.D. dissertations and M.A. theses. These included a Clarence W. Sorsenson Award-winning dissertation by Joseph Thomas, Jr., and a James L. Fisher Award-winning M.A. thesis by Vanessa Wayne. It has been gratifying that so many of the Ph.D. graduates specializing in children's literature have gone on to successful academic careers teaching children's literature.

In 1994, Roberta Trites and I established the Lois Lenski's Children's Literature Lecture series, co-sponsored by the English Department and Milner Library, which has brought more than 25 noted children's literature scholars to campus, including George Bodmer, Lissa Paul, Phil Nel, and Carol Tilley among many others. It continues to be the longest-running lecture series in the department. I also organized the "Well, I'll be Banned: Readings of Challenged & Censored Children's Books" series that featured children's literature graduate students and faculty reading selections from controversial children's and young adult texts as part of the national "Banned Book Week" promoted by the American Library Association. That reading series was held from 1993 to 2016, but it seems that this program ought to be reinstated given the current political climate. I was also able to bring Mark West to campus in 1999 for a weekend workshop on book censorship for local high school and elementary

school teachers. As a member of the English Studies Lecture series committee, I also arranged campus presentations by Vivian Gusin Paley, the only elementary teacher to be awarded a MacArthur Genius Award; Hillary Chute, University of Chicago scholar of graphic novels; and Ivan Brunetti, graphic novelist and *New Yorker* cover artist.

Working with the staff of Milner's Special Collections in 2015, I supervised Rieley Bonslawski's 2015 undergraduate internship, which became "The Evolution of Alice in Wonderland" exhibition. Later in 2019, as part of a graduate seminar, the students organized the "Image & Text: Children's Visual Narratives" exhibition. Given my research on Lewis Carroll and fairy tales, I was invited to give presentations on Carroll's Alice books for the Friends of the Milner Library and on Carroll's photography by the Art History Department, and I contributed an essay to the *pixerina* Witcherina catalogue for the 2002 exhibition at the University Galleries. I served as a dramaturgical consultant for a production of *Alice in Wonderland* by the School of Theatre.

Thanks to department travel funds, I was able to present papers and chaired sessions at conferences sponsored by MLA, M/MLA, SAMLA, ChLA, the Popular Culture Association, and the Society for the History of Children and Youth. I served for several years as a member of the Executive Committee for the MLA Forum on Children's and Young Adult Literature and the ChLA Executive Board. My children's literature research provided me invitations to guest lecture at Berkeley, University of California at San Diego, and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. I also gave online presentations to classes at the University of Michigan, Eastern Carolina University, and Columbia College-Chicago.

I was the book review editor for *The Lion and the Unicorn* for 10 years and another three years as the general editor for the *Children's Literature Journal*. I also served as guest editor for an issue of the *Marvel & Tales*, based on the papers presented at the "Considering the Kunstmärchen: The History & Development of the Literary Tales" conference that I organized at Princeton University in 2001. I was the guest editor for a special children's literature section of the *American Book Review*. I organized the 1998 successful nomination of Maurice Sendak as an Honorary Fellow of MLA, the only children's writer to be given that award, which is voted on by members of MLA.

Much of my scholarly research and publications has resulted from the courses I offered in the English Department and included articles and book chapters about Lewis Carroll, George MacDonald, Charles Dickens, Louisa May Alcott, Gertrude Stein, Margaret Wise Brown, P.L. Travers, Walt Disney, Maurice Sendak, *Telletubbies*, cookbooks based on children's books, and mixed tapes. My articles and reviews have appeared in *PMLA*, *Children's Literature*, *ChLA Quarterly*, *Children's Literature in Education*, *American Journal of Play*, *Marvels & Tales*, *Victorian Studies*, *Novel*, *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, *Dickens Studies Annual*, *Inks: The Journal of the Comics Studies Society*, and *Knight Letter*. I have placed many of these articles, book chapters, and reviews on ResearchGate.net so they can be available to a wider academic audience. Over the years I have been regularly contacted by ISU Report, *The Vidette* and WGLT to discuss children's literature and occasionally by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, Huffington Post, and WGBH-Boston. I have served as outside evaluator on several children's book authors and illustrators for the MacArthur Foundation.

As much as I have enjoyed teaching, I have been grateful for sabbaticals. During one I was able to stay at home after the birth of

my son, Jacob. Another sabbatical enabled me to complete *The Place of Lewis Carroll in Children's Literature*. I was a keynote speaker for the "Alice Through the Ages: The 150th Anniversary of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" conference at Cambridge University made possible by another sabbatical.

One of my fondest memories of teaching was when my son dressed in his Peter Pan outfit and sword and burst into The History of Children's Literature course during the class discussion of J.M. Barrie's Peter and Wendy. This was when Jacob was fascinated with pirates and Peter Pan, and we would often perform elaborate sword fights at home in which he was Peter Pan, and I was Captain Hook. As in the novel, youth would always defeat old age.

As for many other faculty and students at ISU, the stressful recent years of the COVID pandemic, with the resulting online teaching and teaching while masked, has complicated and taken some of the pleasure out of teaching. I always thought that I would retire from teaching when it stopped being fun. I have been treating retirement as a long sabbatical, catching up on missed deadlines and working on various research projects. While I miss the regular conversations with students and colleagues in Stevenson Hall, I am confident that the English Department will continue to evolve and thrive in new and innovative ways. I am grateful to all the students, staff, and faculty, past and present, who have made my time in the English Department such a meaningful and productive part of my life. I hope that children's literature and Victorian studies remain important fields of study in the English Department as it moves forward.

Reflection: Edmund Ankomah

In "Stranger in the Village," James Baldwin writes of his experience in a tiny Swiss village and the general sense of equal parts awe and anxiety with which the locals interacted with him. He writes of the "alienness" that prefigures this encounter between a Black man and a people who had never seen one and how this meeting between an unfamiliar space and an alien is an inherently fraught event. In many ways, Baldwin's experience in this Swiss village is different from what mine has been as an international student in the United States. However, in "Stranger in the Village," we find a reflection on space and experience that foregrounds the importance of human relationships, of the nature of these relationships and the rhetoric and stories that inform and sustain them.

People!

The humans I have interacted with, learned so much from, inspired me in many ways; the humans I have sat beside at lecture halls, walked past in the hallways of Stevenson, exchanged forced, rehearsed smiles at, in the elevators—People! These human relationships have defined my experience as a graduate student in the Department of English. The anxiety and distress that often characterize being in a new environment is all too familiar. But meeting a human, another person willing to do as seemingly little as just sit and chat with you, can make a world of difference. Especially in a world whose apprehension and phobia about the unfamiliar aptly compel us to guard ourselves against such.

People!

Sherrie Howe, who was the graduate program assistant when I arrived in Normal in the summer of 2019 did so much more than just sit and chat with me. Her amiable disposition toward me (and

I believe this wasn't just toward me), her general pleasantness, was a welcome experience in what was, at the time, a struggle to navigate academic life as an international student and the social and cultural puzzle of an America that was just as new to me as I was to it. Graduate school can be a lot to deal with—it is often tasking in a lot of ways (no prize for stating the obvious). However, as an international student, my experience navigating the oftentimes glaring educational and cultural gap would have been considerably more stressful had it not been for wonderful humans like Sherrie. From helping me acquire an office key (giving me a ride to go get it), helping me understand the Connect Transit bus schedule, figuring out all the Human Resources administrative Wahala* to getting me an umbrella for the rainy November schooldays. For an international student, these “little” expressions of humanness help inspire a feeling of at-home-ness even if home is a thousand miles removed from one's present location. The department does a lot to help international students settle into the graduate program, but it's the people, the people in this space, this space not emptied of people who make all the difference.

People!

Very often when we talk about “settling in,” we acknowledge that this process can be difficult. We recognize the struggle that's an inevitable part of it and that a logical terminus to settling in might very well never be reached. For an international student doing graduate school work, it matters little whether it's a 2-year or 5-year program—becoming used to a new social space invites a kind of performance, one that defines your relationship to the new social world and locates your role in the theatre of the space that you've become a part of. What doesn't get talked about much, I think, is the humans whose roles in this theatre can make the experience of settling in a dreadful nightmare or delightful dream. Looking back, I do not think I have had much cause to complain about the department's “active role” in helping international students acclimatize to graduate school work. And I recognize and appreciate the humans whose commitment to their work and genuine gestures of concern have made my story at ISU less dreary than it would have been. I have lost count of the number of times Libby's emails have helped keep me on the “straight and narrow.” “Please do not forget to register for the spring semester”; “Remember to send in your signed health insurance certificate for the fall,”—these are just a few timely reminders I have received during my time here that I'd always appreciate. I remember and appreciate those mid-semester meetings with Dr. Haas, when she was director of the grad program, the warmth with which she'd receive me into her office, the counsel she'd provide on grad school courses and the occasional check-ins on how well my family was settling into the United States.

People!

In Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, there is that moment in the narrative when Alice, having arrived in the “strange” fantastic world filled with “unusual” creatures, meets the hookah-smoking Caterpillar. We learn from this meeting that Alice does not particularly like the Caterpillar when they first meet, because he does not immediately talk to her and when he does, it is usually in short, rather rude sentences. I allude to this to say that my experience has not been all butterflies and daisies. But I also acknowledge that every good story needs some tension, some conflict that drives the narrative. But there is none of that in this reflection.

I look back on my 2-year course work in the department with

much contentment. If I could do it all over again, I very much would. I am grateful for my coursemates who treated me like family. Edcel, my officemate who has just been an absolute joy to share a space with. I am grateful for the courses I took and the humans who inspired much learning in me. I remember Dr. McBride's passion for his work and for just being an all-round wonderful human, Dr. Smith's infectious energy and enthusiasm in the classroom, Dr. Ugor's beautiful mind, Dr. Breu and Dr. Gramer's all-around good energy and the many delightful conversations we've shared. Course work for me was a rewarding experience because of the humans whose love and dedication to their work made it all worth it. My journey toward becoming ABD owes much to the support and encouragement I have received from faculty. My dissertation committee is the best I could have asked for! If I have one regret, it's that I will probably finish my program not having much of an interaction with other faculty in the department. I would have liked to know them. The awkwardness, the forced smiles, the painful attempts at performing friendliness when I meet them in the hallways is something I would have liked to not experience.

*Problem/trouble/difficulty

People!

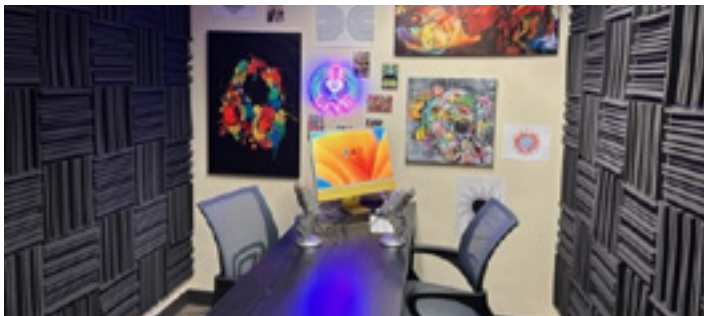
June 20, 2019. I have just arrived at the Uptown Station. I stare blankly into space, still taking it all in: this big, great America I had seen so much of on my TV screens back in Ghana. My host is late to come get me from the station, and I have no means of getting to Walnut Street, where I'll be staying. I do not even know how to get there. So, I wait—confused, overwhelmed, parched, hungry. I see the squirrels that scurry past. Then I notice the squirrel that stops to stare. Our eyes lock. No words are spoken. But we share a moment. If only I spoke their language, a language of animacy, maybe the squirrel would have helped me find my way. Because after all, squirrels were here first. I wonder if the people here notice the squirrels, and the birds and the trees. I remember how it felt to not have another human to speak with. Robin Wall Kimmerer explains this beautifully: “In English, you are either a human or a thing. Our grammar boxes us in by the choice of reducing a non-human being to an it.” I realize now that I have spent much of my time here trying to know people, hoping that somehow by knowing humans I could come to know this space better. If there's one thing I take away with me from my experience of doing graduate school work, it's the importance of forming endearing connections. Life in a new place can be unsettling, but these connections (human or not) make all the difference.

Press Play! The English Department Podcasting Lab is On Air

Faculty, students, and staff can now book the Press Play Podcasting Lab for audio and video projects, thanks to two Provost Innovation and Enhancement (PIE) Grants of just under \$20,00 in 2022 and \$12,000 in 2023. The podcasting lab is just one outcome of proposals that have allowed the Department of English to hire a digital making coordinator (Ph.D. student Tiffany Bishop), a reading development specialist (Ph.D. student Brittany Larsen), an archival and applied research specialist (Ph.D. student Helen Plevka-Jones),

a civic engagement specialist (Ph.D. student Laura Sweeney), and a social media specialist (Ph.D. student Edcel J. Cintron-Gonzalez) to more fully support the unique skills of English majors in the 21st century. The proposal also supported visits by translation studies experts. Together, these skill areas are foundational for the virtual department Center for Student Success and Career Readiness. This center will provide extracurricular training, resources, and workshops for current students who will face quickly changing career expectations. Further, the center helps us better articulate specifically what is special about the talents of English majors.

Faculty and graduate student teaching assistant surveys and syllabi indicate that as of fall 2022, nearly every course in the English department curriculum required at least one digital project, and many required up to three. ENG 101 students are asked to create blogs, multimedia compositions, podcasts, and even videos. Finished in February of 2023, three classes used the lab immediately for projects: ENG 214: Early Modern Studies (22 students), ENG 358: Topics in Publishing Studies (19 students), and ENG 295: Teaching Writing and Literature in the Middle School (20 students). So, within the first few weeks, the podcasting lab served 61 students and, significantly, in three completely different course content areas: Literary Studies, Publishing Studies, and English Education.



The Press Play Podcasting Lab

The podcasting lab is equipped with a new iMac, microphones, headsets, soundproofed panel walls, and an “On Air” sign to alert neighbors of recording sessions. All members of the department can sign up for lab time during working hours. The launch of the lab was complemented by the “Press Play and Tune in Series,” coordinated by Bishop, who created instructional materials for the lab’s users and also worked personally with students assigned class digital making projects. The first event was “Starting a Podcast with Dr. Woods,” featuring Ph.D. alumnus in Rhetoric, Composition, and Technical Communication, Dr. Charles Woods, now a tenure-track assistant professor of English at Texas A&M University-Commerce. The second event was “Learning from the Professionals: An Interview with Dr. Woods and Dr. Schering,” with Woods and Dr. Matthew Schering, also a Ph.D. alum in Rhetoric and Composition who has been working in podcasting since graduation. Recordings of both talks are on the department’s new YouTube channel at [YouTube.com/channel/UCAEVq6uwEYAUyBrh1O9cjJA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAEVq6uwEYAUyBrh1O9cjJA).

With the help of the Press Play Podcasting Lab and the resources that will soon be available on a devoted website, we hope that English majors at all levels will embrace and build talents that they may take for granted. Students who choose English are highly sensitive and observational readers of texts and situations. They are multimodal makers adept at switching technologies and genres, and



Visit the Press Play website (under construction) at About.IllinoisState.edu/pressplay.

they are strong translators of complex information into multiple kinds of languages. English majors are also good at adapting a range of investigative methodologies for applied and archival research, and they are socially and civically aware and activist-minded, pivoting thoughtfully from classroom to community. With the help of podcasts and videos, the Department of English can more clearly articulate these talents to build student confidence, educate the University, and connect with the public.

Social Media Specialist, CYA Scholar, and Poet: Edcel J. Cintron-Gonzalez’s Journey at Illinois State University



Ph.D. Student Edcel Javier Cintron-Gonzalez

Edcel Javier Cintron-Gonzalez is a very busy person. A normal day in the life of Cintron-Gonzalez in Normal includes teaching Children’s, Young Adult, and Latine Literature, thinking of innovative ways to represent the Department of English at Illinois State University through social media*, presenting in multiple conferences, writing academic papers and poetry, and leading and working as an activist in many organizations around campus. People often wonder

how Cintron-Gonzalez does it all, and his response was that he truly enjoys everything he does and hopes his work will contribute to his Puerto Rican and Latine community.

Currently, Cintron-Gonzalez is a Ph.D. Student studying English Studies with a focus on Children’s and Young Adult literature. His passion stems from his love for reading and interest in the ways BIPOC authors celebrate their culture and heritage through their creative work. Cintron-Gonzalez currently writes for the newsletter “Palabreando,” where he offers his thoughts on picture books on topics such as foodways, mental health, belongingness, home, representations, autonomy and agency, Latine youth literature, among other topics. Besides his passion for cooking, he also loves to play video games and write about them from time to time at the website Gamers with Glasses. His interest in game studies has been recognized recently when he won the Rhonda Nicole Memorial Book award from the 26th Women, Gender, and Sexuality symposium for his essay on video game reviews, climate change, and gender in video games. As a Puerto Rican born on the island of enchantment popularly known as Puerto Rico, Cintron-Gonzalez draws a lot of his inspiration for research and writing from his youth and experi-

ences while living in his homeland. As a survivor of the devastating Hurricane George back in 1998 and Hurricane Maria in 2017, Cintron-Gonzalez has found ways to process his trauma by using his love for poetry as a way to heal from his lived experiences.

Irma, Maria, Fiona & Me is Cintron-Gonzalez's debut chapbook of poetry, which was published by PRESS 254/Spoonfuls in May 2023. The chapbook is an embodiment of his relationship with hurricanes in the Caribbean from his youth to his adulthood. Through his poetry, Cintron-Gonzalez invites the reader to know what it was like to experience and survive, firsthand, months without electricity, water, and essential resources during and after a category 5 hurricane. Part of his poetry also represents the Puerto Rican diaspora during hurricane season because many Puerto Ricans who are away from their homeland worry about their family's safety. This was the case for Cintron-Gonzalez when he ended his chapbook with poems dedicated to the recent Hurricane Fiona, which happened in September 2022. One interesting aspect about *Irma, Maria, Fiona & Me* is the reason why Cintron-Gonzalez chose not to include Hurricane George as part of the title. He explained that he wanted to pay tribute to the women who raised him to the person he is today. He wanted to connect the concept of hurricane narratives with how much Puerto Rican women sacrifice for their loved ones and family, especially during times of crisis. Cintron-Gonzalez wanted his chapbook to not only represent Puerto Rican voices from the island but also bring visibility to the collective trauma and mental health struggles all Puerto Ricans share during hurricane season. He also wanted to show how this narrative is present in contemporary Puerto Rican literature. For example, Hurricane Maria and what happened during this event is mentioned in YA and middle grade Puerto Rican literature such as *With the Fire on High* by Elizabeth Acevedo, and *Iveliz Explains It All* by Andrea Beatriz Arango. This recent wave of Puerto Rican literature inspired Cintron-Gonzalez to create a course on contemporary Puerto Rican literature with a focus on hurricane narratives and relief.

During spring of 2023, Cintron-Gonzalez created the course "Contemporary Puerto Rican Literature: Diáspora, Island Narratives, and Hurricane Relief," which was inspired after the passing of Hurricane Fiona and the activism related to hurricane relief and donations for Puerto Rico. Cintron-Gonzalez explained that the course consisted of researching how contemporary authors wrote books related to the experience of hurricanes in the Caribbean. The course itself aimed to create a classroom space to read, analyze, and collectively discuss contemporary literature that is representative of the Puerto Rican lifestyle. Specifically, the class focused on literature and media produced from 2018 to 2022 and studied ways in which Puerto Rican and non-Puerto Rican authors represent the different lived experiences of Puerto Ricans through their body of work. Students learn about Puerto Rican culture, heritage, literature, and how hurricane relief and resources were distributed and treated on the island, keeping in mind the island's imperial and colonial relationship with the US. The course also focused on media studies; the class would study news reports from companies from the U.S. and local news from Puerto Rico and study the narrative and seriousness that was shown when talking about the disaster caused by the hurricane in Puerto Rico. The course also took a mixed-genre method, reading different literary forms such as graphic novels, comics, poetry, memoirs, and young adult literature. Cintron-Gonzalez explained that it is important to understand how media use the terms "solidarity" and "resiliency" to describe how Puerto Ricans would "move

forward" with their lives after a catastrophic and traumatic natural disaster. U.S. media would often acknowledge that the hurricane happened, that people lost their belongings and spent days with no resources available to them, but they would end with the idea that everyone is fine. Cintron-Gonzalez's response to this is to highlight how Puerto Rican narratives not only focus on survival, but the multiple social, economic, and political problems that come with this after a hurricane passes. With his love for poetry and pedagogy, Cintron-Gonzalez also found a new interest in social media and marketing as he is working toward building an online presence for the Department of English.

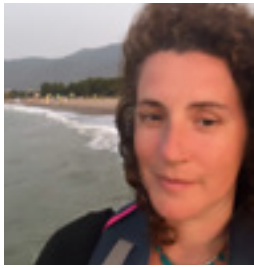
Cintron-Gonzalez also works as the social media specialist for the Department of English at ISU. Faculty, staff, and students alike often see Cintron-Gonzalez carrying around camera mounts, ring lights, and his phone in the Stevenson hallways where he would be working on his next trending video for TikTok. Whether it is a trending dance challenge, or representing life at the English Department, Cintron-Gonzalez's videos have grown in popularity over the last few months within the ISU community. His job includes managing the English Department Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and YouTube channel. He has focused his work within the last year to represent the kind of work that is done in an English Department. He features student achievements when undergraduate and graduate students finish a big project, present at a conference, or win awards. He designs different social media campaigns so that the English Department community and its alumni can express their thoughts. Cintron-Gonzalez has also been working on different video projects that he planned to post during the fall 2023 semester, which includes video podcast interviews with colleagues talking about their research, events hosted by faculty, and much more. With his dedication to managing the English Department's social media, Cintron-Gonzalez was nominated and won the Outstanding Student Social Media Manager award on April 2023 in the #REDBIRDPROUD Social Media Awards. Cintron-Gonzalez said he feels very proud of himself and humbled by all the wonderful positive comments he has received for all he has worked on in his journey at ISU.

Cintron-Gonzalez plans to continue his research on mental health picture books for his dissertation project. He wants to present his research on Latine youth literature in the upcoming MMLA, MLA, ChLA and ILACHE conferences for this 2023-2024 school year. He wants to share his findings with other Latine professionals and continue the conversation on the importance of talking about hurricane and latine narratives, whose voices have been historically underrepresented. As an islander, caribeñe, latine, and Puerto Rican, Cintron-Gonzalez wants to continue to be a part of the BIPOC representation in academia and continue writing poetry to share with the world.

*To join all of the English department's social media feeds on Youtube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and X, as well as access past newsletters and the University website, bookmark this link tree at [Linktr.ee/englishdepartment.ISU](https://linktr.ee/englishdepartment.ISU).

Awards & Recognition

In this section, we shine a spotlight on the individuals and organizations who have gone above and beyond, showcasing their dedication, talent, and commitment to excellence. Join us in applauding their remarkable accomplishments and contributions.



Dr. Lisy Seloni

Dr. Lisy Seloni, Winner of the John Dossey Outstanding Teaching Award

I'm deeply honored to be the recipient of the John Dossey Outstanding Teaching Award this year, and I want to thank my colleagues, mentors, graduate, and undergraduate students for their endless support and encouragement in my teaching journey. I was asked to write

my teaching philosophy as part of this newsletter, so I'll discuss some of the principles that I believe as a teacher-scholar in the area of applied linguistics.

I love teaching and working with future teachers. That's a fact. But it's not just the love of teaching that keeps one in this profession. It's also the willingness to interact with students and colleagues and an eagerness to engage with diverse and ever-changing tools, people, histories, cultures, and resources to make learning as meaningful, equitable, and accessible as possible. My teaching is deeply informed by inquiry-oriented, feminist and anti-racist critical pedagogy. As an educator and an applied linguist who works around the real-life application of various linguistic and second language learning theories, I often wonder how theories and pedagogy I introduce to my students are "appropriated and resisted, located and displaced" (Clifford, 1989, p. 179) in the classroom. We may not have an ability to control how ideas are taken up in our classrooms, so the best we can do is work on creating accessible and explicit learning opportunities and collaborative contexts for students to be able to evaluate those new ideas in ways that are meaningful for them. I strongly believe that the act of teaching can be transformative when our pedagogy centers around the lived experiences, joys, vulnerabilities, hopes, open dialogues, brave spaces, and common humanity of our students and of ourselves as teachers.

As an applied linguist by profession, I am passionate about and committed to preparing future English teachers who are invested in linguistic justice and can develop culturally sustaining and linguistically aware pedagogies for their linguistically minoritized students. Both in my teaching and mentoring, I encourage students to take a stance against linguistic injustices they see around them by helping them build a strong background in language theories and by challenging standard language ideologies they see in places such as children's books, ELT textbooks, media, teacher education, and reading and writing instruction. English language learners, especially from migrant and immigrant communities across the world, face many discriminatory practices as their language practices are assessed or as they try to gain access to public education and its resources. In my TESOL courses, we collectively think about ways in which we could develop tools and create open space where all language practices are seen, validated, and integrated into the curriculum. Students I get to work with do so well with the new concepts and ideas they learn when I center my courses around civic engagement activities and

critical thinking. Through direct engagement with language learners or their own languaging practices, they understand that language is not simply a system of rules to acquire, but a series of fluid social practices that are embedded in a web of social, cognitive, historical, and cultural relations. While they learn to see language as an adaptive system through concepts such as translanguaging, they also learn the interconnected nature of conventionally perceived languages and other communicative systems around us. For example, some of the questions we discuss include but are not limited to: What are the language and literacy practices of our students? Whose voices in our classes we are not hearing, and whose voices we hear more? What risks are ELLs allowed to take as they are learning the English language? What are the consequences of taking those risks, for instance writing in one's vernacular literacy or inclusion of non-Standard English or non-Western rhetorical choices in writing in academic contexts? Such questions help us cultivate critical language awareness whether we work with English learners with immigrant and refugee backgrounds or students of color who use diverse dialects or whether we engage with writing instruction with linguistic complexity.

Because my scholarship is inextricably connected to my pedagogy, let me also add a few words about my research as well. As a second language writing scholar who values transdisciplinary research, I am invested in studying the diverse literate practices of multilingual writers in higher education to better understand the complex processes involved in writers' textual production, knowledge making, and positionality within their disciplinary communities. I've been particularly interested in how future teachers of multilingual writers as well as multilingual graduate students (e.g. thesis and dissertation writers) come to know what they know through the lens of academic socialization, critical language awareness, and cultural historical activity theory. Particularly appealing to me are the ins and outs of class literate activities, multilingual and multimodal writing practices, and complex identities of multilingual writers within various disciplinary discourse communities, as they gain disciplinary knowledge and engage in different ways of knowledge-making. Both in my research and teaching, I find that the pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge of teachers, especially the newcomers, is constantly shaped and mediated by theory building within course works, observations of and interactions with other mentors and peers, by their own language practices, and teaching trajectories. Currently, I am on sabbatical in my hometown, Istanbul, to expand on my earlier work around writing instruction in non-English dominant contexts. I am at the initial stages of an ethnographic research project that examines how pre-service language teachers gain expertise in teaching literacy, specifically teaching writing. I'm excited to examine the ways in which pre-service language teachers develop teacher expertise in writing instruction during their teacher training programs. With this project, I'm devoting my sabbatical leave in Istanbul to reading, writing, researching, and collaborating with colleagues about second language teacher expertise, specifically on how teacher candidates develop and enact pedagogies around second language writing instruction in contexts where English is not the dominant language in the larger community but has a significant symbolic, educational, and cultural role.

While I'm here, I'm also having much needed family time, walking by the beach, and enjoying many, many cups of Turkish tea!



Dr. Steve Halle, Publications Unit Director

Dr. Steve Halle, Winner of the College of Arts and Sciences Excellence Award for Outstanding Teaching by an Administrative Professional
Reflections on Teaching and Learning at the Publications Unit, or My “Vow to Poetry”

Randy Roark: Can you remember deciding to be a poet? Was it a decision?

Anne Waldman: I loved hearing poetry read out loud. I loved reading poetry, and I wrote it from an early age. It was a tacit human occasion. Understood as a natural mode of communication. Poetry was a way certainly to express “secret emotions,” and I felt comfortable, happy inside the making of it. Later it was necessary to assert the position. It became my course of life—marginal, subterranean at first—maybe there was a decision there—that I’d never “sell out.” Poetry then defined my life. Habit and manner took over. Then I never could go back. I took a vow early on to never give up on poetry or on the poetic community—to serve as a votary to this high and rebellious art.

While the students I teach today might consider the sentiment cringe or corny, my commitment to my teaching practice—and especially the one that has emerged during my connection to the Publications Unit over the past 15 years—has evolved hand-in-glove with my own vow to poetry and the community of creative writers, translators, and publishing professionals working in the genre. My commitment is not unlike my mentor Anne Waldman’s quote above from her “Vow to Poetry” interview in a collection of essays, interviews, and manifestoes bearing the same title. My own pseudo-monastic pursuit rests on some core principles that inform how I teach: dwelling in possibility, maximizing the good and minimizing the harm from each endeavor, advancing creativity and knowledge at the expense of ignorance, and creating contexts in publishing that help multiple stakeholders finish the project with a net benefit.

I started at the Publications Unit as a graduate worker in 2008 when I came to Illinois State University to pursue a Ph.D. in English Studies with an emphasis in creative writing, with dreams of teaching poetry workshops in a creative writing program one day. At that time, I’d completed an MFA in poetry at New England College and started an online journal called *Seven Corners* (7C) in 2006 that published Chicago and Midwestern poets working with innovative forms or subjects, which I edited for several years. I didn’t have much of an idea about how to be an editor—there is no test you must take to secure the title—but I did know that Web 2.0 applications of the aughts made the bar to entry for new editors and journals inexpensive and more democratic than ever before. And I was driven by the need to publish voices that were often excluded elsewhere (this still motivates my editorial practice). Editing the journal afforded me opportunities to connect with and publish the work of poets working in Chicago and environs during what was considered a renaissance for innovative poetics in the city. And my own writing changed and evolved after encountering the work of each new poet I published,

and I often took recommendations from these poets about who should be the next person to focus on in the journal.

Thankfully, my foundering early editorial ways did not last long. At the Publications Unit, I received training about the agency an editor needs to be effective, as well as the diplomacy, professional communication skills, and general perseverance it takes to be involved in publishing others’ works across many years without getting burned out. By working on book and journal projects for affiliated journals and presses like *SRPR*, *Mandorla*, and *FC2*, I began not only to hone my editorial skills but also to learn about graphic design and typesetting, marketing and publicity, and some of the less sexy work like subscription and data management and working on large mailings and order fulfillments. The mentorship I received at the Publications Unit from then-director Tara Reeser built confidence in my emerging skills, and she really instilled in me the standard one must maintain to be a professional who is taken seriously by colleagues, authors, and students alike. As a graduate student, I received equally important mentoring from faculty editor Kristin Dykstra while I worked as a graduate assistant for the hemispheric literary journal *Mandorla*, as well as from faculty editor Kirstin Hotelling Zona, with whom I worked as a graduate assistant for *SRPR*. By 2011, I had amassed enough editing and publishing skills—and pedagogical awareness—to apply for the role of assistant director of the Publications Unit.

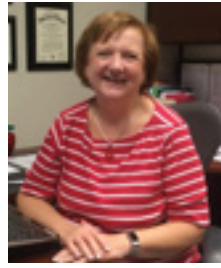
Just as my stint as a graduate appointee to the Publications Unit was transformative, the learning curve during my first two years at the Publications Unit was steep, but the role also gave me the freedom to live up to my pedagogical values and aspirations in the curriculum of English 254: Introduction to Professional Publishing, as well as in the mentoring I would be doing with undergraduate interns and graduate students assigned to the Publications Unit. Because the Publications Unit is a service and instructional organization embedded in the Department of English and serving literary and scholarly journals and presses with international reach, the teaching model that happens here is project-based pedagogy rooted in applied learning contexts. Students assigned to the Publications Unit leave with hands-on experience in editing, book and journal design and typesetting, marketing and publicity work, and much more.

Over the years, I have been involved in some changes that have had a significant impact on the curriculum for publishing studies majors and graduate students in the creative writing program. The most significant change was founding PRESS 254 in 2012. PRESS 254 is a teaching chapbook press and workshop that now publishes two series of little books—usually 24 to 36 pages long and better known as chapbooks—the Sutherland Series and the Spoonfuls series, two books each per year. I had an idea in early 2012 to refashion English 254 from unit-based instruction, where students learned and practiced vital skills in publishing, to a project-driven teaching press that publishes the work of recent creative writing alums in the department’s Sutherland Fellowship program, who work with me to turn their creative theses into a chapbook-length work that publishing studies students and I produce during the fall semester, launching the handmade books with a reading and reception every December. The Sutherland Series, like the fellowship, is named for Robert Sutherland, a longtime ISU professor who was instrumental in establishing creative writing as a program of study in the department and an independent small press publisher of *The Pikestaff Forum* and *Pikestaff Press* for many years.

To me, PRESS 254 is emblematic of my teaching values and my vow to poetry (and all creative writing, if I'm being truthful) in that it creates a teaching and learning situation in which multiple stakeholders benefit. The publishing studies students working as editorial and production assistants on PRESS 254 chapbook projects benefit from hands-on experience while working through a project from raw manuscript to finished book in a single semester. Graduate students in creative writing benefit from having a significant publication that also reflects the diverse kinds of poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and hybrid-genre work that is being created in the program at ISU, as well as working through the process of getting from thesis to chapbook. I benefit, of course, from project-based pedagogy, as every PRESS 254 project is a totally unique experience—challenging me not only to learn and grow but also to remain humble as a teacher and strive to maintain the beginner's mind that was instrumental to my growth and learning a decade and a half ago. And, most importantly, the community and public that publishing shapes benefits from reading the amazing PRESS 254 catalog and attending events.

Since I became director of the Publications Unit, the win-win thinking behind changing the teaching model for PRESS 254 remains the beacon that illuminates my vision for the Publications Unit a decade on. In the intervening years, the applied-learning experiences have been enriched by assisting Dr. Duriel E. Harris with transferring *Obsidian: Literature & Arts in the African Diaspora* to ISU and the Publications Unit, founding our own small literary press Downstate Legacies and its innovative open access translation and lost books series *Undiscovered Americas*, establishing the Publications Unit Partners Program to support K-12 teachers and students involved in creative writing and publishing activity, and inviting notable guests to campus through the Professional Speaker Series and PUB.UNIT Presents events.

When asked to write an essay like this about my teaching in the aftermath of being selected to receive the College of Arts and Sciences Excellence Award for Outstanding Teaching by an Administrative Professional, the easy path is to make myself out to be the hero of this teaching origin story, to make it sound like I came, saw, conquered, and stood atop some daunting peak, silhouetted by the setting sun, cape waving in the wind. But that would simply be untrue. Having the persistence to stay the course and honor the many, many obligations that doing professional publishing work in an instructional context creates has been and continues to be the hardest thing I've done. And there are times—even right now as I write—that I question whether it is all still worth it, when it could be so much less stressful just to walk away, to fall back into the shadows and toil away on other work in solitude. Times when I feel like I'm so far away from the source—the vow to poetry that steered me toward this path many years ago. But then I get an email from an amazing recent graduate—one I would have loved to hire on permanently at the Publications Unit if I could—who is over the moon because she just got a job as an editorial assistant or got accepted into a top Library and Information Science grad program. And sharing in these students' palpable joy lifts me. It's a great day. And I can go on. Or I get an email from an ecstatic translator who is so thrilled to have their poetry translation (that was rejected by 25 other presses before I said yes) named a finalist for a prestigious award. And I bask in the glow of their particular happiness in having the selfless work of translation recognized as contributing to and shaping the culture. And I can go on. And I will.



Dr. Claire Lamonica



Sarada Duvvuri



Riyan Jones

Distinguished Alumni Award Winners: Congratulations to Dr. Claire Lamonica, Sarada Duvvuri, and Riyan C. Jones on Receiving Distinguished Alumni Awards

We are thrilled to extend our warmest congratulations to Dr. Claire Lamonica and Sarada Duvvuri on being honored with Distinguished Alumni Awards, and to Riyan C. Jones for receiving the Rising Alumni Award. These prestigious recognitions are the highest honors presented by the English Alumni Advisory Board of Illinois State University, and they reflect the exceptional achievements and contributions of these outstanding individuals.

The selection process for the Distinguished Alumni Awards is rigorous and based on significant accomplishments within one's chosen field or avocation. Recipients must be acknowledged as leaders and have demonstrated outstanding contributions to their community, state, or nation. They are also expected to maintain a strong connection and interest in their alma mater, Illinois State University.

It is worth noting that Lamonica, Duvvuri, and Jones have already left an indelible mark on their respective fields and communities. Their dedication, leadership, and remarkable achievements have made them stand out as exemplary alumni of our university.

Lamonica retired from Illinois State University in May 2020, after serving eight years as director of the University's Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology. Prior to moving to the center, Lamonica served as associate director of writing programs in the English Department and co-director of the Illinois State Writing Project. During her 45-year career as an educator, Lamonica taught at every level from 9th grade through doctoral students and served as president of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English (IATE) and chair of the National Council of Teachers of English Standing Committee on Affiliates. Her publications focus primarily on writing, the teaching of writing, and faculty development. In retirement, Lamonica serves on the Board of the YWCA-McLean County and volunteers for STAR Literacy and the School Street Food Pantry. In 2020, Lamonica and her husband established ISU's Claire and Tom Lamonica Outstanding Teacher Award.

Duvvuri is a seasoned and visionary line producer who has earned her reputation as an expert behind the scenes in the film and television industry. With a career spanning nearly two decades Duvvuri's passion and expertise have brought countless projects to life leaving an indelible mark on the entertainment world. Her ability to orchestrate complex shoots with precision and finesse has garnered the admiration of directors, networks, and crew members alike. Duvvuri has facilitated the production of over 240 hours of television for an array of networks, including Netflix, Disney +, Discovery Networks, and HBO. Most recently, she worked as a line producer for a feature documentary film scheduled to release in

theaters nationwide and on Apple TV. Having worked on a diverse range of projects, from true crime documentaries to culinary reality shows, Duvvuri possesses a deep understanding of the intricacies involved in the creative process. Her dynamic leadership style instills confidence and motivation in every team she collaborates with, fostering an environment of camaraderie and innovation on set.

Jones is a youth civic engagement and development professional from Chicago with expertise in community safety and juvenile justice. Since graduating from Illinois State University in 2018, Jones has been deeply involved in the transformation of public safety in Chicago. Jones is currently the Safety & Justice Council manager at Mikva Challenge, where he leads a diverse cohort of youth to develop policy recommendations for Cook County stakeholders and elected officials who discuss community safety, intersectionality, and restorative justice principles. As a council manager, he facilitates trauma-informed community engagement workshops, and supports youth to research the impacts of institutionalized violence and interlocking systems of oppression on Chicago's marginalized communities. Recreationally, Jones enjoys capturing moments through photography, graphic design, and testimonial storytelling.

These distinguished alumni have not only excelled in their careers but have also been recognized for their outstanding service to the University and society at large. Whether through their professional accomplishments, community engagement, or commitment to the ideals of Illinois State University, they have consistently demonstrated the qualities that make them deserving recipients of The Distinguished Alumni Award.

Lamonica, Duvvuri, and Jones join an illustrious group of individuals who have previously received this esteemed award. Their outstanding contributions serve as an inspiration to current students, fellow alumni, and the entire Illinois State University community.

Once again, congratulations to Dr. Lamonica, Sarada Duvvuri, and Riyan C. Jones on these well-deserved honors. Your achievements continue to reflect the University's commitment to excellence, leadership, and service, and we are immensely proud of your accomplishments.



Professor Heidi Bowman

Making History through Impact: Professor Heidi Bowman

Professor Heidi Bowman has achieved a remarkable feat—she has won the most Impact Awards of any instructor at Illinois State University. This achievement is a testament to Bowman's extraordinary dedication to helping new students succeed and making a profound difference in their educational journeys.

The Impact Award is a prestigious recognition acknowledging individuals within the campus community who go above and beyond to support and inspire new students. Nominees and recipients of this award are known for their exceptional motivation, unwavering support, and their ability to positively impact students' overall success, retention, and graduation.

Bowman's consistent commitment to the success of students at Illinois State University has not gone unnoticed. Her tireless efforts in providing care, encouragement, and motivation to students have not only helped them grow but have also contributed significantly

to their academic and personal development. Her willingness to go the extra mile and offer assistance beyond expectations has undoubtedly eased the transition for countless students.

Beyond these qualities, Bowman has served as an inspiration and role model to many, instilling in them a sense of purpose and direction. Her passion for her subject matter and discipline has been infectious, igniting a genuine enthusiasm for learning in those she interacts with.

Bowman's remarkable achievements in winning multiple Impact Awards reflect her dedication, commitment, and genuine concern for the well-being and success of students at Illinois State University. Her impact extends far beyond the classroom, leaving a lasting impression on the lives of those she has mentored and guided.

We commend Bowman for her outstanding contributions to the Illinois State University community and unwavering commitment to helping new students thrive. Her achievements exemplify the spirit of the Impact Awards, and we are immensely proud of her well-deserved recognition. Congratulations, Professor Bowman, on this remarkable accomplishment!



Dr. Eda Ozyesilpinar

Dr. Eda Ozyesilpinar Receives the CAS Award for Outstanding Scholarly Achievement of the Year

We are thrilled to extend our warmest congratulations to Dr. Eda Ozyesilpinar on being honored with the prestigious CAS Award for Outstanding Scholarly Achievement of the Year. This award represents one of the highest honors bestowed upon a faculty member by the

College and serves as a testament to Ozyesilpinar's remarkable scholarly and creative accomplishments.

The CAS Award for Outstanding Scholarly Achievement of the Year recognizes the exceptional contributions and achievements of individual faculty members within the college for a single calendar year. It is a recognition of excellence, innovation, and dedication to advancing knowledge and scholarship in one's field.

Ozyesilpinar's research focuses on border violence and the rhetoric of conflict and militarization in borderland policing, with attention to how borders are mapped and visualized. She has published the co-authored book chapter, "Digital Story-Mapping," in the edited collection *Methods and Methodologies for Research in Digital Writing and Rhetoric*, and "Rhetorical Spaces of Transnational Bordering, Border Artivism and Resistance" in *Review of Communication*. She introduces mapping as a new methodology for understanding space and revealing the unheard, even suppressed stories of immigration and border life—suppressed because the voices of those underrepresented populations challenge the accepted and politically necessary narratives. For example, she explores how current cartographies and map-making practices are still colonial in nature, looking closely at how Geographic Information System industry leaders like Google and Esri are creating apps that give "tours" of global locations, claiming to "tell a story" about that space. Active in conferences and in pedagogical scholarship on equity, diversity, and inclusion, Ozyesilpinar has several articles and book chapters forthcoming.

We look forward to witnessing Ozyesilpınar's continued contributions to scholarship and creativity. Her work sets a high standard for excellence within the college. Congratulations to Dr. Ozyesilpınar on this well-deserved recognition of her outstanding scholarly achievements.



Dr. Duriel E. Harris

A Lifetime of Achievement: Dr. Duriel E. Harris, Recipient of the 2023 George Garrett Award for Outstanding Community Service in Literature

Dr. Duriel E. Harris, Editor of *Obsidian: Literature & Arts in the African Diaspora*, has been honored with the prestigious 2023 George Garrett Award for Outstanding

Community Service in Literature by the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP). This award is a testament to Harris's outstanding contributions to the literary community and her tireless efforts to support writers, artists, and scholars.

The AWP's George Garrett Award recognizes individuals who have gone above and beyond in their commitment to helping the next generation of writers flourish as artists and literary professionals. It is a lifetime achievement award that acknowledges remarkable contributions of care, time, labor, and financial support to nurture the literary accomplishments of others.

In her nomination letter, *Obsidian* Managing Editor Tara Reeser beautifully captured Harris's dedication to the literary world. Reeser highlighted Harris's unwavering commitment to *Obsidian* and the broader community of writers, artists, and scholars. Harris has not only provided opportunities and platforms for critical and creative Black thought and expression but has also made a profound impact on the transformation of the larger social world. For example, she coordinates reading series like @Salon, creative sound and podcast events like O | Sessions, and playground spaces like #ObsidianVoices. She created *Obsidian Digital: Digital Arts in the African Diaspora* as well, with a distinguished board of poets and creators. Dr. Katherine Ellison notes that "we are immensely lucky to have a scholar, editor, and creative mind of her caliber in our department, strengthening the reputation of our program and our university, mentoring our students and so many emerging artists in North America and abroad."

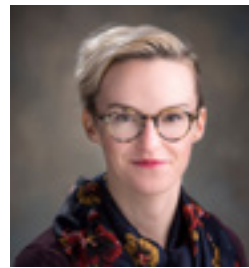
Harris's own research and writing bring together Black aesthetics, African Diaspora speculative fiction, digital technologies, and trauma studies. With degrees from New York University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, she came to ISU in 2021 and quickly rose to full professor of creative writing. She has published *No Dictionary of a Living Tongue* (2017), which was a finalist for the Audre Lorde Award, *Speleology* (2011), *Amnesiac: Poems* (2010), *Velvet Fire!* (2009), *Drag* (2003) and *PRDGM* (2002) as well as has published poems in the *Academy of American Poets*, *Iowa Review*, *Boundary*, *PEN America*, *American Studies*, *Southern Quarterly*, and about 40 other venues. Her work appears in anthologies like *Brilliant Flame: Amiri Baraka: Poems, Plays, Politics for the People*, *Black Magic, Letters to the Future: BLACK Women/RADICAL Writing, Of Poetry & Protest: Emmett Till to Trayvon Martin*, and *BAX: Best American Experimental Writing*, just to name the most recent, along with 25 other collections. She also works in transla-

tion, blogs, and is a spoken word poet with audio contributions to numerous films and exhibitions.

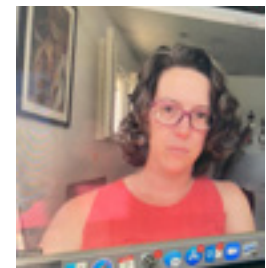
Harris's dedication to pedagogy is reflected in her writing and in her position as editor of *Obsidian*. She mentors a team of undergraduate and graduate students in creative writing and publishing studies each semester, bringing them into the experience of editing and running a prestigious creative journal that won the 2022 Firecracker Award for Independently Published Literature from the Community of Literary Magazines and Presses. They are involved in every stage of the production and marketing, networking with internationally renowned writers. She is also director of numerous doctoral dissertation and master's thesis committees. Many of her graduates have found fruitful writing careers in academic and non-academic positions.

This award recognizes the profound impact of Harris's work as a poet, performance artist, scholar, and professor of poetry and poetics at ISU. It serves as a celebration of her tireless efforts and the positive influence she has had on the literary landscape.

Recently Promoted Faculty



Dr. Ela Przybyło



Dr. Rachel Gramer

Dr. Ela Przybyło and Dr. Rachel Gramer

Dr. Ela Przybyło and Dr. Rachel Gramer have earned well-deserved tenure and promotions from assistant to associate professor. These achievements are a testament to their exceptional dedication and contributions to their respective fields and academic communities.

The transition from assistant to associate professor with tenure is a significant milestone in an academic career, marking not only a recognition of one's accomplishments but also a commitment to continued excellence in research, teaching, and service.

Gramer serves as director of the writing program at ISU, which entails guiding approximately 100 graduate students each year, at the master's and Ph.D. levels, as well as instructional assistant professors, through summer training, a fall writing pedagogy course (ENG 402), and ongoing continuing education workshops. She kept the massive general education program of writing working smoothly during the COVID-19 pandemic, as about 94 sections shifted to online teaching. This was possible because of Gramer's research interests and prolific publication in writing instructor training, designing socially just learning environments and classroom pedagogy. Gramer's peer-reviewed, edited book, *Radiant Figures: Visual Rhetorics in Everyday Administrative Contexts*, with co-editors Logan Bearden and Derek Mueller and the University Press of Colorado and Utah State University Press, is the first collection to analyze and grant significance to the many visual documents that are produced administratively in writing programs. It asks how

data visualization practices in writing studies can lead, ethically, to activism and advocacy, work that Gramer calls “VizAdmin.” Other recent publications include “Making mobility work for writing studies” (2021), “The figured worlds of digital mediation in schools” (2018), “Mess, not mastery: Encouraging digital design dispositions in girls” (2015), and “ClarissaBlogs: Narrative, writing, and the self” (2015). Gramer’s forthcoming publications and work-in-progress will continue to challenge and change the field of writing studies.

Przybyło, who currently serves as director of Graduate Studies, was awarded tenure and promotion in recognition of her international reputation in publishing studies and feminist queer studies, her exceptional teaching, and her commitment to service at ISU and for her broader disciplinary community. During her career so far, she has published two peer-reviewed books, at least (as of the writing of this newsletter) 25 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters with many more forthcoming, and she has created, designed, and served as editor for the preeminent journal in her field, *Feral Feminisms*. The digital journal, *Feral Feminisms*, is now a prestigious forum for feminist theorists and LGBTQIA+ scholars. She has edited four special issues of peer-reviewed journals, and in 2022 she brought five graduate students and a class into that publishing experience to learn the process. Her scholarship focuses on anti-racist and decolonial publishing practices, evidenced by her coedited volume, *On the Politics of Ugliness* (2018, Palgrave Macmillan), which interrogates concepts of embodiment, such as fatness and menstruation. Her book, *Asexual Erotics: Intimate Readings of Compulsory Sexuality* (2019), published by The Ohio State University Press, is regarded internationally as the foundational study in the field of asexuality studies. As attentive to pedagogy as she is research, Przybyło has added four new courses to the English department curriculum and has brought civic and community engagement projects to many of her classrooms. Three student groups in her classes, for example, received funding for community engagement with a total of \$27,000 in grants in 2021 and another \$10,000 in grants in 2022.

As associate professors with tenure, Gramer and Przybyło will continue to inspire and shape the next generation of scholars while further enriching the academic environment for our department.

Spotlight on Dr. Ricia Anne Chansky: Storytelling, Disaster, and Injustice



Dr. Dr. Ricia Anne Chansky, University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez

Professor Ricia Anne Chansky is a distinguished alumna of ISU, where she earned her Ph.D. in 2009. Today, she stands as a leading figure in decolonial storytelling and climate crisis, making significant contributions to various fields through her remarkable career at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez.

Currently serving as the director of the Oral History Lab @UPRM, Chansky oversees an interdisciplinary space that investigates storytelling as a powerful response

to disaster and injustice. Her work is marked by a commitment to addressing pressing societal issues and amplifying underrepresented voices.

Throughout her career, Chansky has received numerous awards and grants, including recognition from prestigious organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Modern Language Association, among others. Her dedication to advancing knowledge and her extensive involvement in various projects have earned her a reputation as a distinguished scholar and advocate for social justice.

Chansky’s impact extends beyond academia. She is a Fulbright Specialist in American Studies, a partner in the Archivo de Respuestas Emergencias de Puerto Rico, and a Research Fellow at the Centre for Research in Latin America and the Caribbean at York University. Her role as the Senior Climate Justice Fellow at the Humanities Action Lab underscores her commitment to addressing climate-related challenges. She was even honored as an International Climate Justice Activist of Note by the Simon Wiesenthal Center/Museum of Tolerance, further highlighting her tireless dedication to the betterment of society.

In addition to her significant contributions to academia and social justice, Chansky has an impressive publication record. She has co-edited several influential books, including *The Divided States: Unraveling National Identity in the Twenty-First Century*, *Mi María: Surviving the Storm, Voices from Puerto Rico*, and *Life Writing Outside the Lines: Gender and Genre in the Americas*. Her work extends to co-authoring books, such as *Maxy Survives the Hurricane/Maxy sobrevive el huracán*, and editing anthologies like *Auto/Biography across the Americas: Transnational Themes in Life Writing* and *Auto/Biography in the Americas: Relational Lives*. Her contributions to the field of auto/biography studies have been widely recognized.

Currently, Chansky is actively engaged in research on a single-author book focused on multimodal disaster narratives, as well as co-authoring a book exploring the intersection of digital humanities and disaster. Her thought-provoking writings on critical disaster studies have been featured in esteemed publications such as *The Washington Post* and *archipelagos: a journal of Caribbean digital praxis*.

Professor Ricia Anne Chansky continues to inspire and impact both her students and peers alike. Her dedication to addressing societal challenges and her contributions to the fields of oral history, auto/biography studies, and critical disaster studies are a testament to her exceptional scholarship and unwavering commitment to social and climate justice. We are proud to call her an esteemed alumna of ISU.

Publications Unit Alumni Showcase: Gabrielle Brown '20



Gabrielle Brown

Originally published online: [News. IllinoisState.edu/2023/08/publications-unit-alumni-showcase-gabrielle-brown-20](https://news.illinoisstate.edu/2023/08/publications-unit-alumni-showcase-gabrielle-brown-20)

Gabrielle Brown '20 is an Illinois State University alum from the Department of English’s publishing studies program.

During her time as an undergraduate, Brown completed a production internship at the Publications Unit, where she transcribed and edited Clarissa Minnie Thompson Allen’s *Treading the*

Winepress (Downstate Legacies, 2019) and completed the typesetting and interior design for *The Book of Kane and Margaret* by Kiik Araki-Kawaguchi (FC2, 2020).

Using her publishing degree, Brown has worked as a writer, freelance editor, and beta reader, and she has since started her own editorial company, Gab With Purpose, where she aims to get more Black authors and their stories published. Recently, she published *Connecting Black Creatives*, an e-book directory that connects Black authors, readers, content creators, and fans of Black literature. In this article, Brown discusses how she started her business and how the skills she built during her internship at the Publications Unit set her up for success.



Brown's *Connecting Black Creatives* e-book directory

What drew you to the publishing studies major and the internship with the Publications Unit?

When I returned to school as a nontraditional student, I knew I wanted to pursue something that would combine both the art and the business of storytelling. It was not enough to major in English alone. I had to ensure that when I left Illinois State University, I'd be on the fast track to pursuing my dreams because I didn't know if I could return for a master's degree. Advanced education is a privilege that not all of us are afforded, and had I not been working as a janitor at the University, I wouldn't have been able to attend classes, especially as a mother of two smaller children. I wanted to make sure whatever I took part in could be used to propel myself forward in my career and any other professional endeavors.

The memory is a little hazy, so I may be mixing up some things, but I remember taking an English class where we either discussed the Publications Unit or went to visit it, and they discussed both English 254 (Introduction to Professional Publishing, the course taught by Publications Unit staff) and the internship opportunities that were available. Upon hearing about them, I immediately lit up. I remember hearing them talk about the different publications they worked on and all the ways students get hands-on learning in the publishing business. Their descriptions sounded exactly like what I was looking for, and I just remember praying, wishing, and hoping that I would be one of the few chosen to work in that internship. Then I got the chance to take English 254 with Dr. Steve Halle (director of the Publications Unit), which cemented my decision to pursue the internship with the Publications Unit even more. There was no way I could graduate from Illinois State University without working in the Publications Unit, and I took every available chance I had to foster relationships, network, and learn as much as I could while in English 254, so that when it was time for me to apply for the internship, they would remember who I was. Plus, having the opportunity to work with Dr. Halle and Dr. Holms Troelstrup (assistant director of the Publications Unit), who would want to pass that up? They really are phenomenal people, and I'm so grateful to have gotten a chance to work with them.

When did you realize that you wanted to start your own editing business? What was your motivation behind this decision?

When I realized that my existence as a Black woman would

determine how I moved through the world of publishing.

While interning, I learned a lot about the business in all its forms: the good, the bad, and the indifferent. I also got to engage in different social circles with other Black creatives, which allowed me to see how the things I'd learned in my intern experience did not always equate to the reality of publishing, especially for people who looked like me.

The reality is publishing is a predominantly white field, and in order for diversity to be authentic to certain experiences, especially as a Black person, it means that sometimes you have to decide between playing the game or starting your own playing field. If I did not want my stories or the stories of the clients that I worked with to be diluted—I was doing freelance editing even while I worked as an intern—I had to be OK standing outside the gate at times. If I wanted my fellow Black creators to be able to tell the stories of their hearts, I knew there was no way I could just go and get a job somewhere to dabble among the red tape for someone else. I had to be my own MVP. I had to be brave.

Part of my motivation was due to my grandmother. She sadly passed away in April 2022, but she always encouraged me to do things for myself. I watched her navigate life as a dark-skinned Black woman while hearing hundreds of stories about what it meant to grow up during Jim Crow—especially here in the North. She taught me what it meant to be *willing* to be different because you were already different, so why not embrace that fact? She was an audacious and proud woman every time she stepped into a room. Even when she was silent, you could feel her presence no matter what was going on around her, and I knew being a product of who she was meant I could pursue my dreams. I guess that means *audacity* is also a major part of my motivation. I have the audacity to believe that I deserve to be in the room with people who may not understand the experience that I write from, or understand the experiences of the people I represent, but we all deserve to be there because our stories matter. This country was built on the backs of people who look like me, and while systematic oppression tries to stifle many of us, it is important to remain vigilant and have the audacity to exist in this world, fully. For if we don't, it (the world) will try to trick us into believing that we don't deserve to be here. The reality is, if we weren't here, the world wouldn't be what it is. And that's a fact no one can take away from us.

What does a typical workday look like as a freelance editor and business owner?

Lots of early mornings and late nights. Depending on the type of service I'm providing for a client, I usually try to devote two to three hours to their project each weekday, if not more.

And because I work a day job, I have to fit my editing work within a certain allotment of hours each day. If I'm responsible, and I wake up at 5 a.m., I can get anywhere from 2-3 hours done before I start my day job. If I decide to sleep in until it's time for my littles to get up for school, I end up working in the evenings and can usually get a bigger chunk of time—4-5 hours sometimes longer—depending on the day of the week. I know that if I have a particularly busy weekend, Monday is going to be the best day for me to tackle as much work as possible because Tuesday I'll be sluggish no matter what I do, no matter how many hours I sleep—it's just that way.

So, knowing your own quirks, knowing how you respond to busyness, how sleep patterns and the day of the week can impact

your work ethic, all of that really does help me to set my work schedule in advance. This is also why I hate last-minute things because if it's last minute, I probably don't want to do it because I've already planned the schedule out at least two weeks in advance! Oh, and I'm a procrastinator, so planning my procrastination in advance has been a game changer.

How did the Publications Unit internship prepare you to run Gab With Purpose? What other influences in your life helped you get started?



Gabrielle Brown

So, when I was interning at the Publications Unit, I was also working a full-time job overnight, 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. Often, I could be seen napping in my car before going into the Publications Unit because why go home just to have to come back to campus? I also took classes and parented two children. The Publications Unit set me up for what my life would look like while I pursued my freelance editing business full time.

What does it look like when you have other responsibilities that are just as important as the work you're doing? It looks like tiredness and frustration and excitement and a zeal to keep pushing even when you think you've given your all. It looks like balance and maneuvering and being able to pivot. So, the greatest thing the Publications Unit taught me, beyond just the skills and the knowledge of the work it takes to be a part of the publishing industry, was how to make all these moving parts stay together. It also taught me to appreciate the concept of time because it passes so quickly, and if you aren't present in the moment, it really will escape you without you even realizing it.

Remember how I said audacity was my motivation? Well, it was also the influence because I have a lot of it to spare apparently, perhaps too much depending on who you ask. My grandmother had a bunch and she passed it on to my mother, and my mother passed it right on down to me. You have to be some kind of "peculiar" to be willing to jump into a world that is experiencing something no one from my generation had ever experienced and say, "I'm gonna start a business" without a surefire plan. And how could you plan for something like a pandemic?

Honestly, I just really believe in myself, in the clients I work with, and in the art of storytelling, and I believe that creativity is just as important as oxygen in this world.

You started Gab With Purpose in March of 2021. How did the pandemic influence your transition from education to running your own business?



Gab With Purpose

Well, sometimes I think I lost my mind a little bit because everything I expected for myself when it came to my education did not happen the way I thought it would. I'd dreamed of walking across the stage and accepting my bachelor's degree in the presence of my friends and extended family. I'd dreamed of having this big celebration, then taking some time to decide what would be the

next step in my career. I just knew I'd finally get to be that person who got a degree, went and got a job, then found out after years of working for someone else that maybe I did want to go into business for myself. Unfortunately, the pandemic happened, and every plan I had up to that moment seemed impossible—and dare I say unnecessary. The last three years were full of pain and sorrow, yet they taught me how resilient my family and I were and still are.

I'm also a person of faith. I believe that life is orchestrated for us to use what would normally be considered "bad" and turn it around for our benefit. While I'd broached the subject of freelancing before graduating, I still made sure to apply to different presses to obtain additional experience because I didn't and still don't know it all. What I found was a little depressing. I couldn't seem to get hired anywhere. Some jobs had laid off a lot of people and a lot of presses' futures were up in the air.

I knew that if I was going to keep striving to pursue my dreams, I would have to be willing to pivot. Now, was starting my business in the middle of a pandemic the best choice ... I say *hell yeah* because I haven't failed. While this may not have been the journey I thought it'd be, I haven't stopped working therefore I deem myself successful. I've seen success in ways that someone may not deem traditional, but every time I'm allowed to help a client with their work, encourage them to pursue their dreams, and ensure they are not being cheated by various entities that seek to take from the creative community instead of giving back, I feel successful. I even quit my job as a janitor to pursue this full-time, and while I have a corporate job now to help alleviate the stress of covering medical insurance—because oh my goodness that is so expensive when you are self-employed—I get to do what I love and not allow capitalism to stress me out. I also get to free up my creative mind to pursue my own writings a little more intensely because I'm not devoted 25-8 to working with clients, constantly having to move on to the next one because there is no downtime. Publishing is a constantly moving organism, a semi-well-oiled machine that, if you take your foot off the gas for too long, it can push you back further than you were when you started.

So, the pandemic made me have to be courageous; even as fear sits in the passenger seat, I have to be the one in the driver's seat.

In your time at the Publications Unit, you worked on transcribing and editing Treading the Winepress by Clarissa Minnie Thompson Allen, a novel first serialized in the Boston Advocate between 1885 and 1886 that would have been only the second novel published by a Black woman in the United States if it had been published in book form. How has this experience contributed to your current work? How have these skills transferred to your current job?

Oh, I have to be honest, archival editing almost got me. I loved transcribing that newspaper film even though it was tedious work and extremely hard to do with all of my other responsibilities. I really loved reading and trying to decipher information from centuries-old newspaper films—being able to research and understand not only the works but the individual who created those works; searching for more information on Miss Thompson Allen while realizing that even if you aren't the first or the second, you still get to be remembered if you're the third, fourth, fifth, and so on.

It was an amazing experience. She was doing something that

many people have no idea about. When people think of 19th-century Black literature, they think of slave narratives, maybe some poetry or autobiographies, and perhaps a few essays. But a story that involves drama with mystery and intrigue? Those narratives weren't being written by Black people, particularly a Black woman, as often, or so they would have you believe. But here, here is this woman, a Black woman in all of her creative audacity to stand in the face of not only societal expectations but numerous other pressures I'm sure too many of us can relate to. She even had to move from the *Christian Recorder* to the *Boston Advocate* because of the content she was writing. She was so talented, and her story was so intriguing that what started in the middle of the newspaper ended up on the front page because people were so eager to know what would happen next. That desire to know more is what motivates a lot of my fellow writers. When we know that people want to know what happens next, it's easy to allow the characters to speak to us.

Now I get to help motivate individuals by guaranteeing their characters are the ones speaking, that they're allowing them to be full-bodied, and ensuring that the parts of the story that sometimes get overlooked like the setting or pacing can contribute to how well the characters are able to tell their stories. And I also get to use it in my own writing because I get to remember the passion and excitement I felt transcribing the next set of newspaper films. I wanted to know what happened to those besotted characters in love or the other members of that town, whose stories we don't quite get the ending to because we haven't been able to find the end of the story. I will forever be grateful to Dr. Halle and the Publications Unit for the experience of working on that project because it truly changed my life in ways I'm unable to fully articulate.

On the Gab With Purpose website, you talk a bit about the intersection of your identities as a writer, editor, and a Black woman and how "every part of [your] Black existence gets to be present in everything [you] do?" What has it meant for you and your clients to have a company like Gab With Purpose in the industry today?

I'd like to think that my company represents freedom.

I have just as many non-Black clients as I have Black clients, and I make it a point to ensure that if I can't help them, I'm putting another Black woman in their face who does what I do. There are many ways to be marginalized in the publishing industry, but I can only attest to what it means to be Black and a woman because that's my identity. That's my experience. I don't try to take up space in areas I have no connection to; I just support and amplify. I do my best to make space for people to speak about their experiences and actively listen when it's someone else's turn to speak.

I acknowledge the importance of "intentional" support because nobody's going to get everything right, but everybody has the chance to "do" something right.

My company means that regardless of what I do—even if it's something wrong and I have to apologize—it's purposeful. We're not doing anything without a rhyme or reason. Every move I make is something that I've painstakingly considered so clients can rest assured that they'll be handled with care because I know I want that for myself. Oftentimes, Black women aren't handled with care because we're seen as able to do it all with the bare minimum, so if you work with me, I care about you, and I want to see you win even if that looks different from what I think it should look like.

You spoke a lot about balancing school, the internship, having a job, and raising two children, which is a tremendous feat. Do you feel like this experience pushed you toward owning your own business and freelancing?

I've always been a college student who worked full time. I never really got to have the college experience where you just go to class and maybe have a 5-to-10 hour-a-week job; that was never my experience, even before children. So having a family and going back to school and working a full-time job just felt like I was adding more weight to the bench press essentially. You're just building muscle really, and even though it did not accurately set the expectation for what owning my own business would look like—because that's a completely different experience from anything I've ever done in my life—it did allow me the opportunity to know how to read my body when I have overextended.

So, my advice to anyone who is or will be balancing multiple things is to listen to your body. Prepare yourself to need time away: time away from the job, time away from school, from work, and even some time away from your family. You have to decompress because if you just keep piling everything on, it will overwhelm you, and burn-out is a very hard thing to get over. It's also much harder to do while still trying to balance, so listen to your body and take care of yourself because health is wealth.

Do you have any advice for current publishing students as they move into the job market or dream of starting a business? Is there something you wish you would've known when you were in their shoes?

If you are a creative who is looking to go into a field where you work with other creatives, be sure that you have the capacity to do both. Creativity in and of itself requires focus, drive, and time to replenish. So, if you are a writer who is also looking to work in publishing, prepare yourself to devote a big chunk of your creativity to other people and learn how to be OK with that.

If you are going into the publishing industry and are part of a marginalized group, prepare yourself for difficult and/or uncomfortable conversations or decisions.

You don't "have" to be an activist to be a part of the publishing industry but just remember if you stand for nothing, who knows what you'll fall for.

And on the off chance that you do wish to make a difference in whatever field you go into, you have to know that your desire to see change in an industry can and will impact your ability to tolerate certain things. Just know you won't ever be alone, as I'm confident someone out in the world is likely thinking/believing something similar.

I would also advise seeking out community. Begin engaging in spaces *now* where there are others who have similar interests to you in publishing. Social media is great and fine, but try to find real people that you can see face-to-face; even if it's via Zoom, start making connections so you can build a community of people to hold you up when it gets hard because it's going to get hard.

Publishing is a never-ending thing (shoutout to Steve Halle for warning me in advance). Even when we get to the end of the year and the queries slow to a crawl and all of that, people are still working.

Just know you're going to be working all the time. Your workload is going to exceed what it should a majority of the time.

Prepare yourself and learn to balance in a way that allows you to have downtime. Being able to decompress will be your best friend.

You've talked about your recently published e-book directory *Connecting Black Creatives*. What else is next for you and *Gab With Purpose*? Are there any upcoming projects you'd like to talk about?

Since I've been working a corporate job, I've slowed down on taking in clients but that's because I really want to focus on amplifying Black creatives in publishing spaces. So, what's next for *Gab With Purpose* is you're going to see lots of talk about how Black publishing community members support one another, uplift one another, and amplify the works of Black authors and Black literature.

As for me on the writing side, I am finishing a couple of my own works in progress or WIPs, which should be ready for editing in the next few months with a publishing goal of late 2023 or early 2024. My author pen name is Gabrielle Rochelle, so if you are interested in stories about magical Black people who work together to save the world while embracing their humanity, then be on the lookout for my debut novel, *The Glowing Shadows Trilogy*.

In the meantime, you can find *Connecting Black Creatives* on [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), [iBooks](#), and [Kobo](#). And you can find Gabrielle and *Gab With Purpose* on [TikTok](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).

About the author: *Gwen Johnson is a 2023 graduate of Illinois State University where she majored in English—Publishing Studies and minored in history. She completed this interview and article during her production internship at the Publications Unit, and she also served as the nonfiction editor for Euphemism, the University's online creative arts journal. In the summer following graduation, Johnson was selected from a competitive pool of applicants for a publishing internship at the independent, women-led publisher Sourcebooks in Naperville.*

The Biggest Boost: A Special Thank You to Our Donors



English Department Wins the Biggest Boost Award

Last February 2023, thanks to the incredible support of our English department donors, we won the Biggest Boost award at the close of the Birds Give Back campaign. This award of \$1,500 is given for the largest increase in individual donations. For our department, that was a 1,450% increase, from four donors to 58! The Birds Give Back campaign, in 2023, focused on four funds: the Publications Unit, *Obsidian: Literature & the Arts in the African Diaspora*, the

Alumni Advisory Board Scholarship, and the General Fund. On February 22, 2024, we will again feature these funds. The Publications Unit fund, established in 2022, helps students gain hands-on experience through unique projects like the Downstate Legacies series, *Undiscovered Americas*, which publishes translations and “lost” books from North, Central, and South America. In 2023, the unit published *Ships in Houston* by Mexican writer Nadia Villafuerte, translated by Julie Ann Ward. The unit raised \$2,620, close to its \$3,500 goal. Students learn editing, graphic design and typesetting, marketing and publicity, and many other tasks related to the publication of literary and scholarly books and journals. They also work on the *Spoon River Poetry Review*, the *Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter*, the small press Downstate Legacies, the fiction press FC2 (Fiction Collective Two), the teaching chapbook press and workshop, PRESS 254, and *Obsidian*.

The *Obsidian* fund supports the journal and provides a publishing platform for Black writers and artists. Housed in the Publications Unit, *Obsidian* is a small but vibrant operation able to engage students in all stages of publishing work, from editing and proofreading to promotions and marketing campaigns—investing in our commitment to the representation and cultivation of Black artists. *Obsidian* is often a writer's first editorial relationship, which is why it's important that we continue to support and uplift the unique ways writers and artists record, respond, and connect to our world and invite students into the process of doing this work.

The Alumni Advisory Board Scholarship helps a deserving undergraduate English major further finance their education. In 2017, the Alumni Advisory Board began working to establish a scholarship for a sophomore or junior English major with a minimum GPA of 3.0 with a promising future, who demonstrates merit, and that scholarship is now endowed. In 2023, the first scholarship was given to DaKylia Henderson, who wrote a moving statement of application. DaKylia's essay, “Making \$1000 Last a Lifetime,” is a powerful call to action for herself, as a first-generation college student, and for our program. She writes: “Receiving a degree would be me breaking a generational curse;” “Receiving a degree would be me rising above the quicksand;” and “Receiving a degree would give me the opportunity to be certified in English Education, equipping me with the necessary skills and knowledge to go back into my hometown and community to teach.” We were impressed by DaKylia's dedication to giving back and to serving as a role model in her own community, paying forward her education. We are looking forward to awarding our second scholarship recipient in spring of 2024.

Finally, the General Fund helps students pay membership fees for important organizations in their field, attend conferences, and benefit from the wisdom of invited experts, whose visits we support with the fund. Our Alumni Day luncheons and student meetings cannot happen without support for this fund. Department faculty also benefit; the fund helps us honor great teaching, research, and service with awards to affirm hard work. This fund is the fuel that keeps our academic and social events going.

Exploring the Written Word: ISU English Department's 2023 Publications

Welcome to a showcase of creative academic excellence! The English Department at ISU takes immense pride in presenting a curated list of reported publications from our talented students, dedicated faculty, and accomplished alumni for 2023. From thought-provoking essays to captivating poetry, insightful research articles, and engaging short stories, this compilation reflects the diverse and vibrant textual landscape fostered by the English Department.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and we encourage all literary community members to reach out to the department with their own publications. We celebrate every achievement, and if anyone's work has been unintentionally missed in this issue, we extend our sincerest apologies. Your contributions are valued, and we are eager to include them in future showcases of our department's talent.

Faculty Publications

Shelby Boehm

Adams, B., Boehm, S., Colantonio-Yurko, K., & Miller, H. C.

"Children's and Young Adult Literature that Support Conversations about Consent, Bodily Autonomy, and Sexual Abuse." *Literacy Matters* 23 (2023): 7-12.

Miller, H. C., Boehm, S., Colantonio-Yurko, K., Adams, B., & Mertens, G. "Naming and Challenging Rape Culture in English Curriculum: Teaching Canonical Texts with Contemporary Adaptations." *Changing English* (2023): 1-13.

Boehm, S., Mundorf, J., Miley, J., & Commeret, M. "Rethinking Teacher Preparation: Three Playful Shifts for Supporting New Teachers." *English Leadership Quarterly* 45.3 (2023): 13-18.

Boehm, S., & Franklin, L. "The Case for Playful Pedagogy in the High School English Classroom." *English Journal* 112.3 (2023): 51-56.

Colantonio-Yurko, K., Adams, B., Boehm, S., & Miller, H. C. "Boundaries, Objectification, and Gender Norms: Addressing Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment with Middle Grade Literature." *Middle School Journal* 54.1 (2023): 23-31.

Worlds, M., & Boehm, S. "Anti-Racist Teaching Using Young Adult Literature" in *Many Books, Many Stories: Using Children's and Young Adult Literature to Open Classroom Conversations*, edited by K. Olmstead and S. Troiani. New York: Peter Lang, 2023. 105-120.

Boehm, S. "A Book that Could Serve as a Mentor Text for Both Teacher and Student." Review of *Vinyl Moon* by Mahogany M. Browne. *Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE*, 2023. Web.

Christopher Breu

"The Infrastructural Unconscious." *symplokē* 31.1-2 (2023), 183-201.

Breu, Christopher and Di Leo, Jeffrey, Eds. "Infrastructuralisms." *symplokē* 31.1-2 (2023).

Breu, Christopher and Di Leo, Jeffrey. "Theorizing Infrastructure: an Introduction." *symplokē* 31.1-2 (2023), 1-8.

Katherine Ellison

"Intelligence, Espionage, and the Ethics of Surveillance in Defoe's Writings" in *The Oxford Handbook of Daniel Defoe*, edited by Nicholas Seager and J.A. Downie. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023.

Gabriel Gudding

"To That One Figure in Bruegel Ridden by The Fetus of Glory." *Fence* 40 (Winter 2023), 1-2. [poem]

"Some Moms." *Fence* 40 (Winter 2023), 3-5. [poem]

"Destructive Rudder." *Fence* 40 (Winter 2023), 6. [poem]

Mercurius Magazine Feature: "Surreal-Absurd Sampler." Artist statement & 6 Poems: "Statement," "Police Babies," "Farm Gig," "Jeremiad," "To One Torn Apart by Horses," "Venter oss ved elvene" (2023): Web.

Katie Landers

"Singular Modes: The Politics of Dress in Cavendish, Evelyn, and Hutchinson" *English Literary Renaissance* 53.3 (September 2023).

Kristina Lewis

Lewis, Kristina B., & Wagner, Santoi, "Empathy and Professional Support via Relate-to-Self in Post-Observation Meetings." *System* 114 (June 2023): Web.

Tara Lyons

"A Gifte of good Moment': A New History of the Stationers' Agreement with the Bodleian Library, 1610 to 1616." *The Oxford Handbook of the History of the Book in Early Modern England*. Ed. Adam Smyth. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 427-445.

"The Bodleian *Daybook* (1613 to 1620): Library Records and the Stationers of London," *Textual Cultures* 16.1 (Spring 2023): 142-207.

"Reading a Lost Book: Ben Jonson's *Epigrammes* (c.1612) and Disposable Authorship," *English Literary Renaissance* 53.1 (2023): 1-34.

Mary Jeanette Moran

"Developments in Fiction for Children" in *A Companion to Children's Literature*, edited by Karen Coats, Deborah Stevenson, and Vivian Yenika-Agbaw. New Jersey: Wiley, 2022. 73-83.

"The Angry Caregiver: Gendered Emotion in The Penderwicks Series and the One Crazy Summer Trilogy" in *Emotion in Texts for Children and Young Adults: Moving Stories*, edited by Karen Coats and Gretchen Papazian. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2023.

Maggie E. Morris Davis

"Markers of Class: The Antebellum Children's Book Adaptations of *The Lamplighter* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" in *Adaptation Before Cinema*, edited by Glenn Jellenik and Lissette Szwedky-Davis. New York: Palgrave, 2023. 235-59.

Ela Przybyło

"Gabby's Tender Queerness and the Tragedy of Heterosexuality on The Bachelorette." *Autostraddle* (September 26, 2023). Web.

"The Subtle Aroace Gaze of 'Heartstopper' Season Two." *Autostraddle* (August 18, 2023). Web.

Review of *Queer Transgressions in Twentieth-Century Polish Fiction: Gender, Nation, Politics* by Jack Hutchens." *Slavic Review: Interdisciplinary Quarterly of Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies* 82.3 (2023): 1-2.

Amy E. Robillard

Misogyny in English Departments: Obligation, Entitlement, Gaslighting. New York: Peter Lang, 2023.

Lisya Seloni

“Putting Self Back into Academic Writing as a Liberatory Practice: Journeying through Personal to Academic” in *Perspectives on Good Writing in Applied Linguistics and TESOL*, edited by R. Kohls and C. Casanave. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2023. 182-199.

“Activity Theory as an Analytical Framework to Understand Expertise in L2 Writing Instruction.” *Journal of Second Language Writing* 58 (2022).

Belhadi, K. & Seloni, L. “Humanizing Doctoral Mentorship During the Pandemic: Transnational Women Creating Feminist Spaces through Rhetorical Listening and Reflexivity.” 7.1 *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics* (2022). Web.

Derek M. Sparby

Memetic Rhetorics: Building a Rhetorical Toolkit for Ethical Meming. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative Series, 2023.

Graduate Student Publications

Edcel J. Cintron-Gonzalez

“Side Hustle Grad Worker Dues.” *White Noise Zine, Defiant* 3 (October 12, 2023). [poem]

“Graduate Student Worker-an acrostic poem-” in *Hot Labor Summer: a zine for the discerning grad worker slacker punk*, edited by Rebekah Mangels and Ulysses Bougie. 1 (August 2023). [poem]

Irma, Maria, Fiona, and Me. PRESS 254/Spoonfuls (May 2nd, 2023). [Chapbook of poetry]

“Espiritualidad en Cinco Pensamientos.” *Palabreadores Newsletter* 3.28 (April 2023), 8. [poem]

“Hey Language, My Language, When can I Dream in both Languages?” *White Noise Zine*. Daydreaming 2 (2023). [poem]

“Stomach Rumbles” *White Noise Zine*. Daydreaming 2 (2023). [poem]

“Indonesia/Australia, Pie in the Sky.” *School in Children’s & Young Adult Literature*, written by Tanja Nathanael and Olivia Bushardt. ChLA International Committee (September 7, 2023). [Blog/Resource].

“Dominican Republic, Islandborn.” *Islands in Children’s and Young Adult Literature* written by Tanja Nathanael. ChLA International Committee (June 9, 2023). Blog/Resource.

“Frizzy.” Children’s Literature Review. *Palabreando: Palabreadores Newsletter* 3.33 (October 2023): 17-21.

“The Secret of the Plátanos.” Picture Book review. *Palabreando: Palabreadores Newsletter* 3.32 (September 2023): 23-26.

“Plátanos Are Love.” Picture Book review. *Palabreando* 3.31 (July 2023): 16-20.

“Jack (Not Jackie).” Picture Book review. *Palabreando: Palabreadores Newsletter* 3.30 (June 2023): 22-26.

“Plátanos Go with Everything/Los Plátanos van con todo.” Picture Book review. *Palabreando: Palabreadores Newsletter* 3.29 (May 2023): 15-19.

“Ramen for Everyone (Ramen para todos).” Picture Book review. *Palabreando: Palabreadores Newsletter* 3.28 (April 2023): 12-15.

“The Capybaras.” Picture Book review. *Palabreando: Palabreadores Newsletter* 3.27 (March 2023): 17-20.

“I haiku you.” Picture Book review. *Palabreando: Palabreadores*

Newsletter 3.26 9February 2023): 16-18.

“Pocket Full of Rocks.” Picture Book review. *Palabreando: Palabreadores Newsletter* 3.25 (January 2023): 21-24.

Audrey T. Heffers (Creative Works as Audrey T. Carroll) *In My Next Queer Life, I Want to Be*. kith books, 2023. [Prose Poetry Chapbook]

Parts of Speech: A Disabled Dictionary. Alien Buddha Press, 2023. [Hybrid Creative Nonfiction]

“Mystic Will.” *Vagabond City Lit*, 10th Anniversary Issue (2023). [Fiction]

“Kin Selection.” *Nebulous Magazine* (2023). [Fiction]

“Defensive Posture.” *Livina Press Literary Magazine* 6 (2023). [Fiction]

“Wellness Check.” *Coalitionworks* 4 (2023). [Fiction]

“Lazarus Species.” *Coalitionworks* 4 (2023). [Fiction]

“When the Forecast Forgets the Wildfires.” *The Disappointed Housewife* (2023). [Fiction]

“Revelation.” *All Existing Literary Magazine* (2023). [Fiction]

“On Eggshells.” *Chaotic Merge Magazine* 5 (2023). [Fiction]

“The Pain Scale.” *Glassworks Magazine* 27 (2023). [Creative Nonfiction]

“(In)Significant, Other(ed).” *Wishbone Words* (2023). [Creative Nonfiction]

“(In)Significant, Other(ed).” *Wordgathering* 17.1 (2023). [Creative Nonfiction]

“Chronic Bingo.” *Cutbow Quarterly* 4 (2023). [Creative Nonfiction]

“Recipe for Avoiding Disaster.” *Talon Review* 3.1 (2023). [Creative Nonfiction]

“Conferencing, Canes, and Other Adventures.” *The Woodward Review* 2.2 (2023). [Creative Nonfiction]

“The Silent I.” *JMWW Journal* (2023). [Creative Nonfiction]

“A Body in Review.” *Emerge Literary Journal* 25 (2023). [Creative Nonfiction]

“A Metaphor for Chronic Pain,” “Liminal,” “We: Disabled,” and “Natural Diversity.” *The Periwinkle Pelican* (2023). [Poetry]

“Bipotential,” “Another Word for Different,” and “We: Queer.” *Erato Literary Magazine* (2023). [Poetry]

“Mutagenesis.” *The Amazine* (2023). [Poetry]

“Genderqueer as a Hummingbird.” *Blue Bottle Journal* (2023). [Poetry]

“Today’s Gender Is ...” and “In a Perfect World.” *Poetry as Promised Magazine*, Pride Issue, 2023. [Poetry]

“Artificer.” *New Note Poetry* (2023). [Poetry]

“Endo-” *Free the Verse*, “Pulling Teeth” issue (2023). [Poetry]

“Bee Genders are a Lie,” “Armor & Poison,” “Functional Extinction,” and “To Thrive Is Divine” *antonym* 18 (2023). [Poetry]

“A GenderCrip Creation Myth.” *Frighten the Horses* (2023). [Hybrid]

Nomination for 2024 Best of the Net, “A Body in Review” (*Emerge Literary Journal*, essay)

Nomination for 2024 Best of the Net, “To Thrive is Divine” (*antonym*, poetry)

kith books Speed Run Winner (*In My Next Queer Life, I Want to Be*, prose poetry chapbook)

Sayanti Mondal

“Performing Indigeneity: Writing Stories through Warli Art in The Deep,” Special Issue: Celebrating Indigenous Authors. *Feral Feminisms* 11.2 (Summer 2023).

Laura Sweeney

“Reflection on Lockdown Pivoting.” *Ice Floe Press*, December, 2023.

“Dispatch from a Displaced Worker.” *Ice Floe Press*, December, 2023.

Maggie Wolff

“Surveys, Maps, and Mothers: A,” “Surveys, Maps, and Mothers: B,” and “Trigger Warning.” *South Florida Poetry Journal*, 2023.

“Surveys, Maps, and Mothers: C” and “Surveys...D-E.” *Anti-Heroic Chic*, 2023.

“Spellwork for Mental Health.” *Door is a Jar Magazine*, 2023.

“Waiting Room Waiting” and “Hum Hunger.” *Pioneertown*, 2023.

Alumni Publications

Ewa Chrusciel (Ph.D. '07)

Yours, Purple Gallinule. Richmond, CA: Omnidawn Publishing, 2022. [Press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/Y/bo185858181](https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/Y/bo185858181)



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