

# Encompass



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NEWSLETTER FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE  
IU DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

## **Faculty Spotlight:** **Michael Weinman**

*Interview by Sean Sidky*

Michael Weinman will be joining the Department of Comparative Literature in the Fall of 2020 as a Visiting Assistant Professor. I met with Michael in the Department's conference room during a visit in early spring to talk about his work.

### **Tell me a little bit about your work and how you got here.**

It's a very long and winding road, as they say, that brings me here. My work encompasses interests in three main baskets: intellectual history, in particular the relationship between mathematics and humanistic disciplines; political theory or political philosophy; and third, ancient Greek philosophy. These are the worlds I've been in, and then different projects bring them together. For instance, the work that I had the occasion to present here takes an interest in Plato's aesthetics or Plato's theory of art, if you want to call it that, and looks at that through the lens of contemporary film theory. That's the kind of work that I do, and I think that a lot of it is fairly disparate from the kinds of interests in the department, but a lot of it is also adjacent to them, and that's what brings me to comparative literature in particular.

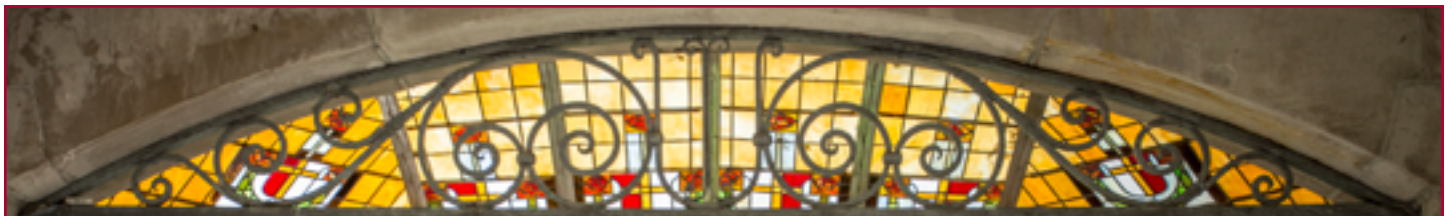


### **Can you tell me a little bit about your current project?**

Well, the most honest answer is that there are three current projects. One of them is a project on liberal political theology, a work in political philosophy, hoping to bring together political philosophy with a sub-discipline of sociology that's called comparative historical sociology. It's interdisciplinary too, but it reaches not in the direction of comparative literature, but in the direction of social science. It's an attempt to understand what "post-secularism" might mean.

That's one project that continues. A second project that I'm working on, which is related to the first, is a kind of Arendt-for-everybody book from Edinburgh University Press. They're doing a series of works on big names in the theory world, presenting in ten short chapters what that thinker was all about. I've been commissioned to

*(continued on page 4)*



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# From the Chair

By: Paul Losensky

## ***Yikes, what a year it has been!***



In December, the academic year seemed to have reached the halfway mark with only the usual spasms of crisis management. Neither surgery to remove kidney stones nor learning to work with the new dean of the College, Rick van Kooten, proved to be as traumatic as I expected. But only a few weeks after I recovered fully from surgery, the COVID-19 pandemic swept around the world. In-person classes were suspended, and we all went into damage control. We scrambled, with varying degrees of success, to switch over to online teaching and pull through to the end of the term. Administrative labors have only intensified over the summer as we brace ourselves for the partial re-opening of campus in August, and I trust that we will learn from our crash course in remote learning in the fall. So, please excuse the tardiness of this issue. Due to reduction in staff, we cannot send out hard copies of this issue of Encompass to all members of the Comparative Literature community and will distribute it primarily via email. But we will have some glossy print copies made, and you should feel free to contact us for one of them if you prefer that format.

Before the hiring freeze went into effect, however, we were able to add Michael Weinman to the faculty as a Visiting Associate Professor. He leaves his position at Bard College Berlin to join his spouse, Irit Dekel (Borens Jewish Studies Program and Germanic Studies), here at IU Bloomington. He brings with him many years of teaching experience in the general humanities, and his research explores the intersections of literature and philosophy, with a grounding in classical Greek thought and theatre. You can read more about Michael in his own words in his interview with one of our graduate students, Sean Sidky

Comparative Literature was also fortunate to have held its major scholarly events before the lockdown began. In September, we hosted a meeting of the Great Lakes Adiban Society. Adib denotes a cultured person of letters in most of the languages of the Islamic world, and this fledgling regional organization brings together scholars in all the major literary traditions of this region, including Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu. The conference gave a good indication of the ways comparative literature is expanding beyond its European origins. As the end of fall semester approached, the annual Wertheim Lecture in Comparative Drama had a theme befitting the holiday season featuring a lecture, roundtable

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For activities and membership information, call (800) 824-3044 or visit <http://alumni.iu.edu>

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discussion, and two performances of *The Second Shepherd's Play*, the latter supported by a grant from the Ostrom Foundation. In the spring semester, before things fell apart, the Departments of Comparative Literature and French and Italian co-sponsored the symposium "Pluralism and the Engaged Humanities," celebrating the career of Eileen Julien, who will be retiring at the end of the 2020-21 academic year. Gathering together many of her close colleagues and former students, this joyous event looked back over a career that stretched from New Orleans to Dakar and helped define the global scope of our department. Finally, sneaking in just as the corona virus began to make itself felt, our biannual graduate student conference, organized by the Student Advisory Board, explored the theme of food in literature and featured a keynote address by IU's own Prof. Vivian Halloran. Both of these events highlighted the range and depth of scholarship fostered by our program. You can read about all these events in the following pages.

And what summer would be complete without a move? We have just completed the final stage of our three-year journey through the Great Ballantine Renovation. We are now nesting in our "forever home" on the sixth floor of Ballantine Hall (room 642), with a comfortable office suite just across from the elevators. Though we will not be able to hold the housewarming party we were hoping for, I hope the day will

come soon when you can visit us here. In another sign that a mere pandemic cannot stop the progress of our scholarship, I am happy to announce that four of our graduate students were able to defend their dissertations (three of them via Zoom) and complete their doctoral degrees. Please join me in congratulating:

Tsaiyi Wu, for her dissertation "In Search of the Lost World: The Modernist Quest for Matter and Body, with a Conclusion on Chinese Poetics," under the direction of Prof. Jacob Emery;

Roy Holler, for his dissertation "All Things Must Pass: Negotiating Identity/Difference in Modern Hebrew Literature," under the direction of Prof. Eileen Julien;

Morgane Flahault, for her dissertation "Crossing Boundaries: Gender and Racial Bending in Three Contemporary Ethnic American Novels," under the co-direction of Profs. Akin Adeşokan and Vivian Halloran;

Ali Frauman, for her dissertation "Unstable Masculinities: Loki, Ergi, and Challenges to Heroic Identity in Old Norse Literature," under the direction of Prof. Rosemarie McGerr.

*My best wishes go out to all of you in these difficult and uncertain times for your continued health and well-being.*

*Encompass*





## Faculty Spotlight (cont.)

co-author the entry on Hannah Arendt. So that's also continuing.

The third project is the closest to what will be my work here and is called *The Cosmos Inside*. It's an investigation of the relationship between mind and world in science writing and narrative fiction from Goethe to Woolf.

**Since you will be joining us in Comparative Literature this fall, I'm interested to hear about how you see literature, or popular culture, fitting into your work or thinking more broadly.**

The easiest thing to say about myself is that I have a PhD in Philosophy, which is not false, but it's misleading because I'm not a philosopher — I know what it is, and I have a tremendous amount of respect for those people, but that's not what my interest is. My interest is in the history of philosophy, the traditions, the folkways really, in philosophy. I've published on this a bit, and I'm far from the only person to have taken an interest in this, but I've received most of my training in this field and am most passionate about philosophy as a way of life.

When you approach philosophy from this perspective, from the perspective of wisdom traditions, this pushes very strongly in the direction of religious studies, or comparative religion, and comparative literature. In this sense, first and foremost, this is how literature is integral to my work: namely, my work in philosophy is work in literary studies. I take an interest in the history of philosophy that I understand to be closer to the toolkit of comparative literature in many cases than philosophy, and happily so. In the second instance, I think that what's best in the tradition of Western philosophy is work that nowadays — I mean since the late nineteenth century — mostly hasn't been done in philosophy, but rather has been done in other forms of intellectual and scholarly work. I wrote a book on Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, which is very much a book written by a philosopher, if anyone opens it, and I wouldn't deny it, but it's a work that absolutely

couldn't or wouldn't have been written without an interest in the literary character of *The Waves*. The kind of interest I take in written work in general manifests itself these days more in literary texts than other texts.

**You said it's the literary character of Woolf that allows her to be philosophical, can you expand on that a little?**

The reason why I wrote a book on Virginia Woolf is that I hold her to be really the best and most thorough interrogator of the philosophy of subjectivity in the interwar period. That's the gambit of the book, where the book is coming from: it's speaking to an audience that's aware of the fact that there was a tremendous shift in the self-understanding of political subjectivity in the interwar period, and that there are numerous *in media res* attempts to come to terms with that, that garner attention until today. We're still trying to think about the tremendous shift in social forms and in the self-understanding of political subjectivity in this very febrile period, all the more so now that we seem to have this haunting sense that those nightmares of the interwar period are returning. I wrote the book before we felt those nightmares, but that's the deep background of it. I say all that, in order to say that to my mind Woolf provides the best *philosophical* account of this transformation in the self-understanding of political subjectivity precisely because she wasn't writing philosophy. What does that mean? It means that in the case of *The Waves* in particular, and this wouldn't be true of *To The Lighthouse* for example, it's not about the way that consciousness is represented in her version of modernist stream-of-consciousness narrative, but about the juxtaposition of these impersonal italicized prose poem in between chapters that themselves migrated between different near-third person narrations. It's this specific literary form that makes it possible for Woolf, with her masterly command of her medium, to depict a self-understanding of political subjectivity that I think can be cited, indexed, referenced, as a philosophy of subjectivity.

I'm a philosopher and I take an interest in her philosophy, but I *have to* pay attention to her work as a creator of literature, and I take this to be paradigmatic of the way that my work traverses between philosophy and literature. I take an interest in philosophical questions and I try to comment on them, but the way that I do that might be to take a putatively literary text in a philosophical way, or a putatively philosophical text in a literary way. What comes out of the rubbing of the two sticks together is something that hopefully makes a contribution to understanding both the philosophical and literary qualities of the work in question, whether that work is by a "literary" author or a "philosophical" author.

***You'll be teaching a couple courses for us in the Fall: Detective, Mystery, and Horror; and Literature and Ideas. Can you tell me a little bit about your plans for those courses?***

Literature and Ideas is going to focus on what I think of as the tradition of existentialist fiction. We're going to look at the notion that "man makes his reality" or that human beings, through the construction of literary works, in particular narrative fiction, quite literally constitute their world. We'll do that both historically and also topically or problematically, engaging classic themes like self and other, self and God, and us and them. We'll go thematically but also chronologically tracing back to the ancient Near East and then through Greek literature, which is something of a specialty for me. With Detective, Mystery, and Horror, we are going to look at some foundational questions, such as: what makes human beings, even the most monstrous among us, human? Is it ever right to do wrong? What is truth and can we ever know it? These questions, we will note, not only consumed poets and philosophers, theologians and psychologists for ages, but also fueled literary traditions such



as the detective story, mysteries, and horror, especially Gothic. The course will focus on classic cinematic and literary works in these traditions in order to open up how identity gets framed in and through the colonial and imperial legacies that shape modern life.

***Is there a book other than yours you would recommend to someone interested in your particular area(s) of research?***

The very first one that comes to mind is a newish book related to the *Cosmos Inside* project is Branka Arsić's *Bird Relics: Grief and Vitalism in Thoreau* (Harvard, 2016).

***Finally, academia is a pretty stressful environment. What do you do to relax?***

This one's pretty easy for me. I spend time with my children, and more helpfully, get outside. [At this point, in a moment of serendipity, Professor Weinman spotted a large hawk flying past the window]. So, I like to birdwatch. But most important, no-device time. Spend time looking at absolutely no electronic device, that's important.



# The 2019 Great Lakes Adiban Workshop

By: Farhad Anwarzai

Each year the Great Lakes Adiban Society holds a regional conference for scholars of medieval and early modern Islamicate *adab*, a term that refers both to literature and to the ethical system to which it gives voice. The Department of Comparative Literature was proud to host the 2019 Great Lakes Adiban Workshop on September 28-29 at the College Arts & Humanities Institute. Sixteen scholars from around the greater Midwest presented papers on a wide range of linguistic and thematic issues encompassing Classical Persian, Arabic, Urdu, Turkish and other literatures of the Islamicate tradition.

Saturday's program schedule opened with the theme of Writing the City. Arlen Wiesenthal of the University of Chicago discussed the relationship between "ruler" and "metropolis" in his presentation on Sultan Murad IV (r. 1623-1640), who was said to have disguised himself and wandered his city's streets late at night, spying on his subjects and enforcing brutal justice whenever laws were violated. Shahla Farghadani of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, analyzed bathhouses as spaces for love and erotic desire in early modern Isfahan.

On the theme of early Mughal poetics, Namrata Kanchan of the University of Texas, Austin discussed how the depiction of marriage in the poet Aftabi's *maṣnavī Ta'rīf-i Ḥusain Shāh* (c. 1565) sheds light on gender dynamics in Ahmednagar. Ayelet Kotler of the University of Chicago examined intertextuality and appropriation in a versified Persian retelling of the Sanskrit epic *Rāmāyana*.

The next theme was Mirrors of the Soul: Geography, Ethnicity, Alterity. Kaveh Hemmat of

Benedictine University explored race, geography, and interiority in Persian epics, while Rama Alhabian of Cornell University analyzed alterity and difference in three of al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmahs*. Alexandra Hoffman of the University of Chicago examined sexuality in Iranshah b. Abi Khayr's *Kūshnāmeḥ* through the lens of monster studies.

The last theme of the day was Para-national Literatures, which opened with a presentation by Alexander Jabbari of the University of Minnesota concerning origin myths of Islamicate languages. Aqsa Ijaz of McGill University concluded with an analysis on two 19th-century versions of *Qissah-i Gul-i Bakāwlī*.

The program schedule on Sunday was equally engaging and thought provoking. The first theme of the day was The Sliding Scales of Humanity. Sam Lasman of the University of Chicago began with a presentation on the role of the *azhdahā*, dragon, in Persian epics. Samantha Pellegrino of the University of Chicago followed with a presentation exploring gender, magic, and ontology in the 14th-century Arabic epic *Sirat Sayf Bin Dhi Yazan*.

On the theme of Metapoesis and Canonization, Shaahin Pishbin of the University of Chicago examined the influence that the poet Amīr Khusraw of Delhi (d.1325) had on Safavid-Mughal Persian poetics. Abdul Manan Bhat of the University of Pennsylvania discussed the Indian writer Firāq Gorakhpuri and metapoesis in Urdu poetry.

Literary Selves and Subjects was the theme of the final panel of the day. Jennifer Tobkin of George Washington University discussed how the writer Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd al-Iṣfahānī





(d. 909) took on a pseudonym and included his own love poems into his poetic anthology *Kitāb al-Zahra*. Allison Kanner-Botan of the University of Chicago analyzed the *maṣnavī* form and examined how it influenced the depiction of Laylī's subjectivity in Nizāmī's *Laylī o Majnūn*. David Kanbergs of New York University concluded with a presentation discussing Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī's *Risālat al-Ghufrān*, or *Epistle of Forgiveness*.

The fruitful workshops and lively panel discussions that took place after each presentation reinforced the importance of studying literature across borders and beyond

the western literary canon. Islamicate *adab*, as discussed in the workshops and emphasized in the presentations, encompassed prolific writers and several vibrant artistic traditions that stretched across the Middle East, Persia, Central Asia, South Asia, and South East Asia. Indeed, if the academic discipline of comparative literature had originated in Baghdad instead of Europe, this weekend conference would have exemplified its scope and central issues.

For more information on the Great Lakes Adiban Society and its regional workshop conferences, please visit: <https://greatlakesadiban.github.io/>

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## Albert Wertheim Lecture and Ostrom Project Celebrate Medieval Drama

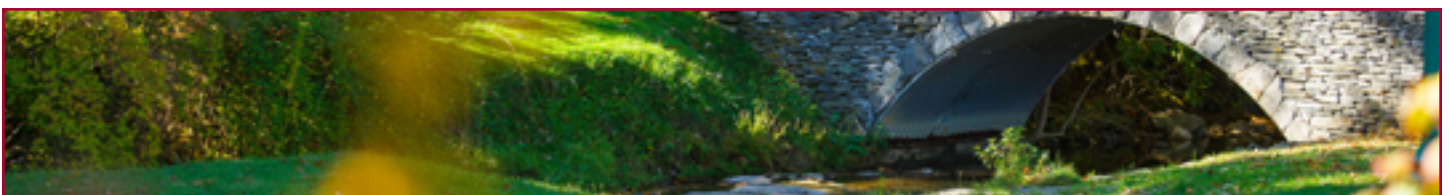
By Rosemarie McGerr

The 2019 Albert Wertheim Lecture in Comparative Drama kicked off a three-day celebration of medieval drama in several forms. On December 5<sup>th</sup>, Andrew Galloway, Professor of English and James John Professor of Medieval Studies at Cornell University, gave a presentation entitled "Gil's Jobs: Women Making Medieval Drama," which drew an enthusiastic audience from several IUB departments and the wider community. Prof. Galloway's presentation used late-medieval English drama, including *The Second Shepherds' Play*, as a jumping off point to look at the relationship of women and forms of dramatic and quasi-dramatic literature at different times and places in medieval Europe. We were very pleased to welcome the donors for the lecture series, Judith Wertheim and Ted Widlanski, at this event.

As has become traditional with the Wertheim lecture series, on the afternoon following the lecture, after lunch for Prof. Galloway with graduate students, the Comparative Literature Department hosted a round table discussion with the guest speaker, led by our chair, Prof. Paul Losensky. The round table began with short presentations by IUB faculty members Karma Lochrie (English), Shannon Gayk (English), and Rosemarie McGerr (Comparative Literature) and graduate student Kortney Stern (English) and then opened up to lively discussion among the graduate students and faculty who attended.

Then, on December 6th and 7th, in the Collins Living-Learning Center dining hall, over 100 members of the IUB and Bloomington community laughed and cheered through

(continued)



## *Department News (cont.)*

two performances of the medieval English play known as *The Second Shepherds' Play*, which retells the story of Christmas from the perspective of the poor shepherds to whom angels announce the news of Christ's birth. The play was performed by IUB students, most of whom had not studied any medieval drama before the fall semester. The performances were the culmination of a semester-long project, supported by the College of Arts and Sciences Ostrom Grants Program, to help make the humor, poetry, and social commentary of the medieval text accessible to student performers and contemporary audiences. The project, called "A Community of Voices: Medieval Drama and Modern Theatre" (co-applicants: Rosemarie McGerr, Jennifer Goodlander, and Sonia Velázquez), was the first one in the department to receive Ostrom Grant funding.

The production used modern translations of medieval songs where the play calls for singing, and performers in the roles of sheep used hand puppets to highlight the important relationship of animals and human beings explored in the play. The students learned about the play's medieval traditions and developed ways to translate them into contemporary terms. The student actors were Joseph Moran (Coll), Macey Policka (Gib), Aryana Rao (Daw), Pratha Bodas (Mak/Joseph), Ava Osowick (Gill/Mary), Jessica Bigelow (Angel), Pooja Rudraraju (Stolen Sheep), and Anushka Silwal and Leathea Thomason (Sheep Flock). Students in production roles

were Lydia Spellman (costume, scenic, and poster design), Jessica Bigelow (music director), Sydney Weber (line producer), Gabrielle Datema (assistant director), and Emma Lechner (house manager). The production was led by guest director Katherine McGerr, Assistant Professor of Drama at Syracuse University. Jennifer Lale, Lecturer in Theatre, Drama, and Contemporary Dance at IUB, consulted on the puppetry. Rosemarie McGerr, Professor of Comparative Literature, translated the medieval text into modern English poetry.

The play performances (also supported by the Medieval Studies Institute and the Department of Comparative Literature) framed the last part of the three-day celebration of medieval drama. On December 7th, before the second performance of the play, the Medieval Studies Institute hosted a symposium called "From Page to Stage: Medieval Drama and Modern Theatre," with presentations by IUB faculty (including Jennifer Goodlander and Rosemarie McGerr) and guest faculty from the University of Illinois, the University of Maryland, and the University of Toronto. The presentations and discussions allowed faculty and graduate students to examine how modern performances of medieval dramatic works can contribute to current scholarship, as well as to the goals of theatre companies that seek to explore the cultural roles of performance in history and the contemporary role of theatre in giving voice to marginalized people and ideas.



*Shepherds Gib, Daw, and Coll commiserate while spending the night with their sheep.*



*Mak brings home the sheep he has stolen from the shepherds.*



# Pluralism and the Engaged Humanities: A Symposium in Honor of Eileen Julien

By Morgane Flahault, Noel Wheeler, and Sean Sidky

This winter, the Department of Comparative Literature celebrated the career of Professor Eileen Julien, with a symposium titled “Pluralism and the Engaged Humanities.” The symposium was co-hosted by the Department of French and Italian Studies, the African Studies Program, the College Arts and Humanities Institute, and the Center for Theoretical Inquiry in the Humanities. Held over two days, 14-15 February, 2020, the symposium featured scholars and speakers from across the humanities and the country discussing the impact of Professor Julien’s work in numerous fields, as well as opening up about their experiences with Professor Julien as a teacher, mentor, and colleague. Two graduate students in the Department of Comparative Literature reflect on their experience attending the symposium:

On the first roundtable, entitled “Visible Woman: The Humanities and the Future of Pluralism,” Morgane Flahault writes:

Dr. Sandra Zagarell opened the round table by presenting on Alice Dunbar-Nelson, a prominent activist organizer, minister, writer, educator, and publisher. She offered to look at Dunbar-Nelson in a pluralistic way, arguing that although her writing and activism haven’t always been read that way, they were often symbiotic; her work was deeply intersectional.

Dr. Meg Arenberg (PhD, Indiana University) proposed that we look with suspicion at the proposition that African literature may be universal and that “cultural strangeness dissolves into the universal.” Universality is often predicated on translation; but what are we to do with texts that are not universally legible? She contrasted Achebe’s work, which tries to balance African strangeness and universality, with Ngugi as an “unrepenting universalist” who believed in the possibility of expressing a common being through a diversity of languages. Meg then gave a short analysis of *The Dragonfly Sea* by Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, which she sees as a new form of what Eileen Julien calls “extraverted novels.” The novel presents Kenya as a site of exchange and refuge before European colonization, revealing its longstanding relations with China.

Dr. Walton Muyumba then gave an emotional homage to Dr. Julien. He showed the audience the notes he had kept from the classes he took and audited with Eileen. Muyumba said he has carried the consciousness of his skin color everywhere he goes, something Julien describes in her book *Visible Woman*. He also discussed his feeling of homelessness, of a Diasporic sense of belonging, and that Eileen’s course From Harlem to Paris taught him to situate himself in space: Paris being a place where he could find

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A panel discussion entitled “Travels with Eileen.” From left to right: Micheline Rice-Maximin (Swarthmore College), Kassian Mmabatho Vaubel (M.A., 2002 - CMLT), Angela Pao (Comparative Literature, IUB), Eileen Julien, and Michael Martin (Media School, IUB).

out what his Americanness might mean.

Dr. Ranu Samantha reflected on the definition of pluralism in the humanities and what that might mean in the future. She described the dire straits that many colleges are in, especially for graduate studies: corporations are by-passing four-year institutions by providing their own training. She described a nightmare scenario for liberal arts education. Discussing the mission of liberal arts as having previously been a colonial machine for a homogeneous form of culture, she asked us to rethink what a common broad knowledge would look like. With a move away from the Eurocentric canon, we've fundamentally shifted from notions of core and periphery, so we now understand differently where knowledge comes from.

Meg Arenberg in response proposed that there are other models available in the form of public learning and education; she gave the example of the Citizen Scientist. Eileen was hopeful for discussions on alternative institutions at the bicentennial to reimagine the future of higher education. She proposed rethinking K12 into K16. She also asked, how do we bring education to the majority, to those who need education the most? Getting into IU is not possible for everyone, especially local populations.

Noel Wheeler writes: The symposium was a celebration of a scholar with provoking thoughts and a caring heart. In particular, Kenneth Harrow's talk, "It's Eileen's Time: Traces of Life with Kalidou Sy," delved into the temporal implications of Eileen Julien's work and her part in the film *It's My Man*. This allowed Dr. Harrow to consider the way in which Eileen speaks of Sy through her memories as well as the way in which these reflections on memory are also reflections on time.

Both students agree that the symposium was extremely warm, with many emotional moments. It was clear that the audience thought very highly of Eileen and that her work has had a profound impact on her students and peers. In Dr. Harrow's words, Eileen makes "you want to listen." Dr. Zagarell praised Eileen Julien as "a friend of your soul." Dr. Muyumba expressed his feeling of honor to be in front of his former professors; he said, "Eileen is my creole: she leads me out and brings me back." This symposium was not only a time for reflecting on the past work of Professor Julien and the role she has played in developing the humanities, but also for considering the changes that her work continues to offer to the present.



# Graduate Student Conference: Eat Your Words

By Margaret McLaughlin

This year, the Comparative Literature Student Advisory Board hosted its biannual graduate conference March 6th-7th on the IU Bloomington campus. Entitled “Eat Your Words,” the conference broadly explored the function and depiction of food in literature and other artistic media across a variety of disciplines.

The conference’s opening remarks were provided by the Director of Graduate Studies Bill Johnston and were followed by two panels. The first, “Food and Femininity,” chaired by Professor Sonia Velázquez of IU’s Departments of Comparative Literature and Religious Studies, considered the relationship between food and gender. Panelists explored that relationship in their discussions of German, Chinese-American, and Columbian works of literature. Presenters from the second panel, “Food and Social Critique,” chaired by Professor Carl Ipsen of IU’s History Department and Food Institute, discussed how food has been used in works from France, Cambodia, and Spain to challenge and analyze social norms. The first day of the conference ended with a keynote lecture given by IU’s own Professor Vivian Halloran from the Departments of English and American Studies, whose talk was entitled “From Melting Pot to Sancocho: Imagining Cross-Ethnic Allyship Across Food Narrative Genres.” Following an introduction by Department Chair Paul Losensky, Professor Halloran’s presentation proposed *sancocho*, a traditional Latin American stew, as a better representation of multiculturalism in the United States than the well-known “melting pot” metaphor. Halloran

argued that *sancocho* celebrates the individuality and harmonization of all its separate components, rather than melting everything into an indistinguishable homogenous whole; viewing the United States as *sancocho* recognizes and celebrates the distinct and different cultures found throughout the country. Professor Halloran’s compelling argument and engaging analysis made for a wildly successful keynote presentation.

The second day of the conference began with an Undergraduate Panel, chaired by Professor Sarah Van der Laan, in which two undergraduate students presented their senior theses; one student analyzed the symbolic role of salt in contemporary American literature and the other discussed queer female food writing. The second panel of the day, “Consuming the Flesh,” chaired by recent addition to the department Professor Jennifer Goodlander, discussed how foods such as challah, pie, and salad connect to cannibalism in Italian, Spanish, French, and American art and literature. The final panel, “Film and New Media,” chaired by Professor Izabela Potapowicz, moved beyond literature to explore depictions of food and alcohol in animated film, popular film, horror film, and music videos. Featuring sixteen papers from ten different institutions, “Eat Your Words” provided thought-provoking analyses on the role of food in artistic works from a wide variety of cultures and time periods. The conference was well-attended, well-received, and, most importantly, well-catered.



Panelists field questions under the watchful eye of Prof. Velazquez.



Audience eats up the words of keynote speaker, Prof. Vivian Halloran.



# Alumni Profile

## Raina Polivka

By Paul Losensky

Raina Polivka graduated with a B.A. in Comparative Literature and French in 2004. She went on to pursue an M.A. in both Comparative Literature and Library Sciences, with a specialization in rare books and special collections. Raina is currently Acquisitions Editor for Music, Film, and Media Studies at University of California Press. Previously, she acquired titles at Indiana University Press in music, film and media, and Russian and Eastern European studies, bringing a wealth of subject knowledge to her position. She spent over a decade in Bloomington before leaving for her current home in El Cerrito, California. She spoke with Prof. Paul Losensky earlier this year.

***Will you tell us a little bit about your work with UC Press, what exactly you do for them?***

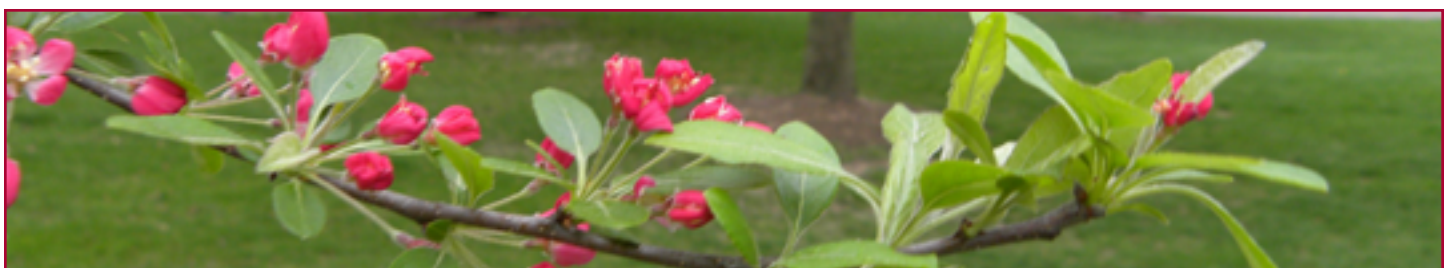
I'm the Music, Film, and Media Studies editor at UC Press. I'm in the acquisitions department so I'm not the kind of editor who does line editing, although I still do that quite a bit with my authors who need it. Instead I'm recruiting authors to publish with UC Press. I also work with authors on big picture things—their goals as an author, determining the audiences that they're trying to reach, how to expand their work to answer bigger questions. I also work with authors to think about the packaging and organization of their books. Prior to this I was an acquisitions editor at IU Press where I worked on several lists: music, film, gender and sexuality studies, Russian and Eastern European Studies, and a little bit of African studies. So even though



I've developed some expertise in music and film studies, being a publisher means you have to think very broadly about the areas you're working in. A lot of people in publishing don't come to their lists with a particular expertise; it's something they themselves acquire by working with individual scholars in those fields for so many years.

***So you graduated twice from the Comparative Literature department with six years in classes, seven years as a student. What skills did you get out of that that are useful to your current work?***

When I visit young scholars who are writing their first books, or junior faculty who are trying to navigate the publishing world, I always share with them that I have a background in comparative literature. It has allowed me to think critically and broadly about a number of different subject areas across language groups, and it was invaluable training to learn to do that in a meaningful way. The writing skills I



developed in comparative literature classes—specifically thinking across different literary cultures and being able to draw out big ideas—continues to bring me much success in the work I do.

The other part I draw on a lot is the teaching aspect. One of my favorite experiences as a graduate student in Comparative Literature was teaching a science fiction and fantasy course (which I knew nothing about), and my syllabus was filled with things like Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and Ray Bradbury—it was very science fiction light, I should say! I went into the class and shared with the students that they brought a certain expertise to the material that I didn't necessarily possess, but that I could teach them how to think critically and creatively and to apply what's happening in the world around them to the texts we read. I think that kind of philosophy of not posing as an expert and being open to people's ideas was really helpful. The other part of that, of course, was teaching writing and teaching forms of expression and giving positive, productive feedback that helps people become better writers. So I definitely drew on those opportunities that Comparative Literature afforded me.

***Do you have any favorite courses or professors who stand out from your time here?***

I loved the Translation workshops that Bill Johnston taught, along with your seminar on the history & theory of translation. Having the space to actually sit down and apply what you're thinking onto the page was really refreshing because so much of what we do takes place in our heads. To have that very practical process

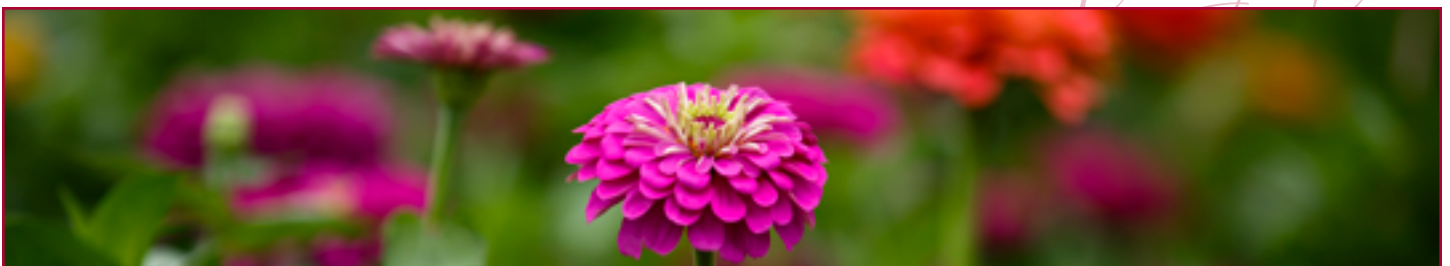
of translating ideas and words was incredible. One of my most formative classes was Herb Marks's Lyric Poetry seminar. I was a senior, and it was a merged class with both graduate students and undergraduates, so I was able to see what graduate students were like—how they performed and what was expected of them at the graduate level, which inspired me to pursue that path. It also instilled in me a life-long love for Elizabeth Bishop, which you know, is quite alive and well!

***What advice do you have for undergraduate students in Comparative Literature (or those considering being in Comparative Literature) and what advice do you have for graduate students?***

For undergrads I suggest that they double major in a language, especially if they want to go into graduate work or higher education, because that provides a real step up when applying to graduate schools. Comparative literature teaches you to think broadly, and so once you find a language area that you're really comfortable and in love with it helps you feel part of that history and culture. I definitely recommend studying abroad too, you know, boots on the ground! Live in that culture and language for a while. It's invaluable when it comes to learning the literature of that space.

As a graduate student, embrace the teaching aspect and bring some creativity to that. I know there are challenges with incoming students and populations changing and shifting in ways that I probably don't even know anymore, but the opportunity to touch even just a few people and inspire them is such a great gift. It's a very tangible takeaway in higher education, which is often very solitary, so having those rapports with students is really important.

*Compass*



# Faculty News



## Jacob Emery

Professor Emery was awarded a Fulbright Senior Specialist Fellowship in June 2019 in order to travel to Moscow, where he taught a series of seminars and delivered the keynote address at the Moscow State University Summer

School in the Humanities. While in Russia, he gave three other talks—on universal language in the Russian avant-garde, on medical terminology in the late novels of Dostoevsky, and on photography as an index of capitalist labor—at the Russian State University of the Humanities, Moscow State University, and the State Tolstoy Museum respectively. He also gave presentations at ACLA (on Vladimir Nabokov’s inability to concede Flaubert’s factual errors), at AATSEEL (on futuristic versions of typewriting technology in Sigizmund Krzhizhanvosky), and at an Indiana University conference in honor of Malcolm H. Brown, on Osip Mandelstam’s theory of synesthetic transcription. 2019 also saw the publication of the article “Humbert Humbert as Mad Man: Art and Advertising in *Lolita*” (*Studies in the Novel*, Fall 2019) and of the somewhat delayed 2016 issue of the *Yearbook of Comparative Literature*, entitled “Return to Mythologies,” which Professor Emery co-edited together with Professor Eyal Peretz, also of the IU Department of Comparative Literature. The introduction to the volume is Professor Emery’s essay “Thinking with Roland Barthes’ Mythologies, 50 Years After 1968 and 400 Years Before.” Forthcoming work includes “Between Fiction and Physiology: Brain Fever in *The Brothers Karamazov* and Its English Afterlife,” written together with IU graduate Elizabeth Geballe and slated to appear in *PMLA*, and the afterword to *Capitalism and the Camera*, a volume from Verso Press. Entitled the “The Mirror and the Mine: Photography in the Abyss

of Labor,” this work will also appear in Russian translation in the journal of the Moscow State University Philological Faculty. Professor Emery is currently spending a semester at Harvard University as Visiting Associate Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literature, where he is teaching one course on historical fiction and one course on science fiction and is delighted to avoid the present day. But he looks forward to the future, specifically to his return to Bloomington in the fall.

## Bill Johnston

Bill Johnston’s translation of the Polish epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz (Archipelago Books, 2018) won the 2019 National Translation Award in Poetry and the 2020 AATSEEL (American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages) Award for Best Literary Translation into English. In September his translation from the French of Alain Mabanckou’s novel *The Negro Grandsons of Vercingetorix* was published by Indiana University Press. At the 2019 conference of the American Literary Translators Association in Rochester, NY, he moderated a panel of graduate student presentations with the overarching theme of “I See What You Mean: Visualization As A Stage In Translation.” He also gave talks and readings at UCLA, Boston University, Oxford University, and the University of Illinois-Chicago. In March 2020 his translation of Stanisław Łubieński’s literary nature essays *The Birds They Sang* came out with Saqi Books in London.



## Paul Losensky

In addition to his endless duties as chair, Paul was delighted to host the meeting of The Great Lakes Adiban Society in September and introduce the visiting participants to the joys of Bloomington on a Lotus Festival weekend. He





travelled to Berlin for the meeting of European Conference on Iranian Studies, where he presented a paper on metapoesis in elegies to the Shi'ite Imam 'Ali in the sixteenth century. At a workshop on Persian poetics at Stanford University, Paul examined the concept of *gharaz*, meaning both "genre" and "intention," in Persian poetics and how it aligns with contemporary Western ideas of affect and the social role of poetry. He had scheduled visits to Chicago for ACLA and to Boston to lecture at Harvard, but found himself most unexpectedly housebound. Quarantine allowed him to finish a chapter-long survey of literature in Safavid Persia in the early modern period for a handbook of Safavid studies forthcoming from Routledge, even as he struggled along with other chairs and deans to figure out what shape higher education will take in the upcoming school year.



**Rebecca Manning**

Rebecca organized "Translation Across Time and Space" seminar at the IU India Gateway Office in Delhi, with participation from faculty at IU's local partner Ambedkar University Delhi, and other faculty from around the world working

on these issues. She received the John W. Ryan Award for Distinguished Contributions for International Programs and Studies at Indiana University for 2020 for her work in promoting Indian studies.

**Anya Peterson Royce**

Anya Peterson Royce was awarded the following grants in 2019: the CAHI/Kinsey Fellowship for "Embodying an American Ballet: George Platt Lynes, Lincoln Kirstein, and George Balanchine"; a CLACS travel/research grant, Juchitán, summer 2019, for "Mapping and photographing the callejones of Juchitán, Oaxaca"; and Arts & Humanities Council and CLACS grants for the international



conference "Mexico Remix: Voces del Pueblo/ Voices of the People." She presented "The Long Way Around" for the Bender Memorial Lecture, 21st FACET Retreat, Pokagon State Park, May 16, 2019. Royce's research and publications included: "Landscapes of the In-Between: Artists Mediating Cultures," in *The Artist and the Academy*, a volume commemorating the 20th anniversary of the founding of The Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, Helen Phelan and Graham Welch, eds. Routledge, in press; "Reflections on a Community of the Heart: Ethnographer and the people of Juchitan, Oaxaca" in *Reciprocity Rules: Friendship and Compensation in Fieldwork Encounters*, eds. M. Johnson and E. Searles. Lexington Press: Lanham, MD, in press; "Balance, Flow, and Space: Michel Fokine, Henri Matisse, Argentine Tango, Balinese Dance" in *Dedalus* 22-23, Número especial, Palavra - Corpo - Música/Word - Body - Music, pp.235-265, editado por / Edited by Claudia J. Fischer & Adriana Crespo, in press; and "Embodying Space and Flow: Fokine and the Russian Ballet," *Festschrift, Four Generations of American Scholarship on Russian Music, in honor of Malcolm H. Brown's 90th birthday.*

**Edith Sarra**

Professor Edith Sarra (Associate Professor of EALC, Adjunct Associate Professor of Comparative Literature, IU) has just published *Unreal Houses: Character, Gender and Genealogy in the Tale of Genji* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2020). The *Tale of Genji* (ca. 1008, by noblewoman Murasaki Shikibu) is a high-water mark of one of the world's most sustained traditions of female-authored narratives. It is known for its sophisticated representations of fictional characters' "minds" and its critical perspectives on class- and gender-inflected relations within the eleventh century Japanese aristocracy. In both content and structure, the *Tale of Genji* is deeply informed by the elite practice of polygynous

(continued)

# Faculty News

marriage—especially the grooming of marriageable daughters and the construction of mansions as expressions of familial authority. Like the dollhouses that delighted aristocratic girls and the residential compounds their families created, the imaginary houses of the *Genji* embody culturally specific ways of knowing the world, even as they gesture toward critical interventions in that world. Sarra explores how key characters in the *Tale of Genji* “think” about houses in both the architectural and genealogical sense of the word. Based on close readings of the *Genji*, *Unreal Houses* elucidates the tale’s interrogations of the literary, social, and architectural spaces of polygyny. Combining literary analysis with the history of gender, marriage, and the built environment, Sarra opens new perspectives on the architectonics of the *Genji* and its relation to the extra-textual world of the city of Heian.



## Sonia Velazquez

After returning from a year-long research fellowship at the Institute for Research in the Humanities at UW Madison, Prof. Velázquez was excited to introduce the new cohort of graduate students to the discipline and the department in CMLT

501. In October 2019, she organized a series of panels on lyric and lament for the Society of Renaissance and Baroque Hispanic Poetry meeting in Irvine. A week later, she presented work from her project on lyric citizenship as an invited speaker at the meeting of the Northeastern Cervantes Society of America in Princeton. In the spring, she will participate in a series of Master Classes on the topic “Why Early Modern Spain?” organized by Prof. Michael Solomon at the University of Pennsylvania. She will speak on how early modern theatre can serve as a recourse for talking about difficult contemporary topics such as sexual violence and the paradoxes of forgiveness. Over spring break, she was invited

to lecture on religious conversion and its visual representations at the University of Geneva’s Institute for the History of the Reformation.

## Russell Valentino

For the past four years, Russell Scott Valentino (professor in the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures; adjunct professor in the Department of Comparative Literature) has served as Associate Dean for



International Affairs, and for the past two and half, as Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, both in the College of Arts and Sciences. He is the author of two books on 19th- and 20th-century Russian literary and cultural history, published in 2001 and 2014—the latter long-listed for the 2015 *Historia Nova* Prize for the Best Book on Russian Intellectual and Cultural History and issued in paperback in 2016. He co-edited collections of literature and cultural studies and has translated eight books of fiction and literary nonfiction from Italian, Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian, and Russian. His translations into English include Fulvio Tomizza’s *Materada*, Sabit Madaliev’s *The Silence of the Sufi*, Carlo Michelstaedter’s *Persuasion and Rhetoric*, and Predrag Matvejevic’s *The Other Venice*. He has received multiple grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, research grants from the Fulbright-Hays foundation, as well as other funding agencies, such the PEN/Heim Foundation, the Howard Foundation grant, and the U.S. Departments of Education and State. His essays, reviews, articles, and translations have appeared in a wide variety of venues, including *The New York Times*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Defunct*, *Del Sol Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Buenos Aires Review*, *Translation Review*, *Slavic Review*, and *91st Meridian*. His translation of Miljenko Jergovic’s monumental family saga *Kin* is forthcoming in 2021 from Archipelago Books.

# Alumni News

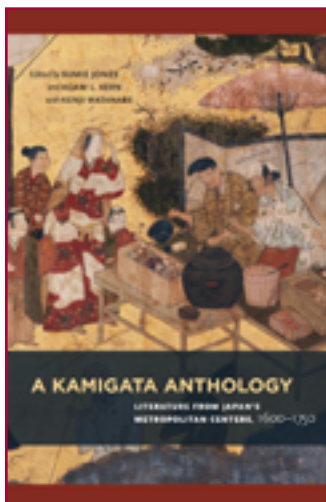
## William Slaymaker

William Slaymaker (Comp. Lit. Ph.D. 1975) wrote an ecocritical essay for MLA publication on the 2008 winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, the French writer J.M.G. LeClezio and delivered a presentation about this writer at the June 2019 ASLE Conference at UC-Davis. Earlier in 2019, he presented at the Chicago MLA on the Heimat concept of the 2004 winner of the Nobel prize, Austrian writer Elfriede Jelinek and now is re-reading the work of another Nobel Prize winner (2019), the Austrian Peter Handke. For IU Life Long Learning, William taught a class (2019) on the “Green Bible” (OT/NT environmentalism) and is teaching a class in March 2020 on English Language Ancestry: From Indo-European to a Hybrid Germanic Language. This topic has been a focus of his linguistic interests and studies since his early undergraduate language classes in the 1960s.

# Emeriti News

## Sumi Jones

Sumie Jones, Professor Emerita, received the Masao and Lindsley Miyoshi Prize for Lifetime Achievement as Translator and Editor of Translation at the Donald Keene Center for Japanese Culture, Columbia University, March 2019. Sumie is the editor-in-chief of a three-volume anthology in English of early modern Japanese urban literature. The first volume, which came out from the University of Hawaii Press in March 2020, completes the set:



*A Kamigata Anthology: Literature from Japan's Metropolitan Centers, 1600-1750* (2020)

*An Edo Anthology: Literature from Japan's Mega City, 1750-1850* (2013)

*A Tokyo Anthology: Literature from Japan's Modern Metropolis, 1850-1920* (2017)

## Oscar Kenshur

Oscar Kenshur has been spending the 2019/2020 academic year in Aix-en-Provence, where his wife, Margot Gray, was directing IU's study-abroad program. Owing to the WHO's announcement that the COVID-19 crisis is a pandemic, the program has been shut down, and the students are being sent back to the U.S. For now, Professor Kenshur will be remaining in France, where he will continue writing and publishing light verse and reading or rereading literary texts. (He's currently reading Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*.)

## Darlene J. Sadlier

She was elected sócia-correspondente (foreign member) by the Brazilian Academy of Letters in Rio and published the book *The Lilly Library from A to Z: Intriguing Objects in a World-Class Collection*, with Indiana University Press.





# Graduate Student News

## **Julie le Hégarat**

For the school year 2019-2020 Julie received the Eoyang-Lee Scholarship and the Future Faculty Teaching Fellowship to teach at Butler University in Indianapolis. In 2020-2021, she will finish her dissertation thanks to receiving the College of Arts and Sciences Dissertation Research Fellowship. In Spring 2020, she gave a talk about teaching and creativity at the EC Moore Symposium on Excellence in Teaching. She was looking forward to present at ACLA in Chicago and at the Spiral Film and Philosophy Conference in Toronto but then things happened...

## **Sean Sidky**

This year, Sean taught a course on Holocaust film for the Collins Living-Learning Center, and spent a lot of time puzzling over small details in his dissertation. He had an article accepted for publication in a major Jewish literature journal (forthcoming in Spring 2021), and spent some time working as a graduate writing tutor for Writing Tutorial Services. He is hoping to use the time stuck at home to learn how to make bread.

## **Meaghan Murphy**

Meaghan works comparatively with classical literature and new media. Her current research project is a comparative look at the construction of ancient and modern conspiracy theory, particularly in the works of Tacitus and Alex Jones. This past summer she lectured on modern myths at Zhejiang University of Technology (Hangzhou, PRC).

## **Tsaiyi Wu**

Tsaiyi has graduated from our dear department as of December 2019. She was very, very grateful for the journey. Her dissertation, directed by Professor Jacob Emery, is titled “In Quest of the Lost World: the Modernist Quest for Matter and Body, with a Conclusion on Chinese Poetics.” Her article published in the journal *Philosophy East and West* is now available on Project Must, titled “Chinese Thing-Metaphor: Translating Material Qualities to Spiritual Ideals.”

## **Alan Reiser**

Alan is looking forward to completing his qualifying exams in August. He has been teaching as an associate instructor in the Japanese language program.



# Graduate Student News

## Cynthia Shin

Cynthia joined the department this year. Yay! A version of her undergraduate thesis on transnational literature of Tawada Yoko, Bae Suah and Franz Kafka was accepted for a seminar at ACLA 2020 on transculturality of the East and the West. She also joined the Diversity Council of the Graduate and Professional Student Government. Outside of school, she works with a gaming organization called Ganymede's Girls that is geared towards creating a safe space for women-aligned and queer gamers, who often have to deal with hostility and prejudice online. She ran three charity events with the organization, raising money for women's health, a children's hospital in Texas, and the Australian bush fire, while also having fun!

## Sarah Lawson

Sarah N. Lawson is completing her fourth year toward her Dual Ph.D in Comparative Literature and Folklore. She is currently studying for candidacy exams and teaching for the Department of Comparative Literature. This year, she has published three book reviews (two for the *Journal of Folklore Research Reviews* and one for *Marvels & Tales*). She has also presented at the American Folklore Society conference and was invited by other fairy tale scholars to participate on a panel at the International Conference for the Fantastic in the Arts. This year she has served as one of the academic coordinators for the department's Student Advisory Board and helped organize the department biannual graduate conference, "Eat Your Words."

# Encompass







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# *Encompass* Summer 2020

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE IU DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

