

SPRING 2023 \* VOLUME XII, ISSUE II

# Words Matter

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY



FotoCavallo

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## 4TH ANNUAL TONI MORRISON DAY: CELEBRATING RESILIENCE

by Sarah Curtis

Keynote Speaker Dr. Farah Jasmine Griffin commenced the 4th Annual Toni Morrison Day celebration on February 17, 2023. Dr. Griffin received her B.A. from Harvard and her Ph.D. in American Studies from Yale. At Columbia University, she is the inaugural chair of the African American and African Diaspora Studies and the William B. Ransford Professor of English and Comparative Literature. *Who Set you Flowing?: The African American Migration Narrative* (Oxford, 1995), *If You Can't Be Free, Be a Mystery: In Search of Billie Holiday* (Free Press, 2001), and *Harlem Nocturne: Women Artists and Progressive Politics During World War II* (Basic Books, 2013) are three of eight books which she authored and edited. In 2021, *Read Until You Understand: The Profound Wisdom of Black Life and Literature* was published by W.W. Norton. She has done extensive work in the theatrical field, and is a 2021 Guggenheim Fellow and Mellon Foundation Fellow in Residence.

During her keynote speech, Dr. Griffin explored the theme of resilience in Toni Morrison's writing. To be resilient, one must have resources and tools to surpass adversity. Morrison's literature is evident of such resiliency, Dr. Griffin noted, but also representative of individuals and communities that do not have the resources to pursue resilience when met with hardship. This is why it is vital to have authors like Morrison speaking on behalf of the adversity that communities may endure and have endured throughout history to give tools to those who may have none at hand. Griffin herself related that growing up, literature, books, and education were among the tools that helped her to be resilient in her community. Griffin described Morrison as "The great historical novelist who has history and language as her tools, doesn't just use them in her

**TONI MORRISON DAY** Continued on page 4



# MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY

## ENGLISH

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## NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Over the past couple of months, it has sometimes seemed as if my e-mail inbox and my Facebook feed have been conspiring to demoralize me by ensuring that not a day will pass without my being urged to read Nathan Heller’s February 27 article in *The New Yorker*, “The End of the English Major.” If you have not yet had occasion to peruse this latest rumination on our seemingly -ever-impending demise, the takeaway is that, despite the fact that “career studies have shown that humanities majors, with their communication and analytical skills, often end up in leadership jobs,” today’s students generally see majoring in English as a self-indulgent, bad bet compared to majoring in better-funded, ostensibly more-impactful STEM, tech, and policy-oriented fields. Numerous follow-up articles have recently appeared in *Higher Ed News*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *The New York Times*, which suggests that many out there find Heller’s prognostications persuasive and/or worrying.

As I’m writing this note in the days immediately following our annual Student Awards Ceremony and Sigma Tau Delta Induction, I find myself wishing that everyone who has recently read Heller’s article could somehow be made to see what I saw in the Great Hall Auditorium last Thursday night. I wonder whether they would still believe the end of the English major is at hand if they had been there to hear about all the insightful and creative essays, stories, and poems written by our various award winners; about how our inaugural Caryl and Charles Sills English Education Scholarship recipients—Kaylee Johnson and Ava George—plan to use what they’ve learned as English majors to impact the lives of their future students; and about how, upon reading Monmouth M.F.A. student, John Vurro’s, award-winning poetry collection, *We, All of Us*, external reviewer and famous poet/critic, David Rigsbee,

was led to exclaim, “Yes, this is what poetry can do!”

Beyond that, I wonder how they would feel about Heller’s dystopian vision if they could have witnessed the infectious energy and love of poetry that Salgado Maranhão and his translator, Alexis Levitin, radiated at their inspiring bilingual reading on March 29. I wish Heller’s readers could have been here to be challenged by Dr. Farah Jasmine Griffin’s timely Toni Morrison Day keynote address and to be enlightened by our well-attended university-wide book discussion of Morrison’s short story, “Recitatif.” And I wish they could have felt the joy and pride that we felt when Tayve Nesse, Editor of *The Banyan Review*, e-mailed the English department midway through the semester to let us know about how Senior English major/intern, Sarah Curtis, had not only “created fantastic marketing templates for social media, built pages out for a midwinter *Banyan* issue, and communicated via email with poets and contributors,” but also “gone above and beyond to make our magic happen.”

In short, I wish there were some way to enable all those who have been discouraged by Heller’s doomsaying to see all the things that we and our students are doing to “make our magic happen” each and every day. If they could see what I see, I suspect that they might recognize that, as Dr. Love so persuasively argued in his keynote address last Thursday night, there will always be “thinkers” like Heller out there prophesying “the end of the English major” and that, despite what they may say or want us to believe, “the future is ours.”

Congratulations to our graduates, and best wishes for a productive and relaxing summer!



## CONGRATULATIONS SIGMA TAU DELTA MEMBERS!

### **Congratulations to our new members! Spring 2023 Inductees**

<i>Coral Barrett</i>	<i>Carolyn Cid</i>
<i>Madison Ducsai</i>	<i>Olivia Frew</i>
<i>Brooke Ganz</i>	<i>Kaylee Johnson</i>
<i>Juliana Kaufman</i>	<i>Peyton Livermore</i>
<i>Rachel Polzer</i>	<i>Hana Vozzo</i>
<i>Ashley Zingillioglu</i>	



### **Fall 2022 Inductees**

<i>Felicia Abline</i>	<i>Barbara Coleman</i>
<i>Grace Cotogno</i>	<i>Dorothy Doyle</i>
<i>Charlotte Edwards</i>	<i>Erin Fowler</i>
<i>Liza Gordon</i>	<i>Allie Gorenc</i>
<i>Debora Graas</i>	<i>Anna Huber</i>
<i>Meadow Magnani</i>	<i>Kalysta Mango</i>
<i>Megan McCafferty</i>	<i>Anaiza Medina</i>
<i>Carlee Migliorisi</i>	<i>Moriah Roof</i>
<i>Matthew Rossetti</i>	<i>Nashaviyah Steward</i>

### **SIGMA TAU DELTA OATH**

I shall endeavor to advance the study of literature, to encourage worthwhile reading, to promote the mastery of written expression, and to foster a spirit of community among those who specialize in the study of the English language and of literature, ever keeping in mind our International motto:  
Sincerity, Truth, Design.



(Left to right): Featured Speaker, Dr. Patrick Love; Professor Swanson and the Delta Sigma Chapter E-board pose for a picture with new members.



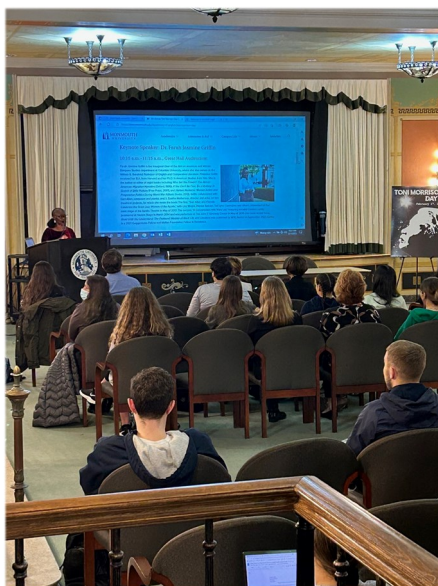
The great historical novelist who has history and language as her tools, doesn't just use them in her novels, but uses them to read the world around her, and teaches us how to use them, how to read the world around us."

## TONI MORRISON DAY *(Continued from page 1)*

novels, but uses them to read the world around her, and teaches us how to use them, how to read the world around us."

ourselves, our communities, and our future. As Dr. Griffin expressed, "the future is not better unless we make it so."

Morrison, in her writing, brought to light issues such as incest, rape, and slavery that may be difficult to talk about, but, Griffin stressed, the goal of education is not to make learners feel guilty or badly, but to empower them. In Morrison's writing lies some of the essential tools one needs to be resilient when faced with the barbarous and unsettling truths of our nation's history. We can use language and history as devices to better understand the present and the future, to measure and understand, as a society, Dr. Griffin said, "where we are, what are we approaching, what are we willing to tolerate, what have we been tolerating, and at what point are we willing to stand up and say to the most vulnerable people, you don't have to count on your resilience alone because I will be resilient with you." To be resilient is not to adapt to what has happened but to overcome it by using the tools, such as literature and education, to better



Keynote Speaker, Dr. Farah Jasmine Griffin and the Toni Morrison Day Planning Committee (left to right: Professors Noel Belinski, Linda Sacks, Brittany Biesiada and Jennifer Harpootian) pose with English Department Chair, Dr. J.P. Hanly

# HIGHLIGHTS OF T.M.D. 2023



**Congratulations to the Toni Morrison Digital Poster Contest winners, Liam Lubitz and Leah Tatu!**



**Dr. Brittany Biesiada moderated the Group Book Discussion on "Recitatif."**



**Congratulations to the Toni Morrison Creative Writing Contest winners, Tony Clark, Marci Rubin and John Vurro!**



**Dr. Brittany Biesiada poses with the presenters of the Student Symposium, "Sula' Through Different Lenses."**

**Keynote speaker: Dr. Farah Jasmine Griffin, Chair of the African American and African Diaspora Studies Department at Columbia University**

**Join us to celebrate "Resilience"**

- Creative Writing Contest
- Poster Contest
- Group Book Discussion
- Student Symposium

**The 4th Annual Toni Morrison Day**  
Department of English  
February 17, 2023

View the full program: <https://www.monmouth.edu/departments-of-english/toni-morrison-day/>

Special thanks to our co-sponsors:  
The Intercultural Center  
The School of Social Work  
The School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
The Honors School

*Toni Morrison Day Program: February 17, 2023*

**10:15-11:15**  
Great Hall Auditorium  
**Keynote Speaker, Dr. Farah Jasmine Griffin**

**11:45-12:45**  
Great Hall Auditorium  
**Group Book discussion "Recitatif"**  
Moderated by Dr. Brittany Biesiada

**1:15-2:00**  
Great Hall Auditorium  
**Presentation of Creative Writing and Poster Contest winners**  
Writing Contest winners will read their work. Light refreshments will be served.

**2:45-3:45**  
Great Hall Auditorium  
**Sula Through Different Lenses**  
Student Symposium, Moderated by Dr. Brittany Biesiada

<https://www.monmouth.edu/departments-of-english/toni-morrison-day/>

**Toni Morrison Day Book Discussion**

This year's TMD will feature a university-wide book discussion of Morrison's only short story: "Recitatif."

Link to PDF: [https://www.cusd90.com/cms/lib/AZ01001176/Ce ntrality/Domain/1073/Morrison\\_recitatifessay.doc x.pdf](https://www.cusd90.com/cms/lib/AZ01001176/Ce ntrality/Domain/1073/Morrison_recitatifessay.doc x.pdf)

**February 17**  
Great Hall Auditorium  
11:45-12:45

All are welcome:  
Students  
Staff  
Faculty

Visit the TMD homepage: <https://www.monmouth.edu/departments-of-english/toni-morrison-day/>

## WRITING WITH NUANCE, HEART, AND DARK HUMOR: SAM LIPSYTE

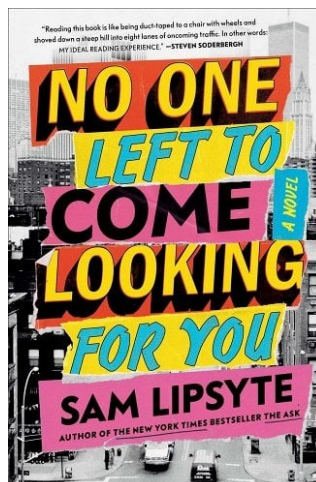
by Charlotte Edwards

On Monday, February 27th, Monmouth University faculty and students gathered in Great Hall 104 for a humor-filled and engaging reading and Q&A with author Sam Lipsyte. The event began with opening remarks about Lipsyte and his work by English Faculty member and Interim Graduate Program Director for the M.F.A in Creative Writing, Professor Alena Graedon. Lipsyte read excerpts of Chapters One and Two from his comic crime noir novel *No One Left to Come Looking for You*, and sat with Professor Graedon to discuss his process in creating the book, as well as his journey to discovering his passion for storytelling.

An author of five novels and two short-story collections, and an inspiring figure in both the fiction and nonfiction genres, Lipsyte stated that his intention was not to create a crime noir story; however, he organically carried over principles from the genre into the plot. He addressed the intersections between darkness and comedy at certain points in the story by describing, “I like to find the humor in the darkness. If you are going to bore yourself, you are going to bore the reader.” Additionally, he fleshed out his process in developing the unique and gripping cast of characters introduced throughout the book. English Faculty member, Dr. Kristin Bluemel, asked, “Do you hear the individual voices when creating the dialogue of the characters from 1993, such as the scene in the bar?” Lipsyte responded by discussing his memory of the emotions and thoughts he experienced during the time, and how these snapshots allowed him to enter an inner time machine and into the different roles of each character.

Lipsyte also provided provoking insights and advice about storytelling and entering into the industry for aspiring creatives. He related his background as a lead screamer in his previous band to show how reaching the end of his time as a musician manifested his devoted commitment to influencing lives as a writer. Further, he stressed the importance of emerging writers reflecting on their life experiences to achieve catharsis and exploration in creating stories, while discussing how his passion for short-story writing led him to discover his niche for writing longer-form works. Professor Graedon reflected on the success of Lipsyte’s

reading and the conversation by expressing, “It brought me great joy to bring the fiction writer Sam Lipsyte to campus for the Visiting Writers Series. He’s long been a favorite writer of mine, and I know that he’s also a favorite of many of our graduate students. His work is funny, surprising, propulsive, lyrical, and often moving. Those descriptions certainly all apply to his latest novel, *No One Left to Come Looking For You*, which is a comic crime noir about a post-punk band in early 1990s New York City. It was especially gratifying to hear from students after the event that they were so inspired by the reading that they went straight home and started writing. I also heard from several folks that it was their favorite Visiting Writers Series event to date. It was an honor to bring Lipsyte to campus.” Copies of his novel were sold following the event, and Lipsyte stayed afterwards for a signing and to speak more with audience members.



(Left to right): Professor Alena Graedon and Author Sam Lipsyte; *No One Left to Come Looking for You: A Novel* (Simon & Schuster, 2022).

## FOR THE LOVE OF CRAFT: SPOTLIGHT ON PROF. GRAEDON

by Faith Bates, M.A. '22

Alena Graedon cares. Any Monmouth student who has taken a creative writing course with Professor Graedon knows what I'm talking about. It's the thoughtful workshop letter; the time she takes to work with each student; the intricately developed courses on fascinating fiction-writing craft techniques (like unreliable narration and prolepsis). In 2022, Professor Graedon received tenure at Monmouth University, and during the 2022-2023 academic year, she held the position of Interim Graduate Program Director for the M.F.A in Creative Writing. A respected faculty member here at Monmouth, Professor Graedon has made an enormous and lasting impact on the MFA program and all of the students under her mentorship. Just ask them! As one creative writing graduate student, Kevin Flook, put it, Professor Graedon is "genuinely passionate about her craft and her students' progress. Alena will work with you, not line by line but word by word to help you be the best writer you can be."

Certainly, Professor Graedon's love for craft starts with her own work. *The Word Exchange*, her debut novel, has been published in ten countries, translated into eight languages, and was selected as a best novel of 2014 by Kirkus, Electric Literature, and Tor. Her nonfiction can be found in such publications as *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *newyorker.com*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The Believer*, *Tablet*, and *Guernica*, and her short fiction in *VICE* and *Southern Humanities Review*.

Even more exciting, Alena Graedon has a handful of projects in the works! When asked what she was currently working on, Graedon said, "I'm working on a few different projects right now: a novel, a novella, and a book of short stories. I'll be on sabbatical next year, and the project that I proposed to work on during that time is a book of stories called *Survivalists*. Two of the stories have already been published, in *Vice* and *Southern Humanities Review*, three more are done, and three others are nearly done. I plan to finish up the three that are nearly there and to write one



Prof. Alena Graedon, Interim Graduate Program Director for the M.F.A. in Creative Writing with students.

"I think the thing that excites me most about creative writing is surprise: Surprising myself as a writer during the composition process, and being surprised as a reader . . ."

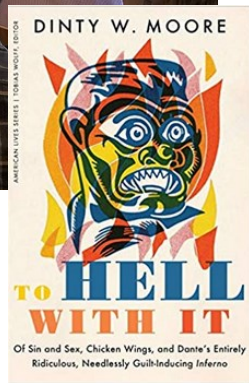
**GRAEDON** Continued on page 8



(Left to right): Dr. David Golland, Dean, Wayne D. McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Author Robert Pinsky,



Author Dinty W. Moore; *To Hell With It: Of Sin and Sex, Chicken Wings, and Dante's Entirely Ridiculous, Needlessly Guilt-Inducing Inferno* (University of Nebraska Press, 2021)



## VISITING WRITERS SERIES WELCOMES DINTY W. MOORE

by Valerie Aristy-Reyes '23

On March 8th, Monmouth University's English and Creative Writing department had the privilege to spend time with the professor, editor, and award-winning essayist and creative writer Dinty W. Moore as part of the Visiting Writers Series. Moore is the author of the memoir *Between Panic and Desire*, for which he won the Grub Street National Book Prize for Non-Fiction. As part of this installment of the Visiting Writers Series, Moore read from his most recent work, *To Hell With It: Of Sin and Sex, Chicken Wings, and Dante's Entirely Ridiculous, Needlessly Guilt-Inducing Inferno*, where, as the title suggests, he explores religious guilt through various personal and humorous anecdotes.

The visit concluded with a question-and-answer segment in which Moore spoke about the inspiration behind his work, his writing process, the role of writing in overcoming religious guilt, and his life before becoming a writer and professor (during which he was a zookeeper and modern dancer). In regards to writing, Moore told the audience to "write about the stuff that puzzles [them]" and "what makes a piece powerful is not the answers, but the questions [they] ask." He also explored the topic of publishing, specifically in the internet age, and invited the audience to "be open to opportunities [they] don't expect."

Regarding Moore's visit, Dr. Kenneth Womack states that it was "a genuine privilege for us to bring Dinty W. Moore to campus. For decades, he has been one of the leading voices in creative writing—especially creative non-fiction."

## GRAEDON (Continued from page 7)

or two more. If I magically finish the collection before the sabbatical year is out, I'll go back to working on my novel (which is not nearly done)."

With a career centered around creative writing at all angles, I had to ask Professor Graedon what excited her most about her profession. "I'm addicted to novelty," said Graedon. "I think the thing that excites me most about creative writing is surprise: Surprising myself as a writer during the composition process, and being surprised as a reader--by the unexpected actions of a character, the weird lyricism of a phrase, or a turn in the plot. I think that's also why I'm so devoted to Ezra Pound's famous maxim to 'make it new.' Literature is art made of language. The imperative of most artists is to try to do something new."

This value of novelty rings true in her teaching methods. According to MFA student Marci Rubin, "Alena assigns her classes unique and exciting creative exercises which are designed to help students improve their craft." Not only do these exercises help students practice particular craft techniques, but they also encourage them to think outside of the box.

Finally, I asked Graedon to comment on her experience with

Monmouth's MFA program so far, especially as Interim Graduate Program Director. She replied: "I've missed my colleague Alex Gilvary, who's not only an excellent administrator but also a friend. That said, it's been a fun and exciting challenge to run the MFA Program this year while he's been on sabbatical. We have incredible students. It's been truly invigorating working with so many of them on their MA and MFA theses, attending their defenses and end-of-semester readings, and just encountering their writing and ideas in workshop and seminar. I've also been fortunate to be supported by wonderful colleagues who help everything run (fairly) smoothly. I look forward to watching our relatively young MFA program grow and continue to develop its own character and flavor."

Truly, we all share Professor Graedon's enthusiasm to see Monmouth University's MFA program continue to grow under the guidance of devoted program directors like Alena Graedon and Alex Gilvary. Although the MU family will miss Professor Graedon during her sabbatical in the upcoming academic year, I think that I can speak for all of us when I say that we look forward to seeing the new work she produces and welcoming her back when she returns.



## VISITING WRITERS SERIES WELCOMES KATHERINE DYKSTRA

by Kevin Flook

Katherine Dykstra is a writer, editor and teacher. She holds an MFA in creative writing from the New School. She served as senior nonfiction editor at *Guernica* and taught narrative nonfiction in NYU's continuing studies program. Her essays have been published in *The Washington Post*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *The Common*, *Shenandoah*, *Gulf Coast*, *Brain, Child, Poets and Writers*, *Real Simple* and the Random House anthology *20 Something Essays by 20 Something Writers*, among other places.

In addition to all of those accomplishments she is an adjunct professor, Writer-in-Residence and Visiting Writer here at Monmouth University.

**What led you to write *What Happened to Paula: On the Death of an American Girl*?**

My mother-in-law, who is a writer and who knew Paula, had been trying to involve me in the project for years, but it wasn't until after I had my first child that I realized I had something to say about this unsolved homicide. New motherhood had me considering all the ways my womanhood effected the circumstances of my life. Using that lens, I started to think about the role Paula's womanhood had in the circumstances of her life. I began to see the ways in which it put her at risk in the 1960s in the middle of the country, and the ways it excused the police and the media from having to do their jobs and hold someone accountable for her death. As this crystalized, what also became clear was the stories relevancy, all the connections between what happened to Paula and what still happens to women today.

**What do you hope readers will take away from Paula's story?**

That nothing happens in a vacuum. As a society, we like to blame women for their own deaths. We take a microscope to their lives, pick out actions (the way they dressed, the company they kept, the way they behaved, the places they frequented) and then blame their deaths on those. But it's a false narrative. Being

killed is never a victim's fault; it's always the perpetrator's fault. Which means we need to start examining the systems that enable and protect perpetrators. Paula died because the systems in place around her put her in danger. She died because someone killed her.

**Can you tell me a bit about your class here at Monmouth?**

Yes! I'm teaching a nonfiction craft class with an emphasis on how to incorporate research. We're reading essays in which the writers have used research to elevate personal stories. Or, vice versa, used a personal story to elevate research. And then we're writing essays that do the same. It's been a ton of fun to put together.

**What advice do you have for writers hoping to follow in your footsteps?**

Not to worry so much about what or how you're writing, only that you're writing. The only way your writing will improve is if you do it.



(Left to right): Professors Alena Graedon, Interim Graduate Program Director of the M.F.A. in Creative Writing, and Katherine Dykstra,



Corinne Cavallo, M.F.A. '23



(Left to right): Allison Long, Michael Qualino, John Vurro, Corinne Cavallo and Jenna Puglisi.

## ALUMNA SPOTLIGHT: NOTES FROM A RECENT GRADUATE

by Corinne Cavallo, M.F.A. '23

On January 13, 2023, I sat in the seats of our auditorium for my own graduation one last time. President Leahy addressed the room and said the words I have heard so often over my twelve years of history at Monmouth: hawks fly together. As I sat there next to my friend and peer of several years, looked up at my family in the bleachers, many of whom graduated from Monmouth, and noted several colleagues from the English department and Writing Services in attendance, as well as multiple former students of mine from composition and literature courses, and EOF who were also graduating (shout out to one of my favorite programs), the meaning of that statement solidified: Monmouth is family.

The journey to receiving my MFA in Creative Writing has been a long one. After attending Brookdale Community College for my AA, then Georgian Court University for my BA, I went straight into my MA in English at Monmouth. Upon completion, I took a four-year break from being a student in 2014 when I began adjuncting English courses. During that time, the itch to write a story that had been in my mind for years began to grow. I was scared to put my creative writing out into the world, and I had very little understanding of how to begin working on a book-length project. However, I knew that what I had to say might be meaningful to someone else out there, and as a person who experienced significant trauma as the child of a father who struggled with alcoholism, I had always wished that growing up there was a book that would have made me feel less alone, and I wanted to set out to write it.

Once I knew I wanted an MFA, Monmouth was my first choice because it is my home. I have many friends here, but my colleagues are also like family, and I knew I could trust that they'd support me while giving the critical feedback I desired as a new creative writer. I began the program when I was 36, and although I had hesitations about being an older student, I was excited to meet other writers. I soon learned that our program was filled with students of all ages, and it was refreshing to be in a space where we weren't defined by that.

While it was initially a strange experience to be working as a student with professors who were also my colleagues, all my fears melted away in my first, then subsequent classes. Through professors like Alex Gilvarry and Alena Graedon, I learned how to strengthen my writing skills with their supportive and insightful feedback and additionally applied some of the teaching skills I gleaned from them to my own classes. As a returning student, I shared in the stress my own students were experiencing with time management and trying to balance coursework and obligations outside of school, so my approach to assignments and deadlines began to change. I gave my students more autonomy to make group decisions about these deadlines, which overall encouraged more engagement in class discussions and made for stronger essays because they were no longer forced to rush.

Along with furthering my skills as an educator, what this program additionally gave me is a community of writers. I am fortunate to have a strong support system at home, but it's the added assistance from faculty, colleagues, and peers that has gotten me to this point. This program, along with the writing group that formed from it, gave me the support and opportunity I needed to write 130 pages of my very first novel. Without it, I think I'd still be mulling over the first 10 pages!

CAVALLO Continued on page 11

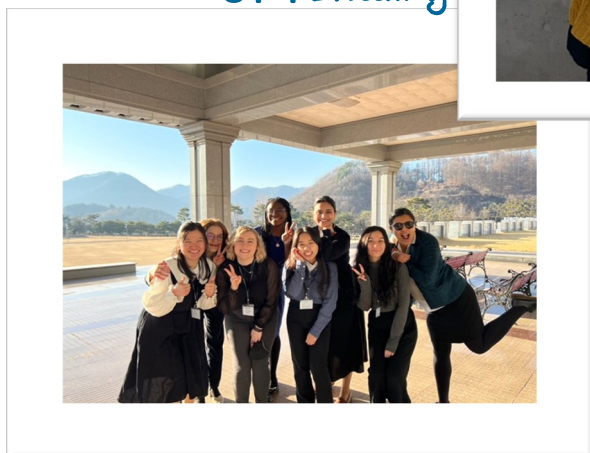
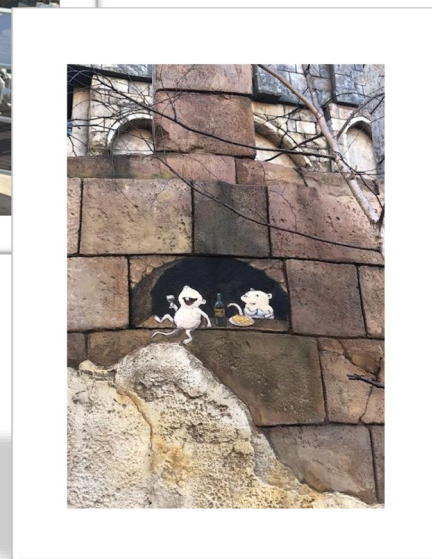
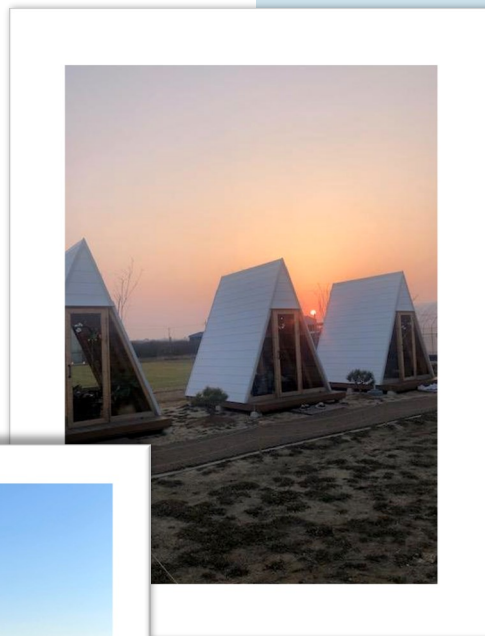
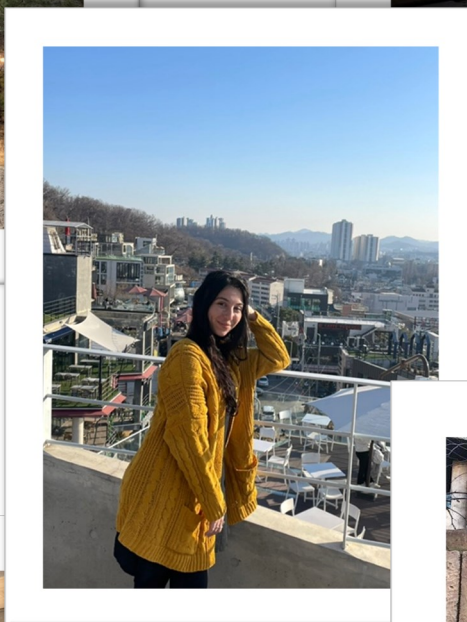
## POSTCARDS FROM SOUTH KOREA

English adjunct faculty member and Monmouth University alumna, Brittany Scardigno is spending Spring 2023-Fall 2024 in as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in South Korea! She has shared some pictures to give us a glimpse into her adventures abroad.



Greetings to MU  
from Cheongju,  
South Korea!

- 청주시 Brittany



## CAVALLO (Continued from page 10)

There is still a lot of work to accomplish to turn my manuscript into a full book draft; however, now, because of the MFA program, I was pushed far beyond what I thought was capable, and I have been given the tools to complete my novel and set out on my own as a writer. What this program truly taught me was to believe in myself and the power and im-

portance of words and stories. There will be rejections and there will be difficult days, but it is all part of the process, and I cannot wait to see what the future holds.



Carlee Migliorisi

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: CARLEE'S MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

by Carlee Migliorisi

Back in the spring semester of 2021, I was a freshman and here at Monmouth University, we were fresh into the new COVID-19 learning restrictions. With my newfound downtime I reached out to Dr. Kenneth Womack (who I knew to be one of the world's leading historians on my favorite band, the Beatles) to inquire about collaborating with him regarding the Beatles. He asked me if I knew the name Mal Evans and it sounded familiar but I didn't know much about him. Dr. Womack told me that Evans was the road manager for the Beatles and that he was one of the few people that was in the Beatles inner circle throughout their entire career. His archive had been lost and rumored to consist of many untold Beatles stories and has since now been recovered and trusted to Dr. Womack by the Mal Evans Estate. This would be the source material of his latest book about Evans' life and he asked me if I would want to join the project as a researcher. He told me this kind of research required someone who knew the Beatles in and out; it needed a fan like me.

This archive consisted of multiple unpublished manuscripts, years' worth of diaries and notebooks, thousands of photographs, and hundreds of hours of audio footage. My primary job was to organize the 2500+ photos and artifacts in our digital archives. I had to identify everyone in each photo, which was tricky at times and then group the photos into corresponding folders. It was not as simple as identifying the year, within each year there were many significant events for the Beatles. Since I have known about all these events through my being a fan, I was able to easily place where each photo was taken. Once Dr. Womack started polishing off biography about Mal's life, it was my turn to read the 600 page document through each stage of editing, make suggestions, and then pick out artifacts and photos to be interspersed in the book to match the story.

Now, in 2023, we have been taking Mal's story on the road and giving the world a sneak preview of what is to come when the book is published in November of this year. We recently returned from a trip to Liverpool where we both presented panels on the Beatles, and it was a dream come true for me to explore the city that birthed the Beatles. The following week we traveled to Jersey City for the annual Fest for Beatles fans where we held a panel about researching the Beatles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Then the next week we went to San Antonio Texas to keynote the Pop Culture Association (PCA) conference there and give Mal a world premiere. This was the largest conference of the three and here is where we tag-teamed our presentation about Mal's life. This presentation allowed me to talk about my work on the project, namely the amount of time I dedicated to combing through the mass amount of artifacts to help shape the story of Mal's life.

Now that we have returned from all of our travels I cannot begin to describe how thankful I am towards Dr. Womack for taking me onto this project. It is because of him that I have been able to have these incredible experiences and the fact that they have all been relating to the Beatles is something I will never take for granted. I never thought that my being a fan could amount to all this and as Dr. Womack pointed out when we were in San Antonio, we're not even halfway done with our work. The first book in the two part series will be released in November of this year which is his biography and in 2024 we will be releasing an extensive collection from Mal's archive including his diaries, manuscripts, and photos. I hope to continue working on this project through my graduation next Spring, and who knows what else it could lead to?



*Carlee in Liverpool in front of the famous Beatles statue in the center of the docks.*

*Carlee and Dr. Womack during their presentation in San Antonio at the PCA conference.*



*Carlee presenting during the panel on 60 years of Beatles fandom at Liverpool Hope University.*

## DEPARTMENT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

### Congratulations to our 2022-2023 English Award Recipients!

We congratulate this year's winners (*pictured left*), and thank our donors for their generosity.

The English Award for Academic Writing — Anna Huber  
The English Award for Creative Writing in Prose — Melaina Carrara

The English Award for Creative Writing in Poetry — Sarah Curtis

The English Merit Award — Nicole Mautone and Rachel Polzer

The Caryl and Charles Sills English Education Scholarship (2022-2023) — Kaylee Johnson

The Caryl and Charles Sills English Education Scholarship (2023-2024) — Ava George

The English Alumni Scholarship — Jessica Propst

The English Award for Graduate Study— Erin Fowler and Kalysta Mango

The English Award for Graduate Creative Writing in Prose— John Vurro

The English Award for Graduate Creative Writing in Poetry— John Vurro

### Congratulations to our May 2023 Graduates!

May 2023— 36 UG, 7 GR

#### MA Theses and Manuscripts Defended

Leah Coppola, "Gender-as-Rhetoric: The Rhetorical Complexity of Transgender Identity and the Challenge to Performativity in Redefining Realness and Tomorrow Will Be Different." Spring 2023.

Dorothy Doyle, *Confessions of a Late Blooming Baby Boomer & Other Lies*. Spring 2023.

Kevin Flook, *Corpseman*. Spring 2023.

Jennifer Rivera, *Salvation*. Spring 2023.

Sophomore Taylor Memoli has been named the Editor of the Entertainment section in *The Outlook* for 2023-2024!

Junior Ashley Zingillioglu debuted two singles, "Something Special" and "Offguard" on all streaming platforms as the artist, Azure Kai. Zingillioglu was also accepted into the 2023 Summer Scholars Program on campus. Her research is part of her Communication Sciences and Disorders minor and will consist of analyzing the potential benefits of online communities for people who stutter.

Senior Erin Fowler shadowed our Department Chair, Dr. Hanly for EN-384 (Language & Community). Her project helped gather research for upcoming updates on the English Department's career planning webpages.



## FACULTY NEWS



Dr. Stanley Blair gave a presentation on Margaret Widdemer as part of the Women's History Month Tribute at The Stephen Crane House on March 26, 2023. Blair also gave the lecture, "Introducing Henry Morford: The Greatest Middletown Writer You (Probably) Never Heard Of" at the Middletown Township Public Library on March 28, 2023. The lecture was sponsored by the Middletown Township Historical Society.

Dr. Blair was interviewed for an article in the Fall/Winter 2022 issue of Monmouth Magazine. The article, "Where Comics Meet Classics," focuses on the literary origins of popular superheroes as discussed in the course, "Superheroes: Echoes of Epic" (EN-222).



Dr. Kris Bluemel published an article entitled "Clare Leighton and the Fine Art of Mass Reproduction" for RAW—Rediscovering Art by Women: The Radical Art Website. The article is part of her scholarly book project, "Enchanted Wood: Women Artists, Rural Britain, and the Twentieth-Century Wood Engraving Revival," under contract with the University of Minnesota Press.



Prof. Amanda Connelly successfully defended her dissertation proposal, "The True Pandemic of Higher Education: How a Student's Sense of Belonging is Affected by Their First-Year Composition Experience."



Dr. Heide Estes was the co-moderator of the webinar, "Medieval Crip Theory: New Approaches and Provocations," organized by the Inclusivity & Diversity Committee of the Medieval Academy of America.



Dr. Patrick Love's article, "Lessons of experience: Labor habits of a long-time, contingent online technical communication instructor," was published in *Technical Communication Quarterly* (Volume 32, 2023, Issue 2).

Dr. Love was the featured speaker for the annual English Student Awards and Sigma Tau Delta Induction Ceremony held on Thursday, April 20.



Dr. Mihaela Moscaliuc has been awarded a 2023 Individual Artist Fellowship from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. The fellowship was awarded "in recognition of the outstanding work" and to enable Moscaliuc "to further [her] artistic goals."

Dr. Moscaliuc's nonfiction piece, "Extractions," was published in the Spring 2023 issue of *Ploughshares*.



Thank you to the Toni Morrison Day Planning Committee for successfully organizing the 4th Annual Toni Morrison Day on February 17, 2023.



Congratulations to Dr. Heide Estes, Professor Jennifer Harpootlian, and Professor Beth Sara Swanson on celebrating 25 years of service at Monmouth University!




**MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY**


**ENGLISH**

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(Right, clockwise) The English Department celebrated the 8th Annual Student Scholarship Week; Dr. Bluemel's EN-598 (Spectp: Intermodernism) class presented their final research papers; Shout out to our graduating English student workers: Sarah Curtis and Mikaela Manarang. We're so proud of you!; Dr. Bluemel's EN-220 (Literature of the Sea) class at the Long Branch Beach; Professor Thomas is accompanied by junior Ashley Zingillioglu prior to the 11th Annual reading of Wordsworth among the daffodils for National Poetry Month; The MA & MFA programs co-hosted a "Throws and Prose" bowling and writing event with Project Write Now; HAWKTalk presenters included English and Secondary Education major Carlee Migliorisi and English major Hana Vozzo.

**SNAPSHOTS FROM SPRING 2023**

**STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP WEEK ENGLISH DEPARTMENT EVENTS**

**HawkTalks - Reception - Poster Expo**  
HawkTalks showcases student work through poster presentations and five-minute TED talk style presentations. A reception and poster expo opening will follow. Includes work from English majors Carlee Migliorisi and Hana Vozzo.  
Monday 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. (Atrium Hall)

**School of Humanities and Social Sciences - The "New" Discussion: Implementing Social Media in Writing Courses**  
In this graduate student presentation to an open classroom, students present to future secondary English educators the benefits of integrating social media into the modern English (and writing) classroom. Students discuss their ideas for the project, the research they have done for their project, and the ways they collaborated to write a proposal for an international conference Computers and Writing 2023. The proposal was accepted, and students will discuss both their research and the process of preparing for the international conference that frequently focuses on Tuesday 4:30 p.m. - 5:50 p.m. (Hedrick 115)

**School of Humanities and Social Sciences - English Intermodernism**  
English Historical graduate students will present their work in progress for their final research papers on British Intermodernism, the writing that fell between the sites reexamined of modernism and postmodernism during the years of the Great Depression.  
Tuesday 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. (Library 200)

**School of Humanities and Social Sciences - English - What Do We Value? An Analysis of Monmouth University's Language Values**  
EN 102 Honors. In this open classroom students present original analyses of seven different authors' published documents that all pertain something about the way Monmouth articulates its language values. Students will speak to what we value as an institution, what we value when it comes to language, and how our values and problems affect those values and what does say about us and what else we care about as an institution.  
Wednesday 11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (McClure 200)

**Student Scholarship Week April 17-23, 2023**

