

THE MIRROR & THE LAMP

The Department of English at Western Illinois University Issue 10 Spring 2023



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

BY
MARJORIE ALLISON



We are back! The 2022-2023 academic year was a year of growth and renewal for the WIU Department of English. Most of our classes were back to face-to-face, but we kept plenty of Zoom and hybrid options for those students who needed distance options. It was great to see our Macomb and QC campus classrooms again buzzing with the voices of new and continuing students. The Department also welcomed two new faculty members, Director of the Writing Program Dr. David Johnson and Director of the University Writing Center Dr. Ashley Beardsley.

We kicked off the school year with a Creative Writing event & potluck organized by Barb Lawhorn. It was great to see the Reading Room filling up with people and chatter. And, of course, food was a great addition as well! Throughout the fall, Ms. Lawhorn continued to host a fantastic and well-attended Reading Room series, both in person and on zoom.

In October, the Department supplied lunch for English majors and minors in the Reading Room. We also held a “Haunted Simpkins” event to celebrate Halloween and give everyone the opportunity to hear and tell ghost stories and have treats. On a recent gorgeous spring day we broke out the ice cream

and nondairy treats to spend some time on the steps of Simpkins Hall. Clearly, socializing and food was a theme this year!

The Fred Case and Lola Austin Case Writer-in Residence events are always special moments for the Department to come together and hear from up-and-coming and established writers. In the fall we hosted KB, a “Black queer nonbinary miracle.” KB’s poetry is personal and riveting. This spring we hosted Angeline Boulley, the Native author of the best selling *Firekeeper’s Daughter* (soon to be adapted as a mini-series for Netflix). Her craft talk and reading in the WIU Art Gallery made for a lovely afternoon. Ms. Boulley was extremely generous with her time and attended a class to discuss the students’ varying interpretations of a key scene in her novel. We are excited to have three authors scheduled to visit campus in 2023-24.

The Maurine Magliocco Lecture in the spring was face-to-face again! Dr. Sara Austin was invited to discuss her work on “Teenage Zombies and Baby Vampires: Childhood Culture, Monsters, and the Taboo.” We plan to move the Magliocco event to the fall in 2023; watch for announcements of the date and time!

The annual High School Writing Festival was led by Dr. Buchanan and Dr. White and over 80 students from area schools attended, many with their WIU English Education major alumni teachers! Drs. Buchanan and White also hosted a writing festival for middle school students in November. Our “Get Lit” Festival was organized by Dr. Hamner and 73 students attended from 7 high schools. We are proud to offer these opportunities to high school students in our region!

Gathering together again to read, write, learn (and eat!) were wonderful experiences during this year of growth and renewal. As I write this, I am also listening to a different kind of growth—that of the construction of the new Performing Arts Center next to

Simpkins Hall that used to be two tennis courts and a parking lot. For those of you who are remote from us, there is a webcam set up on the roof of Simpkins which will give you a live view of the construction site: <http://www.wiu.edu/cofac/cpa/stream.php>. A lot is happening at WIU! We can see it outside our Simpkins Hall windows and hear it in the voices of our students in our hallways and classrooms. We are back! Come see us some time or drop us a line. We are here to welcome you!

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ABOUT THE COVER

We chose a local cornfield as an image of growth and renewal that captures the optimism and potential that we saw this year. We are growing new major options and a renewed face-to-face culture in Simpkins Hall.



AUTHOR ANGELINE BOULLEY READS ON CAMPUS

Angeline Boulley, author of *Firekeeper's Daughter*, the breakout, bestselling young adult novel, came to campus this spring as a Lola Austin Case Writer-in-Residence. Boulley met with students and faculty, talked about the craft of writing with Creative Writing majors and minors, and gave a major reading from *Firekeeper's Daughter* at the Western Art Gallery.

The themes of Boulley's work are grounded in her experience growing up as a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians in Michigan. Her father was a "firekeeper," starting and tending scared fires for tribal ceremonies, and as she grew up she was immersed in the living traditions of her people. Boulley did not initially pursue a life in art. Instead, after getting her college education at the university of Michigan, she devoted herself to native issues and public policy, ultimately becoming the Director for the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education. However, her experiences growing up in Sault Ste. Marie were always on her mind, and she began to write drafts of what would become *Firekeeper's Daughter* when she was forty-four years old. She then worked on developing and revising the book for ten more years. She jokes about her recently found literary fame, saying "I'm a thirty-seven year overnight success!"

Boulley explained that the pitch for *Firekeeper's Daughter* was something like "Nancy Drew meets *21 Jump Street*," and while that nicely captures the YA narrative elements that structure the book,



Boulley uses those elements to write a deeply textured novel that captures the contemporary experience of the Chippewa living in Michigan. The narrative follows eighteen-year-old Daunis Fontaine as she is caught between her first year in college, her place in her family, and her unexpected role as an FBI informant. Facing these competing demands and allegiances, Daunis must make difficult choices as she defines for herself who she is and what she believes. Higher Ground productions, the Obama company, has acquired the rights to the book and it is currently being adapted into a Netflix series.

In her craft talk, Boulley emphasized the practice of writing, explaining how she began her first novel while she was still working full time in Washington D.C. and she could only find the quiet time to write by getting up an hour before her children were awake. Throughout, she emphasized writing, revising, and the necessity of believing in the story.

At her Art Gallery reading, Boulley wowed the crowd, speaking for a full hour in an unconventional form

that she invented. While she would read a few pages from her novel, she would then explain how the concerns of the book emerged from her own life experiences. She explained that, just as she was starting college, a young, undercover police officer had come to her high school as part of a investigation, and, "I thought, 'what if,' and the outlines of the novel started to come to me."

Boulley is at work on a new novel, *Warrior Girl Unearthed*, which she pitches as "Lara Croft, but instead she is a young native woman raiding museums and returning sacred objects to their tribes." The audience was fascinated by her descriptions of how she uses a four act structure and the complex outlines she developed to compose the book.

Boulley was generous, meeting with students in the Creative Writing major option, faculty, and community members, and the department hopes to welcome her back to campus in the future.



SENIOR JOSHUA STINSON WINS HUMANITIES AWARD

Graduating senior Joshua Stinson has been a student leader throughout his years in the department. He has served as the president of our Phi Delta chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honors Society, and he has also served Sigma Tau Delta as a midwest Regent for the national organization. He has also been a contributor and managing editor of *The Mirror & the Lamp*. We reached out to Joshua on the occasion of his award.

M&L: What is the award you won from CAS?

JS: The award I earned from the College of Arts and Sciences is “The 2023 Student Council Honorary Award Winner in Humanities.”

M&L: What are your accomplishments that CAS is recognizing with this award?

JS: In order to earn this award, you must be a senior, currently enrolled (in the Spring semester) as a full-time student, and have attended Western Illinois University for at least four semesters (including the current semester). Additionally, you must have a cumulative GPA of 3.6 or higher. The purpose of the award is to recognize the overall outstanding achievement of a student who shows promise for the future. Some personal achievements that may have helped in the consideration of the award is that I served as the Midwestern Student Representative and WIU chapter president for Sigma Tau Delta and served as the Managing Editor for *The Mirror & the Lamp* last year.

M&L: How has the department of English helped you with these remarkable achievements?

JS: The English Department has been remarkable in helping me to accomplish all that I have and has inspired me deeply to pursue further endeavors. The personalized education that they have been able to provide has allowed me to feel prepared to take on challenges that come after college. Just to name a few, Dr. Banash and Dr. Helwig were extremely helpful in my time in Sigma Tau Delta. They encouraged me



Joshua Stinson is recognized by College of Arts and Sciences Dean Sue Martinelli-Fernandez and Associate Dean Jim Schmidt at the CAS Spring Awards Ceremony.

to take on leadership positions and to become the managing editor for *The Mirror & the Lamp*. I worked with Dr. Buchanan on my Honors College Thesis. She helped me merge topics that I was interested in with assignments and projects to further my degree. I also want to give my gratitude to a member of the department who has since moved to a different university, Dr. Christopher Morrow, who was one of the first faculty members that I became close to at WIU. He encouraged me and made me feel welcome, even in challenging courses. He had a large impact on my education! This list is not exhaustive of all of the professors that I've had and cherish my time learning from. I don't want to ramble on for too long, but I've loved each class with every professor I've had in the English Department.

M&L: You just graduated this year. What comes next?

JS: While it feels weird to say, I did just graduate. For right now, what comes next is teaching! I've accepted a job at Monmouth-Roseville Jr. High School in Roseville, IL. I will be teaching 7th grade ESL (English as a Second Language). Additionally, I hope to start coursework for my Master's Degree soon! In October of this year, I will also be marrying my fiancé. We met at WIU, but she's not in the English Department.

M&L: What advice would you give to someone considering majoring in English at Western?

JS: If you're considering English at Western, there's no better advice that I could give you other than this: Do it. I've never once regretted the choice I made to come here. At first, I was nervous I wasn't going to be good enough. I never thought English was my strong-suit. The faculty are so helpful and you make so many friends that will help you along the way. Outside of taking that leap, make connections once you get here. The faculty are friendly and love to meet with you if you have questions. Try to find a friend in each class! It will help you feel included and give you some extra homework help if you need guidance!



Sunlight in Simpkins Hall. Photo by Bill Thompson

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT SCHOLAR OF THE YEAR 2022 · 2023

EMMA GILLILAND



Emma Gilliland is a Creative Writing Major and Professional Writing Minor on the Macomb Campus.

M&L: Why did you choose to major in English?

EG: I've always had a passion for writing. Originally, I majored in Secondary Education with the intent on teaching both high school History and English, and I eventually hoped to teach at the college level. But I quickly realized that I wanted to pursue a career in writing and publishing. When I transferred to WIU last semester, I decided to major in Creative Writing and minor in Professional Writing. This way, I could learn to master the craft of creative writing while also gaining skills in the professional writing world such as copyediting and publishing. My goal is to work for a publishing company after I graduate while continuing to be a freelance writer.

M&L: What courses have made the biggest impact on you?

EG: The creative writing courses which have made the most impact on me would be the nonfiction creative writing course I took last semester online, taught by Dr. Wurth, and my fiction writing workshop this semester, taught by Ms. McKee. These classes have pushed me to be more creative and have helped me hone my writing skills into several short stories, one of which has won a creative nonfiction award. The professional writing courses which have impacted me most have been the intro to professional writing course I took last semester online with Dr. Beardsley, and the edit and review course taught by Dr. Mossman, which I have taken this semester. Both of these courses have taught me so much about professional and technical writing as

well as copyediting and publishing practices that will be of great help to me in my career.

M&L: What writing assignment are you most proud of?

EM: Last semester, a writing assignment I took great pride in was my creative nonfiction piece entitled, "It's Just all the Memories." It's a piece I wrote about my grandmother's house and all the memories each room holds. It won third place in the creative writing contest this semester and will be featured in *Elements*, the literary magazine published by the English department.

M&L: As you go into your senior year, what are you most looking forward to?

EM: Honestly, I am looking forward to just being done with school, as it feels like I've been in school for forever. I am mostly looking forward to starting my career in the publishing world as an editor and continuing to write novels and short stories.

M&L: What will you be reading and writing this summer?

EM: I always have a huge reading list that accumulates over the semester. But this summer, I will mostly be focusing on getting my first book published this coming May/June. My dad and I wrote this book entitled *Dear Teacher Wendy* about our family's decision to move to Uganda in 2012 and our adventures there. It's been a four-year journey and I cannot wait to hold the book in my hands!

INTRODUCING THE WRITERS



Heya, I'm Natoya Raymond writer of "The Movie That Changed My Life" series here at *Mirror & the Lamp*.

I'm an international student from the Caribbean and began here at Western Illinois University in Fall 2022.

Writing has always been a passion of mine. Conveying my feelings through a planned speech came easier to me than the spontaneous spoken word. I've always loved stories in every type of genre and medium. It's always fun for me to see the author's creation no matter their story's inconsistency, I appreciate their vision and ability to break the line.

My interest also extends to drawing and digital painting/design. I like to think of myself as a creative soul. I love the arts, modern and prehistoric. I feel like drawings convey a totally different way to tell a story, it's ambiguous yet exact, and I love it.

I joined *Mirror & the Lamp* because I wanted to improve both my writing and communication skills. I have always had a fear of public speaking and sharing my ideas, and thought that others

The Mirror & The Lamp 6

would disapprove or dismiss me. However, it was the exact opposite at *Mirror & the Lamp*. Any ideas or suggestions I shared were validated and appreciated. And that encouragement means a great deal to me and helped me to keep improving my self-esteem.

I plan to continue writing for *Mirror & the Lamp* for the remainder of my time at Western Illinois University.



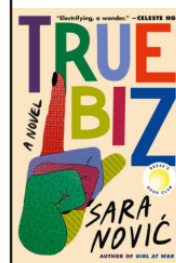
Hello! I believe a self introduction is in order! I am Peter Hostert, editor and writer for the *Mirror & the Lamp*. In the "Introducing the Writers" series each contributing writer will write a brief introduction on themselves. In this introduction I will talk a little about myself as well as my interest in working on *The Mirror & the Lamp*. I enjoy being outside almost as much as my dog, Ember. We go on lots of hikes and swim in as many lakes as we can. She chases squirrels with almost as much enthusiasm as I have for reading and writing.

I started attending Western Illinois University at the start of the 2022 Spring semester when I transferred from Southern Illinois University. Several semesters later and it is amazing seeing how my skills in writing have grown and flourished!

The most improvement I have noticed in myself is my technical and academic writing, which is exciting.

Ever since I can remember, I have always enjoyed writing. I started doing it immediately after I could read, way back in the year 2006. But for a long time it was just silly little stories scribbled in various different journals or scraps of paper held together by yarn or staples. I think it is very important to have the ability to express yourself in words. That's why I was intrigued with *Mirror & the Lamp* because it focuses on everything English and is run and managed by students studying English. I can't wait to contribute to this student publication for the remainder of my time here at Western Illinois University.

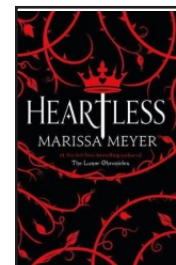
FAVORITE BOOKS OF THE SEASON: VALENTINES EDITION



Submitted by Ashley Beardsley
@am_beardsley

True Biz by Sara Novic

"True Biz explores disability and civil rights, love, and various forms of grief through hearing and Deaf characters. The chapters rotate between three characters, following how they navigate their



Heartless by Marissa Meyer

The Red Queen's backstory. I first read it in 2018, and on Goodreads I gave it five stars and wrote this brief review: "Oh, my goodness. Perfect. <3"

Submitted by Emily Woods
@emwood.s

NEW PROFESSIONAL WRITING OPTION FOSTERS CONNECTIONS AND COLLABORATIONS

BY
DR. AMY PATRICK MOSSMAN

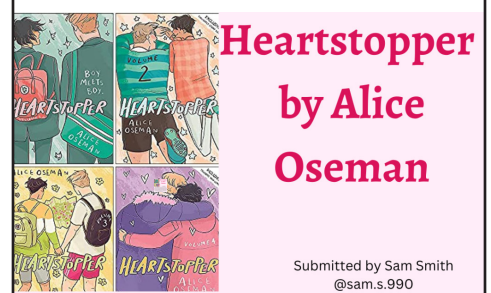


We are thrilled to be boosting our professional writing offerings as we have recently launched a new professional writing option within the English major. Now Western students can choose to minor or major in professional writing. This past year we offered courses in technical communication, introduction to professional writing, rhetorical theory, rhetorical grammar, editing, and reviewing, and digital writing and multimedia texts. In Fall 2023 undergraduate students can take grant and proposal writing, writing for the web, digital writing and multimedia texts, or technical communication.

Briza Dure Alvarenga (senior English major/professional writing minor) explains, "Professional writing courses are the best option to learn in an interactive way how to exploit the maximum potential of writing. Through the projects and interactions with peers, one also develops an idea of what one would like to practice in the future."

In addition to collaborating on cool class projects, many of our students also gained experience outside of the classroom working on four publications, from our department creative writing journal, to our annual collection of winning student essays, to a collection of nonfiction essays written by honors students in collaboration with community members, and even *Mirror* itself. Others are pursuing internship opportunities and writing, designing, and publishing on their own. Peter Hostert (senior English major/professional writing minor) notes, "It's in professional writing that I have seen the most growth while attending Western. These classes have all been challenging and have shown me new technical programs and methods to communicate. Each time I take a class in my professional writing minor, I know I will learn many new things and be challenged!" All in all, students are having fun, faculty are having fun, and it's an exciting time for professional writing in the English Department!

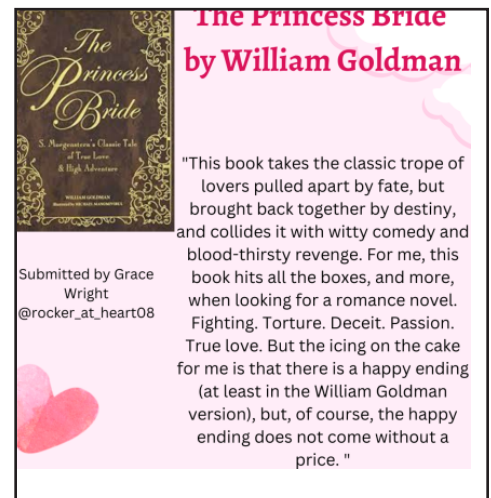
FAVORITE BOOKS OF THE SEASON: VALENTINES EDITION



Heartstopper
by Alice Oseman

Submitted by Sam Smith
@sam.s.990

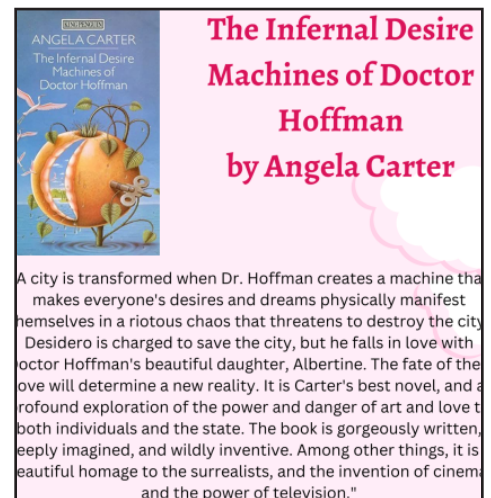
"After being placed next to each other in homeroom Charlie, one of the only openly gay boys at his school, meets Nick, and they quickly become friends. But Charlie soon realizes he's falling for Nick, & he doesn't think Nick feels the same. Beautifully written and illustrated, this series of graphic novels tugs at your heartstrings every step of the way as it tackles 'taboo' topics all high schoolers can relate to."



The Princess Bride
by William Goldman

Submitted by Grace Wright
@rocker_at_heart08

"This book takes the classic trope of lovers pulled apart by fate, but brought back together by destiny, and collides it with witty comedy and blood-thirsty revenge. For me, this book hits all the boxes, and more, when looking for a romance novel. Fighting. Torture. Deceit. Passion. True love. But the icing on the cake for me is that there is a happy ending (at least in the William Goldman version), but, of course, the happy ending does not come without a price."



**The Infernal Desire
Machines of Doctor
Hoffman**
by Angela Carter

A city is transformed when Dr. Hoffman creates a machine that makes everyone's desires and dreams physically manifest themselves in a riotous chaos that threatens to destroy the city. Desidero is charged to save the city, but he falls in love with Doctor Hoffman's beautiful daughter, Albertine. The fate of the love will determine a new reality. It is Carter's best novel, and a profound exploration of the power and danger of art and love to both individuals and the state. The book is gorgeously written, deeply imagined, and wildly inventive. Among other things, it is a beautiful homage to the surrealists, and the invention of cinema and the power of television."

MOVIES THAT CHANGED OUR LIVES

BY

NATOYA RAYMOND



“Movies are thought-provoking”

-Natoya Raymond

Matthew Gedraitis, an English Education major enjoyed sharing his life-changing movie!

M&L: Matthew, what movie was life-changing for you and why?

MG: The original *Blade Runner* from 1982. I first saw this movie when I was in middle school, and it completely changed my perspective as to what movies could be.

Beforehand, I watched a lot of classic blockbusters like *Jurassic Park* and *E.T.*, but *Blade Runner* was a different beast. While those previous films are fun and imaginative, *Blade Runner* had a lot more going on with its story.

The themes it worked with were thought-provoking and applicable, especially today.

M&L: I see, so what specific character/characters resonated the most for you in the movie and why?

MG: The character of Roy Batty is the stand-out in this movie.

I don't want to get too much into it but the gist is, he's a replicant with a limited life span of 4 years. The search for his creator to be granted more life is such an interesting story.

It made me ask questions like “what is a meaningful life?” and “is there a certain length of time needed to make a meaningful life?” I'm not doing the best job of explaining it, but it's amazing.

M&L: Don't worry Matthew, I get what you are saying! Next question, what specific scene touched you the most?

MG: The final scene, with Roy Batty's “Tears in Rain” monologue. It's iconic and that is for good reason; it's such a touching and human moment. It really stuck with me when I first watched it and I think about it a good deal.

M&L: Finally, how would you recommend/pitch this movie in one line?

MG: The rapid advancement of AI leads to androids that achieve sentience. How do we as humans approach that?

“Movies are alive.”

-Natoya Raymond

I believe that everyone has a movie they felt was life changing for them. I know I do! I was curious to hear from others, so I went out and asked! For this interview I spoke with Peter Hostert, a Senior and an English Major with a Minor in Professional Writing

M&L: Peter, what movie was life-changing for you and explain why?

PH: Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* is the most recent film that had a life-changing effect on me. The plot is nature-based, with a notion of preservation very prevalent within the story. Yet, Miyazaki took an approach to nature-based films I had never experienced before. Instead of playing out the nature-story trope through a dichotomy of good (nature) vs. evil (civilization/industry), Miyazaki creates an in-depth interplay between several factions all of whom have believable and just motivations.

In this story the humans live in a town protected by a palisade. It belches smoke and fire from behind the pointy barricade and has locked gates with armed guards. While in other nature stories, this would be seen as evil, the extraction of resources from the surrounding land to forge iron ingots isn't written this way. Instead, this industry is shown to fund stability and happiness. Women are freed from forced prostitution and the sick are given a purpose through work, being cared for within the safety of the town and its society instead of being left in the wilderness to die. The understanding of why the humans extract from nature is stressed by the need to finance and

support themselves against the invasions from another human faction. This faction wishes to take their iron, kill the men, and enslave the women for themselves. This unique handling of humans and their motivations within a nature movie alone was enough for me to appreciate this film and be inspired by it. Instead of making a one-dimensional, flat dichotomy of pure good vs. pure evil, this film solidified my understanding of how nuanced real life is.

M&L: What specific character/characters did you resonate with within the movie, explain why?

PH: While most of the cast in this movie possesses depth, the character Princess Mononoke had me pondering for a long time. She is the only human in the film entirely dedicated to the faction of nature. She bonds with white wolves and lives in the forest. She refers to one of the wolves as her mother and despises her own kind. Violent raids are launched by her and her wolf companions against the humans of Iron Town, killing anyone without remorse. While she never wavers in her allegiance to nature, there is evident anger and a subtle sadness in her disposition. She is isolated, paranoid, and the only one of her kind where she lives.

Princess Mononoke is a well-crafted character with strengths and flaws. She is isolated and lonesome while simultaneously being a fantastic warrior and an honor-bound individual. She never questions her life, though, and never sways from her decisions. This made her an intriguing character to me. These varying dynamics of sadness and confidence in her choices added much nuisance to her and the story's commentary on the relationship between humans and nature.

While many nature stories would show Mononoke's character as the protagonist, the ultimate good, convincing many of the key characters to join her side, this does not happen. She is seen

as aggressive and dangerous by the humans, and the movie shows you they are right to feel this way.

In fact, the film's main character, Ashitaka, must work incredibly hard and put himself in danger to save the citizens of Iron Town from Mononoke. Several times Mononoke attempts to murder peaceful, kind humans in vengeful, cold blood. Ashitaka, who acts as a bridge between the people of Iron Town and Princess Mononoke, eventually befriends Mononoke. Still, she refuses to live with him and acts indifferent towards him, eventually returning to the wild. This left me feeling a permanent distance from Princess Mononoke.

I liked Princess Mononoke as a character because she broke the common trope of nature stories. In these stories the character who is in tune with nature is usually an entirely benevolent being who is kind and unequivocally right. Nature at its core is cold and unthinking, purely driven by the need to survive. This film postulates that for most of humanity's time, humans have been indifferent to but not evil towards nature. Princess Mononoke is perfect in helping us reflect upon this indifferent approach towards nature and its interaction with humanity.

M&L: And finally, what specific scene/line touched you the most?

PH: A specific scene in this movie that touched me is one where the main character, Ashitaka, inserts himself between Princess Mononoke, who embodies nature, and Lady Eboshi, the leader of Iron Town, who embodies humanity. Lady Eboshi and Princess Mononoke get into a fight. Ashitaka maneuvers between them and holds the murderous Mononoke off with one hand and blocks the deadly blade from Lady Eboshi with the other before yelling out to both of them, "There is a demon inside of you, it's inside both of you!

Look everyone! This is what hatred looks like, this is what it does when it catches hold of you!"

A common theme for Ashitaka throughout the movie is this desperate insertion between two warring factions. Each has justified motivations to fight and survive by hurting the other side, each is right and wrong. This scene is the most dramatic, with Ashitaka pleading to the two factions to put aside their hatred for the good of everyone. It supports the mantra that Ashitaka strives to follow, "To see with eyes unclouded by hate."



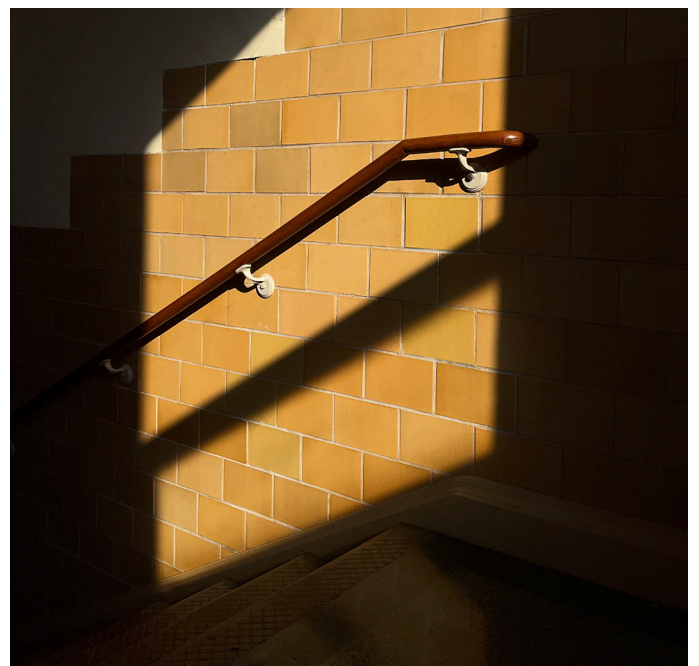
WESTERN VOICES BACK IN (PHYSICAL) PRINT!

BY
AMY MOSSMAN



The spring 2023 students editors read from the Western Voices archive housed in the department reading room

In spring 2023 the editing classes (ENG 483G) not only did a fantastic job putting together the 21st collection of annual Leland Essay contest winners for *Western Voices*, but also had fun working together on the project as they honed and applied their skills. They collaborated across space and time, joining forces from Macomb, Quad Cities, and beyond, to get the job done. Everyone from both the online and in-person course sections had a job, from copyediting, proofreading, and organizing, to helping with layout and design. I am so proud of their professionalism and work ethic and their ability to make this project a success as we celebrate the writing of Western students! For a physical copy, contact the English Department. An online version will be available on the English Department website in the coming months.



Simpkins Hall Stairway. Photo by Bill Thompson

I AM NOT A POET

BY

BLAKE MURDOCK

I can practically hear a certain professor reading this title now. Don't worry, I know that the fact I write poetry, by definition, makes me a poet. Something about it for me just runs a little deeper than that, and thus, here I am, a non-poet who loves to write poems.

Since I've become a college student here at Western, I have found a way to make poetry work with and for me in a way I couldn't grasp in high school. Maybe it was the sonnets, iambic pentameter, or being forced to read *Beowulf*, but poetry was the bane of my English-loving existence. I liked research papers more than Shakespeare, and I hated research papers. I remember having to write a concrete poem in elementary school and analyze the work of Marlowe my senior year, but it all felt forced and obligatory. I still think that if they weren't required to do so, none of my teachers would have taught poetry at all. Thankfully, now I realize what a damn shame indeed that would have been.

All of this is to say that something, someone, changed my mind when I began here last semester. My previous teachers taught me a fraction of what poetry could be, they did the equivalent of introducing me to the world by taking me to a smog filled city and saying, "Here's Earth. People love Earth" before grading me on my ability to discern why the city had been laid out the way it was. The instructors of my past taught me poetry. Barbara Lawhorn reached into my soul, pulled out all the words I had hidden within it, and told me

that poetry is me and I'm doing the world a disservice by not proving it.

I fancied myself dark and scary once. Not after Lawhorn, though, no. She started by asking us to find any poem, any poem at all, that really spoke to us. Somehow, that was the first time it ever occurred to me that I could have some sort of say in what type of poetry I learned about and consumed. And so I found myself a poem. Something that didn't rhyme, something overtly gay in a way that was too loud to be ignored, something full of love and not of stupid similes. It was freeing in a way.

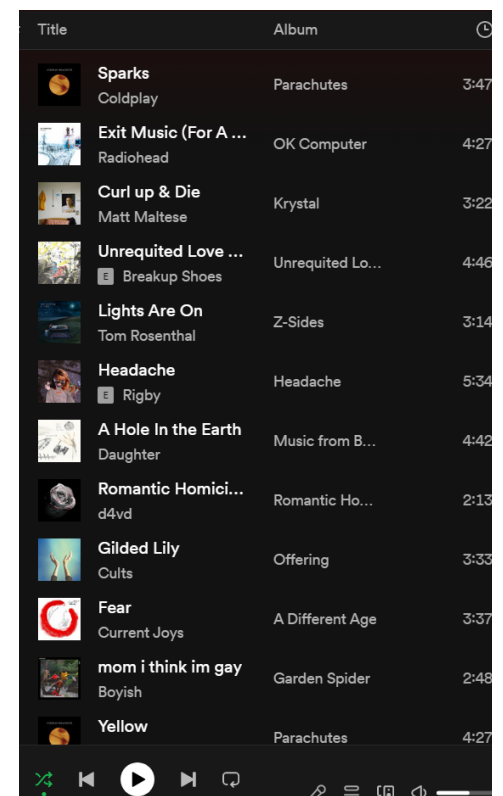
I'm not sure exactly when it happened, but finding that poem led to me becoming someone I never really thought I could be. Before, I thought I was unapproachable and imposing, someone that people would fear and be right to. Now, I pity those who haven't discovered how to gasp for air in lines and stanzas or immerse themselves to tears in their own poetry. I've created a playlist exclusively to make me sob so I can write poetry like I'm trying to bare myself to the world inch by inch, finding a new corner of my heart to dig through with every untitled document created.

Still, I'm not a poet; my poetry class has proven that much to me. I rhyme too little, too much, my slant rhymes aren't slanted enough, my poems are too concrete, they're too abstract, they're confusing, or they leave no room for interpretation. I do not understand meter, nor do I understand

how a poem can be incorrect.

The entire experience has made me want to start some anonymous social media page to post my work on. Let my poetry be consumed as words on a page, paint filling a canvas, rain hitting a window in a satisfying rhythm, not as the ideas or experiences of someone who is real. Let me fade away while my poems remain, containing all of me but not my signature. Let my poems be experienced in a dim room where the reader is forced to confront them alone. Allow my poems to resist change by not having an author to change them.

That, I think, is how I and my poetry should be seen and experienced: as a non-poet and their poetry.



*Blake Murdock's Playlist for
Writing Poetry
The Mirror & The Lamp 11*

WIU PHI DELTA STUDENTS PRESENT AT THE SIGMA TAU DELTA NATIONAL CONVENTION IN DENVER

Sam Smith (B.A. 2023) and Emily Woods (M.A. 2023) represented WIU's Phi Delta chapter of Sigma Tau Delta at the 2023 Convention this past March 29-April 1. After navigating airports and Denver, Colorado's downtown transportation, they each presented critical essays on literature and participated in the other sessions, workshops, and events offered. Sam presented her Margaret Atwood-inspired paper "Female Objectification and the Effects on Women," and Emily shared her analysis of cultural influences on Langston Hughes' and Joy Harjo's poetry.

Sam writes, "I attended the

convention last year but didn't present anything, so this year I knew I had to submit a piece. I had a wonderful time last year, and I am so thankful I was able to not only attend again but also to present a paper I spent a long time writing. Sigma Tau Delta strives to feature local and lesser-known authors at the convention when possible, and I always leave with an armful of new books to read and authors to explore. In addition to the featured and keynote authors, I learned so much from my peers and alums from my presentation alone, and I have come away with ideas and recommendations to use in both my academic work and future

classroom. From reading an original poem at Open Mic Night for the first time, to the highly anticipated Bad Poetry Night, Emily and I had just as much fun at the evening events as we did during the day's events. In addition to a new-found friend and peer in Emily (we met for the first time literally 4 days before meeting up in the Denver International Airport), I met so many wonderful new people and even saw friends from last year! I am deeply grateful to Dr. Buchanan for her editing and mentorship and to the English department at Western for supporting me financially and in turn making this trip possible. I look forward to potentially attending as an Alumni in the years to come."



*Emily Woods Presents
The Mirror & The Lamp 12*



Emily and Sam

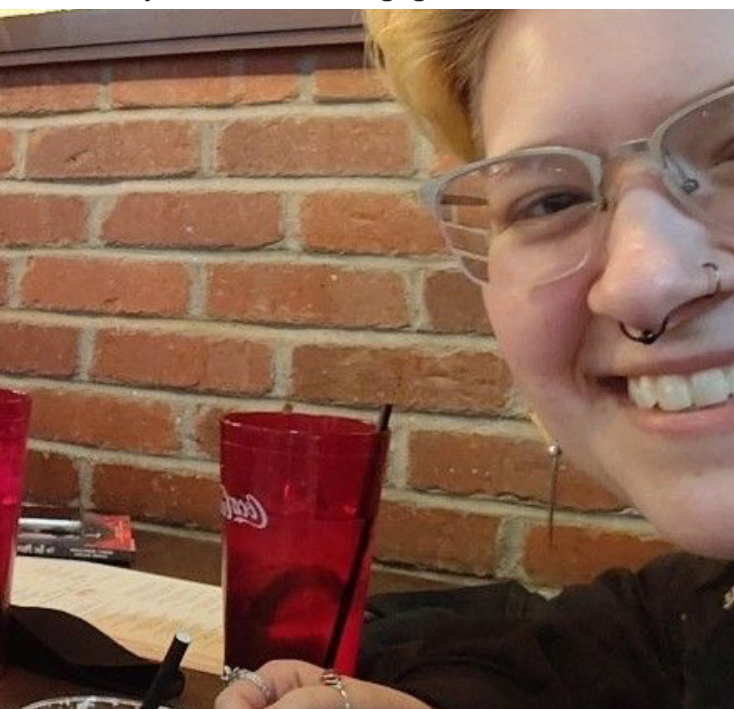


Emily says, “I was inducted into Sigma Tau Delta in 2018 at Illinois College but never attended convention during my four undergraduate years, so I am grateful for the opportunity I had not only to go as a graduate student but to read from a piece of work that I am proud of. Beyond the panel I presented on, I found connections between keynote speaker Brenda Peynado’s common reader *The Rock Eaters* and my master’s exit option on speculative fiction, young adult literature, and a Texan peer’s queer studies (I actually plan to cite his essay in a final project for Dr. Buchanan’s English 559: The American Teenager!), as well as my creative writing goals and

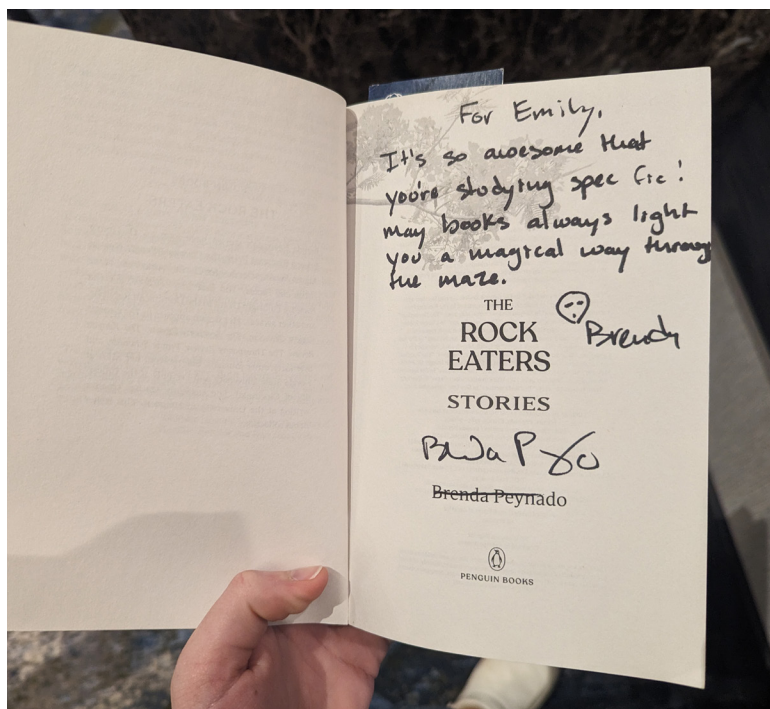
Sigma Tau Delta alumna DeAndra Miller’s publishing workshop. If I wasn’t taking a break to get lunch or dinner with Sam (or taking a nap), I was listening to as much as I could, jumping from session to session to hear a reading of Maria Dahvana Headley’s *The Mere Wife*, both beautiful and intentionally bad poetry, and the authors’ of *The Toni Morrison Club* secrets. Thank you again to Dr. Malachuk for the revision and presentation guidance before I submitted my essay as well as the Graduate School for awarding me financial assistance so I could accept its acceptance and engage with the English community.”



Sam Smith Presents



Sam in Denver



*Emily gets her copy of *The Rock Eaters* Signed*

2022 · 2023 ANNOUNCEMENTS



Dr. Rebekah Buchanan presents scholarships to English Education majors Brett Metternich and Grace McGill

Each spring, the English Department awards \$20,000 in scholarships and fellowships for our graduate and undergraduate students. We are pleased to announce the following students were awarded English scholarships this spring for the 2022–2023 academic year.

Undergraduate Scholarship and Award Winners

John Merrett Scholarship in English Literature – **Emma Gilliland**

John and Barbara Blackburn Scholarship – **Samantha Smith**

Dr. Paul Blackford British Literature Scholarship – **Emma Cortelyou**

Dr. Olive Fite American Literature Scholarship – **Abigail Jones**

Robert L. Hodges English Education Scholarships – **Keagan Beckner; Grace McGill; Brett Metternich**

Nai-Tung Ting and Lee Hsia Ting English Scholarship – **Claire Koechle**

Dr. John Castle Memorial Scholarship – **Ainsley Eskridge**

Sig. Jeannette & Dean Johnson Scholarship – **Jamariah White**

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Lila S. Linder English Scholarship – **Sam Weed-Adcock & Peter Hostert**

Wanninger Family Scholarship – **Sam Weed-Adcock**

Alfred J. Lindsey Memorial Scholarship – **Abigail Jones**

Beth M. Stiffler Memorial Scholarship – **Claire Koechle**

Scholar of the Year – **Emma Gilliland**

Writing Awards

Bruce H. Leland Essay Contest Winners

English 100, Introduction to Writing – 1st Place, **Maddie Koester**; 2nd Place, **Jade Forney-Bernson**; 3rd Place, **Lakiyah Williams**

English 180, College Writing I – 1st Place, **Alahna Davis**; 2nd Place, **Henry Elizabeth Ziegler**; 3rd Place, **Olivia Jung**; Honorable Mention, **Colin Scanlon**

English 280, College Writing II – 1st Place, **Ebony O.D.K. Lindsay**; 2nd Place, **Lily Paw**; 3rd Place, **Jasmine Kargbo**; Honorable Mention, **Georgiana Reedy**

GH 101 General Honors – 1st Place, **Paige Grice**; 2nd Place, **Megan Coleman**; 3rd Place, **Keira Botica**; Honorable Mention, **Lily Martinek**

Multimodal Writing – 1st Place, **Nicole Sprague**; 2nd Place, **Julietta Marini**; 3rd Place, **Briza Dure Alvarenga**

Creative Writing Awards

Lois C. Bruner Creative Nonfiction Awards – 1st Place, **Abigail Jones**; 2nd Place, **Blake Murdock**; 3rd Place, **Emma Gilliland**

Cordell Larner Award in Fiction – 1st Place, **Steven Lung**; 2nd Place, **Cyrus Dale**; 3rd Place, **Addison Upchurch**; Honorable Mention, **Blake Murdock**

Cordell Larner Award in Poetry – 1st Place, **Blake Murdock**; 2nd Place, **Clarissa Lopez**; 3rd Place, **Maureen Roland**

Graduate Scholarship, Fellowship, and Award Winners

Ron & Leslie Walker Graduate Fellowship – **Mark Brown & Kirsten Lippold**

Sydney M. Conger Essay Award – **Emily Woods**

Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award – **Kirsten Lippold**

C. John Mahoney English Graduate Fellowship – **Abigail Heinecke**

Announcements

Current Students

Peter Hostert was elected Treasurer of Sigma Tau Delta.

Grace McGill was elected President of Sigma Tau Delta.

Deanna Palm was a student teacher from October 5th to December 22nd at the Misioneras de la Providencia in Salamanca, Spain.

Samantha Smith presented her critical paper “Female Objectification and the Effects on Women” at the Sigma Tau Delta National Convention in Denver.

Maya Steinke was elected Vice President of Sigma Tau Delta.

Emily Woods presented her critical paper “Diverse Influences in Minority Poetry” at the Sigma Tau Delta National Convention in Denver.

Joshua Stinson won the College of Arts and Sciences Humanities Student Award.

Alumni

Shelby Davin (B. A. 2020) was accepted to the M.A. program in Social Justice and Human Rights at Arizona State University and she is supported there with a graduate assistantship.

Katelin Deushane (B.A. 2016) accepted a position as a Youth Services Librarian at the Shannon Staub Public Library in North Port, FL.

Joshua Farenkrog (B.A. 2023) accepted a teaching position at ROWVA High School in Oneida, IL.

Nicole Foster (B.A. 2022) accepted a teaching position at Farmington High School, Farmington, IL.

Kaylee Gundling (B.A. 2020) accepted a position as the Director of Social Services and Admissions at Aspen Rehab & Healthcare in Rock Island, IL.

Kelly (Schloss) Harrington (M.A. 2017) accepted a position as Training Manager, Strategic Services-Media at Advantage Unified Commerce.

Molly Hall (M.A. 2016) was promoted to Operations Manager in the Office of Effective Philanthropy at the Taproot Foundation.

Haley Helgesen (M.A. 2017) accepted a position as Senior Technical Writer at the anime streaming service Crunchyroll.

Ed Komenda (B.A. 2011) accepted a position as the Washington statehouse reporter for the Associated Press.

Joshua Poulos (B.A. 2022) was accepted to the M.F.A. degree by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Rene Powers (M.A. 2022) teaches writing at Augustana College and Black Hawk Community College in the Quad Cities.

Darrin Ross (B.A. 2022) accepted a teaching position at United High School, Monmouth, IL.

Joshua Stinson (B.A. 2023) accepted a teaching position at Monmouth-Roseville Junior High.

Faculty

Ashley Beardsley published “Using Recipes for Place-Based Research and Writing” in *Writing Spaces and Reviewed Making Matters: Craft, Ethics, and New Materialist Rhetorics* by Leigh Gruwell for *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. She presented “Together in the (re)Making: Rethinking Key Terms and Practices through a Food Lens” with Jody Shipka and Erica Leigh at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Chicago, IL.

Rebekah Buchanan published twenty-four book reviews with *Library Journal* and *School Library Journal*.

She published thirty-four podcasts for New Books Networks and presented at two national conferences—one with undergraduate student Darrin Ross.

Merrill Cole published the poems “As If the Snow Belonged to Spring.” *Mollyhouse* 5 (February 2023); “Dance.” *Pine Cone Review: Glissade, Special Issue on Dance* (November 2022); “Hinge.” *Lotus-eater Magazine* 15 (May 2022); “Linear A.” *Lotus-eater Magazine* 15 (May 2022). He read his poetry at The International Society for the Study of Surrealism Conference, online, November 2022. He presented his paper “Strangle Me with Your Lasso of Stars: Surrealism and Slavery in Aimé Césaire’s *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*” at the Surrealism and the Postcolonial panel, International Society for the Study of Surrealism Conference, online, November 2022. He read his work for *A Performance of Dramatic Poems*, a video written by Merrill Cole, directed by English Major Matt Gedraitis, and featuring student actors from English 299 in Fall Semester 2022.

Roberta Di Carmine was invited to speak at the Veterans’ Resources and Multicultural Center as part of the discussion of the film *The Woman King*. She presented “This is the Zodiac Speaking: The Role of US Media in the Representation of the American Serial Killer Zodiac” for the True Crime Special Topics, Popular Cultural Association Conference, San Antonio, TX, April 5-8. She recently completed a new graduate degree in criminology in the program *Criminologia e Sicurezza nel Mondo Contemporaneo* at the University of Rome. She is currently at work on new book focusing on Italian American filmmaker and photographer Attilio Gatti in Colonial Africa.

Everett Hamner presented “Sorry to Bother You, But We Need Science, Not Scientism,” a response paper for the “Environmental Justice Epistemologies” session, Science and Literature Forum, Modern Language Association, San Francisco. He also traveled to Huntington Library in San Marino, CA for research in the Octavia E. Butler Papers.

Barbara Lawhorn published her poem “Using My Hands” in the *Santa Clara Review* and her poem “Kitchen Song” will appear in *Inkwell*. Her short story “Field Corn” was published in *Miracle Monocle*, and “God Send” is forthcoming in *Belmont Story Review*. She presented “Old Friends Talk Art: Ekphrastic Prose & Poetry Writing in Response to Art” at the Buchanan Center for the Arts. She will present a special topics workshop for Syracuse University’s Project Advance in July, and she is beginning her second graduate course in a Mindfulness in Education certification through Antioch University.

Freesia McKee presented her paper “Teaching Ecopoetics as Peacebuilding Practice” at the Student-Faculty Peace and Conflict Studies Conference at St. Norbert College in Green Bay, 2023.

Mark Mossman along with Lori Baker Sperry and Justin Schuch presented “Connections Matter: Retention Practices Focused on Student Connections” at the Higher Learning Commission Annual Conference, Chicago. He was appointed to the 2023-2024 Becoming a Provost Academy (BAPA), part of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. He is currently at work on a paper entitled “Sustainable Funding Models for Mid-Level Public Higher Education Institutions.”

Richard Ness published the entry “Motion Pictures, Journalism in” as part of the **Encyclopedia of Journalism** (Sage 2022).

A.J. Rocca published his short stories “Of the Duly Conducted and Mostly Unremarkable Meeting of Don Quotidene and the Giants of Andalia” in *Diabolical Plots* (July 2022) and “WRR S639847 E1” in the anthology *Things Improbable* (Improbable Press). His critical essay “*La La Land*’s ‘Another Day of Sun’ as Utopian Entertainment” appeared in *PopMatters*. He presented “J.R.R. Tolkien and the Musical Theodicy” at the 45th International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in Orlando, FL.

William Thompson retired this spring after twenty-two years at Western.

Alicia White and her co-authors published “Walking The In Between: Convening Time And Space For Our Entangled Selves” for Irwin, Rita L., et al. (Eds.) *Pedagogical Propositions: Playful Walking with A/R/Tography* (International Society for Education Through Art). She also published her creative piece “Do Not Enter: Walking And Rolling The Wrong Way Up The Down Ramp” in R.L. Irwin, D.T. Barney, N.Y. S. Lee, J.M. Ursino (Eds.), *Pedagogical Propositions: Playful Walking with A/r/tography* (International Society for Education Through Art).

STORIES OF SIMPKINS: THE OCCUPATION OF 1970

BY
PETER HOSTERT



Simpkins Hall

Being one of the oldest buildings on campus, Simpkins Hall is steeped in lore and history. From tales of ghosts roaming the halls to documented cases of major political protests, countless fascinating stories are nestled within this stately building's architecture. One of these stories is the anti-war protests and occupation of Simpkins itself during the early years of the 1970s. The Vietnam War lasted from arguably the late 1950s to the mid 1970s and during that time the American public slowly began to find its voice in dissent at what the United States government was doing overseas. Nationwide, protests on campuses were organized and carried out in the name of peace.

Exploding in number across the United States after the horrific events at Kent State on May 4th, 1970, Simpkins Hall was directly involved in response. On this tragic day four students were massacred at Kent State by the national guard while protesting. Western Illinois University was one of the campuses that rose up to protest such a horrific event. A week after the massacre, 1,000 Western Illinois students marched from dorm to dorm chanting anti-war slogans. Simpkins Hall at the time was the building on campus where ROTC operated out of and the march ended outside there,

now our beloved building for the English department. An occupation of the building would occur for the duration of five days after this initial march. Throughout these five days negotiations began, ROTC equipment was taken out of Simpkins and students remained occupied within the building. One of the two student newspapers, the independent, student-owned and student-run *The Western Catalyst*, would document the event. The photos shown here were pulled from the archives of Mallpass Library. As is common today with protests, a counter march ensued. During this time the national



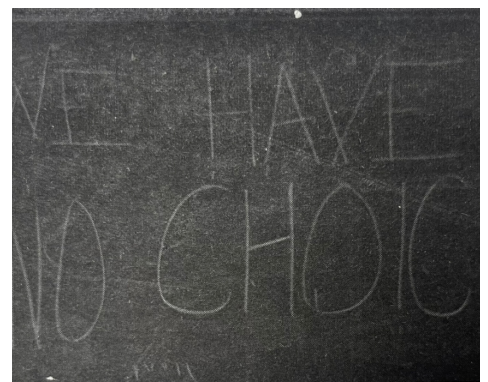
A photo of the march from the Western Catalyst, a student-owned and operated newspaper at Western, 1969-1974.

guard stationed at the armory on the south side of Macomb (which still stands and is operational to this day) was put on high alert. Eventually the occupation was disbanded and referendums on Westerns ROTC were promised.

Regardless of one's political opinion, I believe shining a light on this event is important to the legacy of Simpkins Hall. As the building of the English Department here at Western Illinois University, I find it important to remind those of the history that

occurred upon our campus and within our wonderful building. To know that our building and our alumni were involved in a historical movement taught in classrooms all throughout the country is exciting and humbling for an English student like me that roams the halls of Simpkins each day.

Knowing the events that transpired in Simpkins over a whopping fifty years ago makes me prouder than I already am of this historic and storied building, and I wish to share that with students and alumni alike through this publication. The words in the photograph below were written upon a blackboard in a classroom we all have probably attended class in, and they remind me that there has always been struggles in this country and that we, the students, have a say in what goes on here. I hope that by ending on this uplifting note all students and alumni of the English department continue their efforts in writing. Getting our thoughts and opinions out there may seem trivial in the moment, but just like these students, our actions and thoughts have a real impact upon the world and, hopefully, someday someone just like us will be writing about the words we all put out there in the world.



ONE PROTESTER scrawled his reason for the Simpkins Hall occupation on a chalkboard in the building.

BILL THOMPSON RETIRES

William “Bill” Thompson, Reference Librarian and Professor of English, retired from Western this spring. The Department gathered at the Old Bailey House with friends from across the university to celebrate Bill’s remarkable career and all he has contributed to Western.

At the Bailey House celebration, current department chair Marjorie Allison and former chair Mark Mossman spoke about Bill’s remarkable contributions to teaching, to service, and particularly to his amazing work with the faculty union. Bill himself also spoke, thanking everyone for their generosity, his happiness at having more time to read, and his plans to stay engaged with the university as an Emeritus Professor. *The Mirror & the Lamp* interviewed Bill about his decision to retire and his plans for the future.



Bill Thompson addresses the assembled crowd at the Old Bailey House
The Mirror & The Lamp 18



M&L: Why did you choose to retire this year?

BT: As a friend said, you can retire when you’re healthy and young enough to enjoy life or you can retire when you’re ill and too weak to enjoy it. I chose the first option. As Oscar Wilde said, and the divine Oscar had to say about nearly everything, “In life the first four acts are a comedy; the last is a tragedy.” I hope I retired at the middle of of Act Three. If not, I hope to amuse myself and others as best I can.

M&L: What do you think of as some of your career highlights in your time in the Library and the English department?

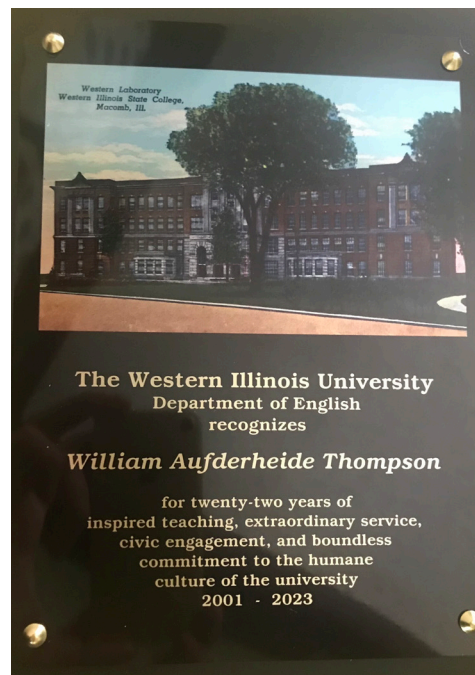
BT: It’s sappy to say, but true things are often sappy ones: what I most enjoyed is sharing my enthusiasm for learning and discovery, whether it be the population of Togo or the connection between an 18th century romance and a 21st century tale of torture and redemption in Chile. Also the constant revelation that there are so many beautiful books and people in the world, though it may not always seem that way. I am a natural Pollyanna, which is why I struggled hard to make things better.

M&L: What will you miss most about being a full-time tenured professor at Western?

BT: So much! Teaching others is a delight and always a learning experience. I will also miss trying to make Western a better place for faculty, staff, and students. My methods were not always appreciated but the goal was always to decrease misery and increase creativity and joy.

M&L: You’ll now be an Emeritus Professor. What do the next few years look like for you, and what are you most looking forward to about retirement?

BT: Reading. I look forward to reading new things, and photographing beauty wherever I find it (and it is everywhere). I also hope to visit old friends and make new ones. I also look forward to whatever the unknown has to offer. But most immediately, I look forward to reading whatever I want whenever I want.



The Department presented Bill a plaque to recognize his work

PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE

Ashley Beardsley is the University Writing Center Director, and a scholar of Writing Studies, Cultural Studies, and Food Studies. If you are lucky enough to attend one of the department events when she brought her baked goods this past year, you are indeed lucky. Ashley sat down with *The Mirror & the Lamp* to take the Proust Questionnaire.

What is your idea of happiness?

Happiness is a warm chocolate chip cookie with slightly crisp edges and a gooey inside. That cookie represents joy, pleasure, and comfort, which shape happiness.

Which living person do you admire most?

Jasmine Cho, cookie activist

When and where are you most happy?

I am happiest when I'm in my kitchen, music blasting, baking.

Which talent would you most like to have?

The talent to learn languages quickly.



If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I'd make myself slightly taller so I could reach the absurd kitchen cabinet above the fridge more easily.

Where would you most like to live?

Australia; there are still active greyhound racing tracks, and I'd move there to adopt more of them.

What is your most treasured possession?

The ring my dad gave my mom for their 40th wedding anniversary.

Who are your favorite writers?

Top 3: Stephen King, Sylvia Plath, CA Conrad

If you could choose another occupation, any occupation, what would it be?

Pastry chef/owner of a vegan bakery

What is your motto?

Everything is better with sprinkles!



Western Illinois
University

The Mirror & The Lamp
Department of English
1 University Circle
Macomb, IL 61455-1390

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Managing Editor Peter Hostert

Undergraduate Editors Amber Butcher
Robert Davis
Matthew Gedraitis
Blake Murdock
Natoya Raymond

Copy Editor A.J. Rocca

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The Mirror & the Lamp
The Department of English
Simpkins Hall
Western Illinois University
Macomb, IL. 61455