I wrote your name about time

repeat the world

magnify

poetry daily comes to mason

in this issue:

alumni, student, and faculty news

susan shreve retires

visiting writers
CHAIR’S MESSAGE

Dear Alumni and Friends:

Today is the last day of classes for the fall semester. It’s been a great term—I taught a new class, Once Upon a Crime, that allowed me to indulge in my two passions: folklore and true crime. My interest in narrative criminology emerged through my love of mystery and true crime. My “mental chocolate” is curling up with a great mystery novel, and a few years ago, I began writing mystery fiction as a stress reliever. I was intrigued to discover that the field of criminology has recently ventured into the study of narrative and crime (see Lois Presser’s 2015 edited volume *Narrative Criminology: Understanding Stories of Crime*). I started exploring this intersection myself by writing a peer-reviewed essay, “The Folklore Detective: Forensic Narrative Analysis” (forthcoming in a special issue of the Canadian folklore journal *Ethnologies* in 2020), and decided to develop a class around the concept.

Once Upon a Crime began as a typical folklore course on narrative, storytelling, and analysis. Instead of fairy tales, students were asked to analyze true crime stories (court cases, podcasts, and books) in order to understand how narrative is used as the foundation in criminal cases. Students learned the power of story in the criminal justice system, for instance, how a skilled narrative can convict an innocent person. The class was populated with English majors (many who plan to write mystery and true crime), but also criminology students and forensic science students. The joy of being an educator at Mason is that my colleagues and I have the freedom to investigate emerging fields of study, in this case, narrative criminology, and introduce them to our students.

Even as I finish my semester grading, I’m preparing to take the Field School for Cultural Documentation back on the road. For three weeks during the winter break, students and I will be documenting the folk culture of Ireland. We’ll start on Achill Island, a tiny community off the west coast of Ireland, then finish up in Dublin. I’m excited that the students will have the opportunity to do folklore fieldwork in rural and urban settings. If you’d like to see what the students did during the trip, you can read about it at livingethnography.wordpress.com.

In the pages that follow, you’ll learn about the Creative Writing Program’s partnership with *Poetry Daily* (poems.com) and the amazing opportunities it provides our creative writing students, as well as Professor Lisa Gilman’s collaborative Folklore Festivals class with the Arts Management Program in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, and Professor Lisa Koch’s Harry Potter study abroad.

I want to thank the alumni, friends, and faculty who have generously given their time and money to support our programs and student scholarships. I encourage you to join me in becoming a sustaining donor to the English Department through the Friends of the English Society. These monthly contributions can cost as little as a cup of coffee, drafted electronically from a credit card, and work to provide innovative and life-changing opportunities for our students.

Thank you for your generosity and commitment to the department and Mason. Your partnership makes these opportunities possible.

Debra Lattanzi Shutika
Chair, English Department
Support Your English Department

Please consider financially supporting our work and the next generation of Mason English students by becoming a member at one of the giving levels listed below. Your gift will have an immediate impact on the future of our department and the writers and scholars we prepare for the world.

Friends of English Society
Through the Friends of English Society, you can become a monthly supporter of the English Department, providing stable contributions that directly assist with need-based student support, intellectual and creative events, and the reduction of fundraising overhead. You can increase, decrease, hold, or discontinue your contribution at any time simply by contacting the department. Will you consider joining this vital philanthropic group through a monthly gift of $5, $10, or even $25 dollars to help support the English Department? Enroll today!

The Chair's Level
Members of the Chair's Level make an annual gift of $1,000 or more, which allows us to create new undergraduate scholarship programs to support the English Department. Membership includes early invitations and access to visiting writers, scholars, and event receptions.

The Sustainer's Level
Benefactors who make an extraordinary annual gift of $2,500 or more join the Sustainer's Level. These gifts help the department create new graduate fellowships or produce new undergraduate awards. Membership includes all the benefits of the Chair's Level, as well as a signed copy of one of our alumni’s books. Your donation is tax deductible to the full extent allowed by the law, minus the retail value of the book.

Donate Today
To contribute online, visit english.gmu.edu and select “Give” in the top right corner. For check donations, please make payable to: George Mason University Foundation Inc. Write “English Department” in the memo line. The enclosed return envelope can be used to mail in your check. If you have questions about the levels of giving or named fund opportunities, please contact Mark Hall, assistant director of development, at mhall19@gmu.edu.

Robert Raymond Scholarship Encourages Diversity
This year’s Robert Raymond Scholarship has been awarded to Andrew Joseph White, BFA ’19, who is currently a first-year student in the MFA Program. The Robert Raymond Scholarship, set up by Adjunct Professor Rosalind Gann in honor of her father, encourages diversity in the classroom by providing support for promising writers who are also members of underrepresented minority groups.

“I am honored to receive a scholarship that supports underrepresented voices,” says White. “As a trans man, it is both heartwarming and humbling to be selected. A huge thank you to Roz Gann and the Creative Writing Program for making this possible, and, of course, to Robert Raymond himself.”

White is the third recipient of the scholarship, which provides a one-time award of $1,000. As an undergraduate, White received the Aileen Walls Award, which honors an outstanding graduating English major.

Founding Professor Retiring after 40 Years
Susan Richards Shreve, who helped found Mason’s MFA in Creative Writing Program in 1980 and was its “guiding nurturing spirit” according to fellow professor Stephen Goodwin, is retiring this year on the eve of the program’s 40th anniversary.

“Susan has the gift of the beloved teacher,” says Goodwin. “She sees what’s best in her students and helps them see it for themselves. For both students and colleagues, she has been a connection to the larger literary world—a world of publishers, agents, and events of all kinds, from glittering readings to teaching in public schools. And she throws legendary parties!”

Shreve’s 15th novel, More News Tomorrow, was published last year and earned rave reviews, with Kirkus calling it “Part gothic novel, part adventure story, but primarily a meditation on surmounting misfortunes that may lie beyond an individual’s control.” Shreve is also the author of the memoir Warm Springs: Traces of a Childhood, among other nonfiction books and essays, and she’s written 29 books for children.

In addition to cofounding the MFA Program, she was also the cofounder of the PEN/Faulkner Foundation, an organization that she chaired for 30 years, and helped to develop the Writers in Schools program serving the Washington, D.C., area.

Shreve will be reading at the New Leaves Writers’ Conference April 13 through 17. See creativewriting.gmu.edu for the New Leaves schedule later in the semester.
Twenty-two years ago, the founding editors of the online poetry anthology *Poetry Daily* launched poems.com and introduced the literary world to the concept of the daily poem. Every day since, *Poetry Daily* has featured an outstanding single poem from a new collection or literary journal, selected for its interest and literary merit from the hundreds of publications sent to its offices every month. In January 2019, those offices moved to George Mason University.

The partnership between *Poetry Daily*, an independent nonprofit, and Mason’s Creative Writing Program offers graduate and undergraduate students opportunities to work on the website through internships, graduate professional assistant positions, and classroom experiences designed around portions of *Poetry Daily*’s editorial and production processes. During the last year, students have been involved in the development and implementation of a completely redesigned website, which now includes a serialized educational resource called “What Sparks Poetry,” in which poets explore experiences and ideas that spark new poems and offer readers poetry writing prompts.

One of those students, Lloyd Wallace, graduated with his BFA in creative writing in May 2019 and first worked on *Poetry Daily* via an editorial course run by MFA and BFA poetry faculty Peter Streckfus, who served as the new editorial director for the website during its transition to Mason and through 2019. After the course, Wallace stayed on with PD—as it’s lovingly called by its editors and staff—to complete an editorial internship during the summer and fall semesters.

“The most valuable part of my PD experience has, selfishly, been the craft experience I’ve gained taking part in the close reading of books and journals that is key to the *Poetry Daily* editorial practice,” says Wallace. “It’s provided me a richer, more thorough ‘poetic apprenticeship’ than I ever thought I’d get as an undergrad.”

“Reading and responding to so much contemporary work has helped me understand what I love about the poems I love,” says graduate student Millie Tullis of her experience last semester with the website’s rigorous editorial review process. “This understanding has helped me write the poems I want to write.”
Folklore and Festivals

The English Department’s Folklore Program is collaborating with Mason’s Arts Management Program and with the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (SCFCH) to offer two interrelated, team-taught courses focused on folklore and festivals, both open to undergraduate and graduate students.

The spring course, Folklore and Festival Management, draws on interdisciplinary scholarship to train students in folklore and festival management and provides the academic foundation for the summer course, Folklife Festival Experiential Learning. The latter provides practical, hands-on experience: Students work on the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

The project’s development was supported by a 2019 George Mason University Provost’s Curriculum Impact Grant awarded to three Mason professors: Lisa Gilman in the English Department and Carole Rosenstein and Karalee MacKay in the Arts Management Program. Gilman and Rosenstein organized a forum about such partnerships at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society.

“Our goals are to invigorate and reinforce the academic training of students who will graduate to work in the arts and cultural sectors in the United States and abroad,” says Gilman. “The team-taught approach will allow a folklore professor to explore issues of cultural representation, for example, while the arts management instructor will focus on the practical skills needed to produce a festival. In the summer session, students will develop their skills in any number of directions, from festival documentation, to social media and marketing, to logistical organization, and more.”

This year’s Smithsonian Folklife Festival will take place June 24–28 and July 1–5 with a focus in part on the cultures of Benin, Brazil, and the United Arab Emirates.

Christian Stanzione, a first-year poetry MFA candidate, works on the production and editorial components of Poetry Daily through a new graduate professional assistantship. The position is one of several that the English Department has developed to support students in their studies and offer them valuable and pertinent experience they can take with them in their professional lives. Stanzione describes working on Poetry Daily as “an education in contemporary poetry that I don’t think I could have gotten otherwise.”

“Having a chance to experience this moment in poetry with my peers, and having that experience germinate in our community and in our work together, feels like a crucial part of our development as artists,” Stanzione says.

The journal’s presence on campus has led to other innovations. MFA and BFA poetry faculty Eric Pankey used Poetry Daily as his required text in his undergraduate workshop Poetry Writing during the fall 2019 semester. Each week, his students wrote one-page responses to one of the week’s poems.

“What is interesting to me is that the two or three poems that I find most compelling, challenging, and well-wrought tend to be the poems a majority of the students choose to write about,” Pankey says. “The more amazing the poem, it seems, the more insightful the student responses.”

Students have the chance to admire a wide variety of poems, according to Pankey, including the plain spoken, the formally innovative, the political, works in translation, and featured works. Many students attempt the prompts offered in “What Sparks Poetry” as well, he says.

Pankey notes that occasionally poems appear that contradict a lesson he’s taught the class. “It has been fun to discuss how the poet has managed through her practice to be successful doing the very thing I had advised against,” he says. “With a printed anthology, I would have ready models and lessons at hand, and life might be a bit easier in the class. But each week I find poems on Poetry Daily that offer just the right model. I am discovering the poems at the same time the students are, and it is a joy to share in that discovery.”

“After a year of new beginnings, this coming year, I think, will be a year of thanks,” says Streckfus, who passed the editorial direction to fellow MFA and BFA poetry professor Sally Keith this semester. “We have so much to be grateful for: our readers, our sponsors, the poets and publishers whom we feature, the students who put so much into Poetry Daily, who have given it a new life. It’s exciting to think what may come next.”

Donations to the Poetry Daily Foundation can be made via the enclosed return envelope or through the “Give” option in the top right of our website at english.gmu.edu.

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Jessica Anthony, MFA ’04, has a new novel, Enter the Aardvark, to be published in March by Little, Brown.

Sam Ashworth, MFA ’18, had an essay published in Longreads in September, “McDreamy, McSteamy, and McConnell,” which looked at the phenomenon of Congressional fan fiction.

Joe Hall, MFA ’08, has several recent publications: “from People Finder, Buffalo” on the PEN America blog, “I Hate That You Died” in Poetry Northwest, and “On River Road” and “Buffalo’s Intestines” in saltfront. Hall has read or will be reading at both Daemen College in Amherst, New York, and St. Mary’s College in St. Mary’s City, Maryland.

Rajpreet Heir, MFA ’16, had an essay published in Bustle in July, “I’m So Jealous You Get to Read Anita and Me by Meera Syal for the First Time.”

Eric Hodgkins, BA ’90, has published his first book, A Box in the Basement. The title refers to a stash of photographs, letters, and other items that belonged to Hodgkins’s grandmother that inspired the stories and memories he shares throughout the book.

Jesse Kirkpatrick, a current MFA student, had an essay, “Maddox vs. Maddox,” published in the fall issue of The Summerset Review.

Current MFA student Heather Osial organized the first Write Turns writing conference for teens in mid-November at Marsteller Middle School in Bristow, Virginia. More than 85 students attended from nine high schools and nine middle schools in the Washington metropolitan area. Bestselling YA novelist Lisa Maxwell and former Prince William County (Virginia) Poet Laureate Robert Scott headlined the conference. Two Mason alumni also participated—Michelle Orabona and Ellen Weeren, both MFA ’19—and Mason’s Creative Writing Program cosponsored the conference.

Alyse Knorr, MFA ’12, has a new chapbook, Ballast, published in October by Seven Kitchens Press.

Dan Kois, MFA ’01, has a new book from Little, Brown: How to Be a Family: The Year I Dragged My Kids around the World to Find a New Way of Being Together.


Elizabeth Deanna Morris Lakes, MFA ’15, has a full-length poetry collection, Ashley Sugarnotch & the Wolf, appearing this spring from Mason Jar Press.


Sandra Marchetti, MFA ’10, has picked up representation from John Thorn, official historian of Major League Baseball and affiliate agent at Thompson Literary Agency, for her baseball poetry manuscript, Aisle 228. She also has poems forthcoming in The Cortland Review, Quidity, Doubleback Review, Celipoems, and in two anthologies: Show Us Your Papers from Main Street Rag Press and New Poetry from the Midwest from New American Press.

Alexandria Petrassi, MFA ’19, is the new full-time communications and development associate at Split This Rock.

Rachel Purdy, a current MFA student, has a nonfiction essay, “Domestic Coffee,” on TinHouse.com.

Robert Schuster, MFA ’15, has enjoyed publications in both poetry and prose since graduation, including most recently the poem “Exhibition” in SPLASH! and the short story “A Prank” in Eureka Literary Magazine. Since 2016, he’s worked as an English teacher at Stuart Hall School in Staunton, Virginia.

Hyunyoung Cho delivered a lecture, “Winning the Peace: Narrating a New Hero in John Milton’s Paradise Lost,” at the international symposium “Gandhi’s 150-Year Legacies: Peacebuilding from Asia and the West,” which was jointly hosted by Mason Korea and Yonsei University in celebration of Mohandas K. Gandhi’s 150th birthday in October. Also in October, approximately 50 students at Mason Korea participated via teleconference in a Fall for the Book event featuring Korean American authors Eugenia Kim and Alice Stephens.

Kevin Flanagan's book War Representation in British Cinema and Television: From Suez to Thatcher, and Beyond was published by Palgrave Macmillan as part of the Britain and the World series.


Lisa Gilman joined Kemi Balogun, Melissa Graboyes, and Habib Iddrisu as a coeditor of Africa Every Day: Fun, Leisure, and Expressive Culture on the Continent, published in November by Ohio University Press. Gilman was one of the recipients of a 2019 George Mason University Provost’s Curriculum Impact Grant for the proposal she wrote with Arts Management Program faculty on folklore and festivals (see page 5). Gilman was also named editor-in-chief of the Journal of American Folklore, the flagship journal of the field in the United States. Three other Mason faculty are associate editors: Debra Shutika, Ben Gatling, and Lijun Zhang.

Jessica Hurley has an essay, “Complicity, for the Time Being: Nuclear Entanglements from Atoms for Peace to Fukushima,” in a special issue of Comparative Literature Studies titled “Complicity in Post-1945 Literature: Theory, Aesthetics, Politics.”


Richard Nanian contributed a long review of Rolf Lessenich’s Romantic Disillusionism and the Sceptical Tradition to the third issue of the Journal of Romanticism this fall. Nanian is also an assistant editor for the journal.


Sylvia Schreiner is the author or coauthor of several recently published or forthcoming essays, including: “Multidirectional Leveraging for Computational Morphology and Language Documentation and Revitalization” with Lane Schwartz, Benjamin Hunt, and Emily Chen in Language Documentation & Conservation; “Patterns in Heteromorphic Consonant Behavior in St. Lawrence Island Yupik,” with Benjamin Hunt in Proceedings of WSCLA 24, University of British Columbia Working Papers in Linguistics; and “Nominal Predication and the Semantics of Roots” in Proceedings of NELS 49. Additionally, she presented two conference papers in October and November: “When Translation Fails: Pinpointing ‘Past Tense’ Meanings with Speakers of St. Lawrence Island Yupik” at the 21st Intit Studies Conference in Montreal, Canada; and “Initiating a Tool-Building Infrastructure for the Use of the St. Lawrence Island Yupik Language Community,” with Lane Schwartz, Peter Zukerman, Giulia Masella Soldati, Emily Chen, and Benjamin Hunt at the International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019: Perspectives Conference at Purdue University.


Alok Yadav talked with National Public Radio’s Lynn Neary about the Nobel Prize in Literature, discussing the crisis at the Swedish Academy that led to the deferral of the 2018 prize for a year and the steps that have since been taken to improve the organization. The conversation aired in early October on both All Things Considered and Morning Edition during the week that the 2018 and 2019 literature prizes were presented.

Visiting Writers Spring 2020

Readings begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Fairfax Campus in Fenwick Library’s Main Reading Room.

- **Thursday, February 13**—Danielle Evans, author of the short-story collection *Before You Suffocate Your Own Fool Self*, and Christina Thompson, author of the narrative history *Sea People: The Puzzle of Polynesia*
- **Tuesday, March 24**—Kaveh Akbar, author of the poetry collection *Calling a Wolf a Wolf*
- **Monday, April 13**—Mira Jacob, author and illustrator of *Good Talk: A Memoir in Conversations*, and Chinelo Okparanta, author of the novel *Under the Udala Trees*
- **Wednesday, April 15**—Martha Ronk, author of nine books of poetry, including her most recent, *Silences*

Harry Potter in Literature and Film

**Summer Study Abroad:**
**May 31–June 27, 2020**

Explore the wizarding world of Harry Potter in Scotland and England! Journey through the Highlands on the Hogwarts Express, roam through awe-inspiring castles and graveyards, write in the café where J.K. Rowling penned *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, meet the artists who designed *The Daily Prophet*, and speak with the Scots translator of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s (Sorcerer’s) Stone*.

These activities and more will help you to interpret Harry Potter novels, films, and plays with greater complexity. Based mostly in Edinburgh and London, the course also includes visits to Glenfinnan, Scotland; as well as Alnwick, Durham, and Oxford, England, to investigate geographic and socio-historical influences. Harry Potter’s influence on contemporary literature, art, and culture—such as the novel *The Magicians* and fan-fiction sites—will be highlighted as well.

Led by Professor Lisa Koch.

Open to Mason students and nonstudents. Apply by March 8.

For more information, visit [masonabroad.gmu.edu](http://masonabroad.gmu.edu) and search for “Harry Potter.”