



UC Berkeley Comparative Literature Big Give Newsletter 2021

Dear Alumni and Friends of UC Berkeley Comparative Literature:

While only a few of us have set foot in Dwinelle Hall during the last twelve months, we are all still teaching, studying, attending events and meetings remotely. While it has been a challenging and difficult time for all of us, we are hoping for a return to normal this fall. We nevertheless have kept our spirit of community alive, providing support to each other where we can—and we hope the same for our alums and friends.

In spite of all this, as a department, we have done many things during this last year that we can be proud of and grateful for. This newsletter gives us an opportunity to think of a few of them, with faculty, grad students, undergrads, and staff, and as always, the Big Give gives you an opportunity to support the department, particularly the graduate and undergraduate students in their education and careers.

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Faculty News:

Last fall, Prof. **Beth Piatote** (Ethnic Studies) joined our department with a partial appointment. Professor Piatote is a scholar of Native American/Indigenous literature and law; a creative writer of fiction, poetry, plays, and essays; and an Indigenous language revitalization activist, specializing in Nez Perce language and literature. She is the author of two books: *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature* (Yale 2013), which won an MLA award; and *The Beadworkers: Stories* (Counterpoint 2019), which was longlisted for the Aspen Words Literary Prize, the PEN/Bingham Prize for Debut Fiction, and shortlisted for the California Independent Booksellers “Golden Poppy” Award.

This year, **Tony Cascardi** will be concluding a ten-year term as Dean of Arts and Humanities in June and will return to teaching after a long-deferred sabbatical. His next book, entitled *Francisco de Goya: Art of Critique*, will be published by Zone Books next year." He has started a book series with Cambridge University Press devoted to the intersections of literature and philosophy (the Cambridge Studies in Literature and Philosophy).

This year **Judith Butler**, eminent scholar of Gender Studies and Critical Theory, retired from her position in the department. Fortunately for us, she will continue to teach as Professor of the Graduate School.

You can watch Townsend Center Book Chats about **Vicky Kahn's** most recent book *The Trouble with Literature* (Oxford University Press), and about **Nelly Oliensis'** new book *Loving Writing/Ovid's Amores* (Cambridge University Press) right here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xXU5JvJPO8>, and right here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOQaiKR81Hs>.

Eric Naiman, after more than ten years of chairing two departments, is stepping down as chair of Slavic. Eric also Received the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages 2019 award for Outstanding Contribution to the Profession. He also published two articles on Dostoevsky: "'There was Something Almost Crude about it all.....' Reading the Epilogue of *Crime and Punishment* hard against the grain" (*Canadian Slavonic Papers* 62:2 (2020), 123-43), and "Gospel Rape" (*Dostoevsky Studies* 22 (2018), 11-40). He also published a review of recent work on Nabokov in *Times Literary Supplement* (June 26, 2020).

During this year, **Michael Lucey** is on sabbatical as a Visiting Research Fellow at Merton College, University of Oxford, and as a Visiting Researcher at St. John's College, Oxford. During his sabbatical, he is working on two new projects: "Literature and/as Language-in-Use" and "Thinking About Sexuality with Novels," and on a special issue of the journal *Paragraph* to be called "Approaching Proust in 2022" in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Proust's death. He also finished a new book, *What Proust Heard: Novels and the Ethnography of Talk*, published by University of Chicago Press in March 2022.

Karl Britto's article on Vietnamese francophone author Phạm Duy Khiêm appeared in the October 2020 issue of *French Studies*: "'Madame, je ne suis pas une jeune fille': Phạm Duy Khiêm's *La Place d'un homme*."

Tom McEnaney was named a [Mellon New Directions fellow](#) (2020-2023) to "retrain" in computer science, data science, and statistics in order to carry out research at the intersection of critical theory and cultural analytics (computational approaches to literature). He also published two articles about how the study of sound can reinvigorate the study of literature and how we might rethink genres like *testimonio* by

paying more attention to the sounds of speakers' voices alongside their textual representation: "The Sonic Turn" in *diacritics* (Vol. 47, No. 4, (2020): 80-109), and "Rigoberta's Listener": The Significance of Sound in Testimonio" in *PMLA* (Vol. 135, No. 2, (March 2020): 393-400). Tom was on the Berkley Music department's podcast series for an episode about "[Remote Instruction](#)" and the concept of "liveness."

Sophie Volpp's new book *The Substance of Fiction: Literary Objects in China 1550-1775* will be published this fall by Columbia University Press.

Tim Hampton has been lecturing and teaching in the wake of his recent book *Bob Dylan: How the Songs Work* (Zone Books, 2019, paperback 2020). This includes guest blog posts at Princeton University Press, MIT Press, a forthcoming article at *Aeon/Psyche*, an online magazine, lectures in London, France, and Stanford, and an online course at the 92Nd Street Y in New York. His new book *Cheerfulness: A Literary and Cultural History*, will be out in late 2021 or early 2022 (Zone Books). He also wrote two new essays, "Bob Dylan in the Country: Rock Domesticity and Pastoral Song" and "Sancho's Fortune: Money and Narrative Truth in Don Quixote".

A new book by **Miryam Sas** entitled *Feeling Media: Potentiality, and the Afterlife of Art in Japan* is forthcoming in 2021 or early 2022 from Duke University Press. One of the chapters of this book on postwar and contemporary Japanese media theory and art examines how artists conceive of collective practice. In his picture, drawn from that chapter, a group of local residents and volunteers organized by WAH (Wow) project Japan comes together to lift a two-story house off its foundations. They lift it 5 centimeters into the air. In the other, in a Grasslands art project, local residents wanted a path from the waterside to their chateau in a small rural village in Denmark, so locals and volunteers did a 24 hour pathbreaking marathon where they walked back and forth together until a path was formed. Comp Lit is a collective endeavor into the unknown: let's all break paths together!



In the past year **Harsha Ram** published "World Literature as World Revolution: Velimir Khlebnikov's *Zangezi* and the Utopian Geopoetics of the Russian Avant-garde" in the collected volume *Comintern Aesthetics* (Toronto UP) as well as annotated translations from the Russian of two articles on the early 20th-century Georgian primitive painter Niko Piroshmanashvili for the volume *Global Modernists on Modernism: An Anthology* (Bloomsbury Modernist Archives). Another of his articles, "Spatial Scale

and the Urban Everyday: The Physiology as a Traveling Genre (Paris, St. Petersburg, Tiflis),” is due to appear shortly in the two-volume *Cambridge History of World Literature*, while another, “Place and Space: Imperial Modernisms and the Geopoetics of the Planetary,” is being considered by the journal *Modernisms/Modernities*.

We also want to draw attention to a range of departmental initiatives and events. **Rob Kaufman** and **Tom McEnaney** organized and introduced zoom events for "El Grupo": "*The Borderlands of Culture: Conversation/Charla* with Professor Ramón Saldívar (English, Comparative Literature, Stanford University), Professor Ivonne del Valle (Spanish & Portuguese, UC Berkeley) and Ph.D. student Alejandra Decker (Spanish & Portuguese, UC Berkeley) was one of them. Another one, also organized by Rob Kaufman and Tom McEnaney, focused on work in progress: "Works in progress / Estudios en curso" featuring, from UC Berkeley's Comp Lit Dept: teaching faculty **Karina Palau**, Ph.D. student **Gladys Rivas**, and undergraduate **Ryan Tuozzolo**. A next event of "El Grupo", this time in collaboration with UC Berkeley English Department's Holloway Poetry Series will include the poets Roberto Tejada and Anna Deeny Morales. All these events have been co-sponsored by the Departments of Comparative Literature and the Department of Spanish & Portuguese.

Dora Zhang was recently interviewed for the New Books Network podcast about her book: <https://newbooksnetwork.com/strange-likeness>.

Together with **Dora Zhang**, **Rob Kaufman** is organizing a series of events discussing career paths and trajectories with and for our graduate and undergraduate students. They include "Trajectories of Literary Study, Teaching, Careers: Community Colleges and Four-Year Colleges and Universities", with UCB Alums Professor of English **Natalia Menéndez**, Foothill College, Los Altos Hills, CA (BA in Spanish & Portuguese; MA in English) and Professor of English **Laura Wagner**, Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa, CA (Ph.D in Comparative Literature); UCB Comp Lit Ph.D. student--and graduate of Chaffey Community College, Rancho Cucamonga, CA, and Cal State University Long Beach--**Matthew Gonzales**; and former UC Berkeley Comp Lit undergraduate, community-college transfer, and Masters in Comparative Literature from Dartmouth College, **Annabel Jankovic**; "Thinking about Doing an Honors Thesis in Comp Lit, or in a Related Field/Department?"; and "Thinking about Grad School in Literary Studies? in Other Areas of the Humanities or Social Sciences? or Law School, Public Policy Degrees, MBAs, MPHs, etc.?"

Graduate Students:

With the support of a generous grant of the Graduate Division, the Department has developed a new course that is meant to facilitate the transition of new graduate students into the program and the communication among graduate student cohorts. We hope that, in step with our efforts to diversify our graduate student population, this course will form a new platform for discussion of shared interests and for the support

of students with diverse backgrounds. Grad student **Matthew Gonzalez**, currently finishing his dissertation, is teaching this course in its first instantiation in spring 2021.

Grad student **Max Kaisler's** poem "Tableau Vivant" was awarded the 2020 Harold Taylor Prize from the Academy of American Poets and was published online here: <https://poets.org/2020-tableau-vivant>. Max's poem "Sun House" was published in the Stanford literary magazine *Mantis* and republished in January 2021 in the Amherst Magazine (available online here: <https://www.amherst.edu/amherst-story/magazine/issues/2021-winter/amherst-creates/that-which-was-too-obvious>). Max will be presenting on "City Poems: Amicitia and Urbanitas in Catullus and O'Hara" at the 2021 Classical Association of the Middle West and South (CAMWS) Conference as part of a panel on *Contemporary Catullus: Catullan Reception in Modernist and Contemporary Poetry* this spring.

Emily Laskin finished an article called "Geography, Genre, and Narrative in Kipling's *Kim*". It is forthcoming in the Spring 2021 issue of *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*.

Together with a fellow graduate student in English, Gabrielle Elias, **Pedro Hurtado Ortiz** has organized a panel titled "New Novel Studies at Berkeley." **Dora Zhang's** *Strange Likeness* was one of the books highlighted in this event and she was a panelist, alongside faculty and graduate students from English and French.

Winners of the Outstanding Graduate Student award were **Marlena Gittleman**, **Mary Mussman**, and **Christopher Scott**.

Undergraduate Students:

Bella Chavez graduated in 2020 and double majored in Comparative Literature and Latin American Languages & Cultures. She is a recipient of the competitive Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. During her undergraduate career, she studied abroad in Brazil, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. In December of 2020, she was awarded the prestigious Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Graduate Fellowship which will fund a Master's degree in International Affairs. Upon completion, she will enter the U.S. Foreign Service and become a diplomat. Without a doubt, her degree in Comparative Literature, where she read and studied countless cultures and countries, has inspired her to pursue a career on a global scale.

Third year Comparative Literature student **Kayla Cohen** is studying English, Hebrew, Arabic literatures. Drawing from her travels and the interviews that she conducted with Jewish Diaspora leaders in 2017 and 2018, her new book (titled "The Full Severity of Our Connection") carefully examines the Jewish people's links to the non-Jewish world and how these links have impacted different conceptions of Jewishness. She hopes that this book can reshape conversations on campus about Jewish history and identity for both Jewish and non-Jewish readers. More information can be found [here](#).

Commencement/Graduation



As for Commencement, last year's could not be in person as you may know, but Cal did put together a "minecraft" commencement featuring "lego students" ... ceremonies will once again be remote this year, but we anticipate a "normal" commencement in 2022!

2020 PhD graduates:

Nicole Adair wrote the thesis "The Hermeneutics of the Veil: Reading Faith in Early Modern Poetry" and is currently pursuing creative writing.

Keru Cai wrote the thesis "Poverty and Squalor in Modern Chinese Realism", Junior Research Fellowship (Fellowship by Examination) at the University of Oxford (Magdalen College), and has accepted a job offer to start at the Pennsylvania State University in Fall 2022 as Assistant Professor of Asian Studies and Comparative Literature.

Sherilyn Hellberg wrote the thesis "Grammatical Claustrophobia: Despair and the Architecture of Entrapment."

Bristin Jones wrote the thesis "First Person Animals: Interspecific Communication in the Anthropocene." Teaching environmental humanities courses at UC Merced as she works towards publishing her first novel.

Maya Kronfeld wrote the thesis "Spontaneous Form: Four Studies in Consciousness and Philosophical Fiction" and is now a member of the Princeton Society of Fellows.

Danny Luzon wrote the thesis "Translational Encounters: Modernism, Jewishness and Translation in Literatures of the Mass Migration Period" and is now Assistant Professor of English at the University of Haifa.

Jocelyn Saidenberg wrote the thesis "Echo Otherwise" and is now Visiting Assistant Professor at Deep Springs College.

Simona Schneider wrote the thesis "On Lyrical Spectatorship: Invocation and Intermedial Encounters in the 1920s and Beyond" and is now a research post-doc at University of Udine, Italy.

Simone Stirner wrote the thesis "Ethical Tendencies: Forms of Attention in Poetry after the Holocaust" and is now Assistant Professor of German Studies in the Department of German, Russian, and East European Studies at Vanderbilt University.

Diana Thow wrote the thesis "Original Echoes: Poetic Subjectivity and Translation between Italy, France, and the US" and is now teaching at UC Berkeley in Italian Studies.

The 2020 B.A. graduates: **Gilad Barach, Jessica Burr, Humberto Castorena, Bella Chavez, Mixty Espinoza, Elizabeth Gobbo, Christina Hui, Molly Kearnan, Luna Khalil, Arianne Marcellin-Little, Emily McKinney, Brian McKnight, Iris Morrell, Paola Padilla, Hyeona Park, Kara Poon, Haley Rome, Cole Smith, Sean Stover, and Chase Wilmot.**

PLEASE DONATE HERE, THANK YOU!

In closing, we would like to thank our community of alumni and friends for their past and continued support to assist our graduate and undergraduate students.

Sincerely

Niklaus Largier, Chair, Comparative Literature