



LAKE FOREST COLLEGE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

Fall | 2023 | Soundings Newsletter

Welcome

These are exciting times for the Lake Forest College English Department. This fall sees the return of our former colleague Dustin Mengelkoch, whom many of you will be meeting for the first time. He will be teaching Literature and Medicine while Professor Reedy is on leave. The new semester also sees the return of Mark Eleveld, who will be teaching his popular course Slam Poetry and the Spoken Word for the second time. The semester will also see the publication of two books by members of the faculty. Prof. Goluboff has co-written a collection of poetry, *Citizens of Ordinary Time*, with Mark Luebbers, and even as I type, it is shipping from Urban Farmhouse Press. My own novel, *Alice B. Toklas is Missing*, will appear in November from Regal House. We must also congratulate Prof. Arnell for her Inklings Fellowship, a scholarly award that will allow her to develop the scholarly interests she shares with her Fielding Fellows. On a social note, we look forward to another fabulous Halloween party, and students are invited to marvel at the triumph of last semester's croquet tournament: the trophy, inscribed with the names of the winners, is on display in the department lounge. Onwards! Excelsior!

Robert Archambeau

Chair, Department of English

Inside This Issue

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Read on to find out about the events the English Department has planned for this semester, including the date for the opening of the Krebs Center and more!

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Do you want to get involved in English clubs and organizations? Read on about Tusitala, INK., Writing Club, and Dead Souls.

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LFC's alumni, faculty, and students have been keeping busy since the spring! Continue reading to hear about all their exciting news.

FALL 2023 Events Calendar

TRIP TO SARAH RUHL'S THEATER PRODUCTION OF *EURYDICE*

Lake Forest College will be providing transportation to *Eurydice*, written by Sarah Ruhl, internationally recognized playwright and professor at the Yale School of Drama. The play will take place at the **Writers Theatre in Glencoe, IL on October 1st**. Transportation will be provided. Please contact [Professor Ben Goluboff](#) for details. Visit the [Writers Theater website](#) for more information.



KREBS CENTER DISCUSSION WITH ZEYNEP TUFEKCI

The new Krebs Center for the Humanities will begin its first full year of operations in 2024-2025. You can read more about the Krebs Center [here](#).

For 2023, the Krebs Center will host a discussion between Zeynep Tufekci, internationally recognized authority on the interactions between technology and social, cultural, and political dynamics, and Executive Director of the Krebs Center and Professor of English Davis Schneiderman, at **5:30 p.m. on Friday, October 6th in the Lily Reid Holt Memorial Chapel**. More information can be found [here](#).



VISIT BY POET REGINALD GIBBONS



Reginald Gibbons, Francis Hooper Professor of Arts and Humanities at Northwestern University and winner of the Balcones Poetry Prize, the Folger Shakespeare Library's O.B. Hardison Jr. Poetry Prize, and the John Masefield Award from the Poetry Society of America, will be visiting Lake Forest College on **October 11th**. If you are interested in joining, please contact [Professor Ben Goluboff](#) for details.



ENGLISH DEPARTMENT HALLOWEEN PARTY



The English Department's annual Halloween party will take place from **4:30 pm. to 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 25th in Glen Rowan House.**

"HOW OLD ENGLISH BECAME NEW AGAIN: MEDIEVAL PERSPECTIVES ON MODERN QUESTIONS"



Can studying a culture from 1000 years ago—that of England before 1066—illuminate some of today's most pressing issues? Dr. Renée R. Trilling, Associate Professor of English and Medieval Studies Program Director at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, will approach this topic from two angles. First, she will explore the ways in which people in the past addressed some of the questions we still ask, such as how we define identity and then craft language to talk about it. Many past responses are not ones we would want to emulate today, but they are usefully thought-provoking as we negotiate our own thinking on these subjects. Second, she will discuss how modern attitudes influence the way we study the past—notably, how political ideologies influence the questions we ask of texts that are a millennium old. Among other subjects, Dr. Trilling will examine how the history of the English language can shed light on our contemporary discussions around the use of pronouns; the so-called #FemFog controversy and the ways in which feminist theory has influenced scholarship in Early English Studies (including Dr. Trilling's 2023 co-edited volume); and the recent debate on the very name of her field (from "Anglo-Saxon" to "Early English"). The lecture will be at **4:00 p.m. on Monday, October 30th in Meyer Auditorium, Hotchkiss Hall.**

"LAST UNICORNS AND TALKING HORSES: ON JUDAISM AND FANTASY LITERATURE"



What is Jewish fantasy, and how does it compare with the fantasies of Christian writers such as C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien? Is the Golem legend a Jewish fantasy, and what about the representations of Jews as occult figures in Gothic literature, twentieth-century pulp fiction, and twenty-first century YA fantasy? At **4:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 30th in Meyer Auditorium, Hotchkiss Hall**, Professor Michael Weingrad will discuss fantasy literature and its Jewish representations and writers, including Jewish American writers Peter S. Beagle and Bernard Malamud, and how Judaism provides, and subverts, a "story-shaped" account of the world.

CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

TUSITALA

Tusitala is Lake Forest College's premier literary magazine, dedicated to displaying the creativity and diversity of its student body. Published annually, Tusitala stands as both a creative outlet and showcase for the very best student poets, prose writers, photographers, and visual artists of every variety, including the occasional music score. The magazine celebrates the creative arts community of Lake Forest College by exhibiting art with the hope of inspiring, enlightening, and entertaining. Also, Tusitala is looking for new members and will be holding elections at the beginning of the year! For anyone interested in joining, contact [Paige Blackburn](#) of the editorial team.



WRITING CLUB

Writing Club provides a space on campus to foster the creative talents and passions of all students interested in writing. It's a place where writers support other writers as we explore different writing techniques and genres! Check out the weekly prompts on the Instagram page: @lfcwritingclub. If you're interested in joining, please contact the club president, [Shaina Maitino](#).



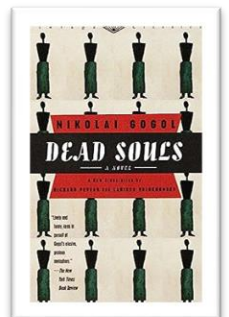
INK.

INK. is a literary club that provides discussions, open-mic nights, excursions into the city, games, and workshops to help foster, promote, and strengthen the English and creative writing community of Lake Forest College. Anyone interested in joining INK. can contact this year's club leader, [Emma Smith](#).



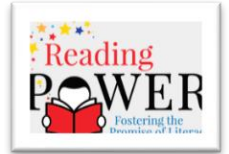
DEAD SOULS

A new literary group, Dead Souls (named after the writer Gogol's famous novel), will convene this fall on Fridays at 1:00 p.m. in Carnegie 102. It will be a readers' theater aimed at reanimating some great international classics of the literary underground. On tap this year will be George Orwell's *1984*, Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground*, and Kafka's *The Trial*. We'll read aloud together a chapter or two each week and then share ideas about these fascinating texts and their contemporary resonances. Join us for tea & some riveting discussions about texts on tyranny! Please contact [Professor Carla Arnell](#) if you are interested in attending. Faculty and students are both welcome—as are students from any major. No pre-reading necessary!



ARE YOU LOOKING TO VOLUNTEER THIS SEMESTER?

Reading Power is a non-profit based in Lake County looking for volunteer literacy tutors to work one-on-one with PreK-2nd students in North Chicago, Waukegan, and Zion schools on developing their reading skills. If you are interested, please contact [Professor Carla Arnell](#).



SCRABBLE SCRIMMAGE

Are you looking for some fun on late Friday afternoons? Do you love the board game Scrabble? If you have the patience for and interest in getting together with faculty and students to bone up on your Scrabble-playing prowess, please contact [Professor Carla Arnell](#). English majors, word nerds, and others all welcome!



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Sam Bickersteth (English & Philosophy '24) recently attended the International Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, Michigan to present a scholarly paper on the 20th century Arthurian poet Charles Williams. Sam's paper is an offshoot of the work he has done with Professor Carla Arnell to create an annotated edition of Williams' complex poetry.



Q & A with Sam Bickersteth

Q: Can you describe the topic of your paper and how you became involved with the medieval conference?

A: The main title of my paper was “The Nuntius of Byzantium, the Emperor’s Logothete,” which is a quotation drawn from the poetry of Charles Williams, a 20th century British writer and member of the Inklings (alongside C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien). I was delivering a paper on his Arthurian poetic cycles, which were very much concerned with the Matter of Britain and other medieval sources. I came across the conference by way of Professor Arnell, my tutor and longtime teacher, who recommended I send in a proposal, which was then accepted.

Q: What was your greatest takeaway from this experience?

A: My greatest takeaway would have to be how enjoyable it can be travelling as an academic, and all that you can learn about all manner of places and people you might visit for such conferences. It was a wonderful exercise in experiencing novelty.

Q: What did you learn from your fellow peers and participants in the conference?

A: I found myself in conversation with one professor (from the Netherlands, no less) on the bus over to the campus, who gave me some sound advice regarding pursuing what interests you, and being kind to those with whom you may happen be in competition. After delivering my presentation I was also fortunate enough to be able to attend another seminar on the theology of Thomas Aquinas, which I found very enlightening – not only in the technical content, but also in their style of self-presentation and address.

Q: How did you first become interested in medieval literature?

A: My interest in medieval literature began with the gradual osmosis of the Matter of Britain into my imagination at a fairly impressionable age; seeing tales of Merlin and Arthur displayed in various television programmes was combined with myths and fairytales read by [my] parents was more than enough to secure my [interest]. I was also familiar with Dante and Chaucer before coming to Lake Forest, but ENGL 210 with Prof. Arnell and 211 with Prof. Reedy certainly both further piqued my interest.

Q: How would you advise other students at Lake Forest who share an interest in medieval literature to become involved in this conference or similar activities?

A: I would encourage other budding medievalists to continue to read as much as you can on a subject that interests you, and then do some online research to see what relevant events are upcoming. Have a look in various societies, clubs, and groups – again all of which I’m sure can be researched on the Internet. If you find something that catches your eye and is logistically feasible (perhaps it will be on Zoom, even if far away), try and co-ordinate something with your tutor or another trusted member of the English faculty, and they will almost certainly be happy to help.

STUDENT NEWS

*2023 Recipient of The McPherson Prize
for Excellence in Scholarship (English)*

Nicole Nagel

*2023 Recipient of The Gail DeHerder
Memorial Prize in Creative Writing*

Rowan Guduru

FACULTY NEWS



Professor Joshua Corey's review of Ada Smailbegovic's *Poetics of Liveliness: Molecules, Fibers, Tissues, Clouds* was published in the most recent issue of *Modernism/Modernity*. Smailbegovic's book considers the intersection of scientific investigation and poetics in the work of such poets as Gertrude Stein, Jen Bervin, Christian Bök, and Lisa Robertson. The full review can be read here: <https://modernismmodernity.org/forums/posts/corey-poetics-liveliness-smailbegovic>.

Also, after a hiatus, he has resumed his occasional series of Substack essays on mostly literary topics and is just a couple posts away from concluding his series on Patrick O'Brian's epic Aubrey-Maturin cycle of historical novels. Read and subscribe at <https://joshuacorey.substack.com/>.



Professor Bret Rappaport's article "Humility - A Path to More Persuasive Legal Writing" was accepted for publication in the journal *Legal Communications and Rhetoric: JWALD*. The article explores a not surprising premise — that if lawyers were to write with more humility (both in their approach to writing and the execution of the text), they would be more effective. The thesis, however, applies to all persuasive writing. The article will be published next year in the journal. Additionally, this summer, Bret and Jina welcomed their second grandchild, little Maple Elizabeth Rappaport!



Professor Catherine Reedy and her husband Casey welcomed their new baby, Penelope Ann, in early August! Professor Reedy is on leave during the fall semester.



Professor Carla Arnell was recently chosen to be an Inklings Fellow during the 2023-24 academic year. One of an inaugural cohort of Fellows sponsored by a new program at the University of Notre Dame, Arnell will receive funding to develop a new course related to the Inklings and have opportunity to share pedagogical ideas and insights with other Inklings scholars nationwide throughout the year. Arnell has been collaborating with English and philosophy major Samuel Bickersteth ('24) and fellow scholar Sørina Higgins on an annotated edition of the Inkling Charles Williams's Arthurian poetry. She has a new book review forthcoming this October in the *Journal of Inklings Studies* as well as an essay called "Existential Mathematics: Charles Williams's Arthuriad and the Geometry of Love" forthcoming this December in the new Brepols Press book *Mystics, Goddesses, Lovers, and Teachers: Medieval Visions and Their Modern Legacies*. This essay was begun as a joint research project with former Richter scholar Jack Farrell (English and philosophy major '24). Arnell also taught a new FIYS course on the Inklings last fall with peer teacher and English major Denzel Marufu ('23).



Professor Davis Schneiderman has ended a five-year term as Krebs Provost and Dean of the Faculty, preceded by five years as Associate Dean of the Faculty, and he looks forward to rejoining the English Department after completing a sabbatical in 2023-24. While on sabbatical, Professor Schneiderman will work on several editorial projects related to his work on William S. Burroughs, for both University of Minnesota and Cambridge University Press.



Professor Ben Goluboff's *Citizens of Ordinary Time*, a collaboration with the Massachusetts poet Mark Luebbers, appeared from Urban Farmhouse Press in June. *Citizens* is nine suites of speculative biographical poetry about artists, writers, and other oddballs. In this collaborative poetic endeavor, Benjamin Goluboff (*Ho Chi Minh: A Speculative Life in Verse*) and Mark Luebbers (*Flat Light*) project the lives of eclectic and memorable people through speculative biography. Renowned in their use of this poetic style, here we see the likes Robert Frank, Bill Evans, Gerda Taro, Robert Capa, and others in imagined glimmers from their lives. In unique work that follows in the line of *Spoon River Anthology*, we are invited along for poetic experience that couples historical fact with deep-dive lyric experience. These are poems of experience, ones that let readers feel and hear and witness history in a way that makes it very real, almost personal, and leaves a lasting memory and lingering feelings.



Professor Robert Archambeau's novel *Alice B. Toklas is Missing* will appear from Regal House in November. Paperback, hardcover, and eBook versions will be available, followed by audiobook. The novel focuses on Jazz-age Paris, the center of the artistic and literary world, and the center of the center was Gertrude Stein's salon, where the famous and aspiring creative talents gathered to gawk at Stein's Picassos and vie for status. Young Midwesterner Ida Caine arrives in Paris with her husband Teddy, a would-be Hemingway who thinks he can adventure first and write later. When Teddy falls in with the Stein set, he brings Ida to the salon, where she is shunted into a corner with the wives of famous men. She burns with resentment and wonders if she can ever develop into a real artist herself. A few days later, Gertrude Stein's partner Alice B. Toklas vanishes. Stein calls upon Teddy to investigate. Soon after, he vanishes. Forced to seek out her missing husband, Ida follows his trail through a milieu including strange Surrealist rituals, Tarot card readings, and the catacombs beneath the city. She falls in with a young American poet, T.S. Eliot. An unlikely passion grows while they seek answers to the shocking disappearances.



Professor Henry Carrigan continues to write about books for *Publishers Weekly* and *BookPage*. Among some of his more recent reviews for *PW* are Emma Smith's "The Making of Shakespeare's First Folio" and David Yezzi's "Late Romance: Anthony Hecht, a Poetic Life." Some recent *BookPage* reviews include Jonathan Eig's *King: A Life*, Camille Dungy's *Soil: The Story of a Black Mother's Garden*, Anne Hull's *Through the Groves: A Memoir*, Ricardo Nuila's *The People's Hospital*, and Benjamin Moser's *The Upside-Down World: Meetings with the Dutch Masters*. Also, his most recent feature for *No Depression* was on Americana musician Rodney Crowell and his new album, which he recorded here in Chicago at Jeff Tweedy's studio



Professor RL Watson is the co-curator of the American Folk Art Museum exhibition *Unnamed Figures: Black Presence and Absence in the Early American North*, which highlights the inclusion and exclusion of Black individuals from history and artwork in the North from the late 1600s to the early 1800s. The exhibition, which includes 125 works of art, will open on November 15, 2023 and close on March 24, 2024. *Unnamed Figures* was featured in *Vulture's* article "10 Art Shows We Can't Wait to See This Fall." Read the article [here!](#)

ALUMNA SPOTLIGHT

Q & A with Katharine Pflaum Mershon

Congratulations are in order for Katharine Pflaum Mershon, a 2006 graduate of Lake Forest College, who currently teaches as an Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Western Carolina University and recently won the Excellence in Teaching Liberal Studies Award!



Q: How did you find your calling in philosophy and religion?

A: I came to the study of religion in a rather roundabout way. I grew up in Deerfield, the suburb right next to Lake Forest. Being raised there meant that I was exposed to the North Shore's vibrant Jewish community. While I was raised in a secular home, the importance of Judaism was instilled in me by other relatives and more observant Jewish friends. Over time, I started asking questions about how I could be Jewish without knowing the religion's central rituals and prayers, or what it meant to identify as "culturally Jewish." These kinds of questions drew me to religious studies classes, where I could explore personal questions within an academic framework. I also started college less than a year after 9/11. I was deeply troubled by the rise in Islamophobia and the escalation leading to the War in Iraq. It felt vitally important to learn more about Islam so that I could speak intelligently about the religion and Muslim cultures in general. When a friend of mine alerted me to a class on the Abrahamic religions, I jumped at the opportunity. After that experience, I was hooked. I also started to see how my literature courses raised religious questions, which led me to bring the two fields together more and more.

Q: How did Lake Forest College contribute to your interest in philosophy and religion? Did you know from the beginning that you wanted to pursue philosophy and religion, or did you discover your interest in these subjects throughout your education?

A: When I started at Lake Forest, I did not anticipate that I'd spend my adult life pursuing the study of religion or philosophy. I was a literature person, through-and-through. My advisor was the inimitable Rick Mallette, of beloved memory. He was a scholar of early modern British literature, and many of the texts we read engaged with religious ideas and questions. One of my absolute favorite classes was "Shakespeare and Religion," which Professor Mallette co-taught with Rabbi Bronstein, a wonderful teacher and religious leader. I remember writing about the figure of Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice," which was my first time exploring representations of Jewish people in literature. While I mostly write about animals and religion these days, I love teaching about Jewish identity.

Q: How did your degree in English from Lake Forest College assist you in pursuing your current areas of interest in education and research?

A: Because the academic study of religion is interdisciplinary, it is not defined by a single method or field. This feature is appealing because it gives me the flexibility to use my literary studies training to think about how religious language and concepts appear in non-traditional spaces. My English literature background has made me extra attentive to how we use language in everyday life, which is what led me to my current research project on religion and dog rescue.

Q: When did you realize that you wanted to teach? Was there a specific moment?

A: While there wasn't a single moment that led me to teaching, there is a specific person who had a major impact on my pedagogy: Professor Carla Arnell. I could describe how beautifully designed her classes were or talk about how much I loved hearing her read Chaucer in Middle English, but her example as a teacher goes beyond her brilliance. She caught me when I was the most unsure of myself and helped me to see my own strengths. This happened through countless small interactions. Today I try to follow her example. I reach out to students when they do something well, not only when they are struggling. I make myself available to meet outside of class. I strive to make students feel seen and heard. I would not be where I am today without Professor Arnell, and I try to pay her immeasurable generosity to me forward in my own teaching.

Q: What have been your most formative experiences since your time at Lake Forest? What was your experience like at Whitman College?

A: That's a tough question; so much has happened since then! Right after college, I moved to Chicago with my best friend from Lake Forest. We lived in a tiny shabby apartment. It was perfect. I adopted a cat. And then another one. And then a dog. I married an incredible human who has moved around the country with me (and accepted the fact that I am always finding stray animals).

My years at the University of Chicago had a major impact on me as a scholar, teacher, and human being. I loved living in Hyde Park and being surrounded by so many bookstores. My friends and I developed an Animal Studies workshop, which included graduate students from across the Humanities and Social Sciences who shared an interest in foregrounding non-human animals in their research. Through that workshop, I learned that I am happiest when I'm collaborating with people across disciplines. It also led me to develop my current project. The chance to teach at Whitman certainly was a formative experience. As someone who hadn't lived outside the Chicagoland area, moving to rural Washington State was such an adventure. I learned that I am more adaptable than I thought I was. Walla Walla was a beautiful place to live. Whitman's small classes and close-knit community felt very similar to Lake Forest. I had generous colleagues who mentored me, and patient students who helped me become a better teacher. I was also able to develop and teach a wide range of classes, from "Religion as Popular Culture" and "Hyphenated Identities in Jewish Literature" to "The Ethics of Apologies" and "Religion and Animal Ethics." I was lucky to spend my first two years after graduate school teaching there.

Q: What advice would you give to Lake Forest students with similar academic interests?

A: My first piece of advice would be to get to know your professors. They are brilliant people who are committed to teaching. Learn as much as you can from them. Go to their office hours, even if it feels scary at first. I'd also say to make the most of your proximity to Chicago. I know Lake Forest now has a robust set of programs in the city, and I'd definitely take advantage of them. If you specifically want to go into academia, I'd recommend taking some time off in between college and graduate school. It's good to go work in the world and take some time figuring out who you are and what you care about. (Take this from someone who didn't take much time off and therefore took forever to get their doctorate!).

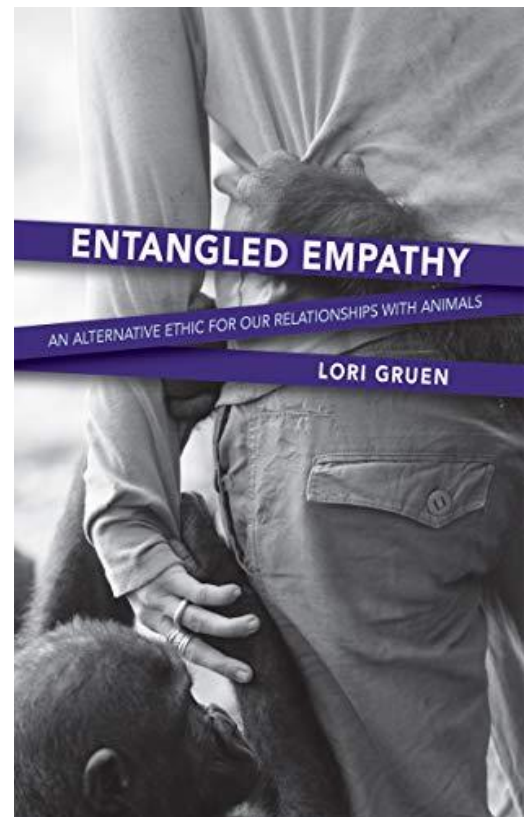
Q: Your work entailing the intersection of animal studies and religion, which you discuss in “The Theology of Dog Training in Vicki Hearne’s *Adam’s Task*,” is incredibly interesting. Before reading your article, I had never considered animal studies through a theological lens. What sparked this thought process? What impact do you think viewing the relationship between people and animals from a religious perspective will have?

[Read Katharine's Article here!](#)

A: Thank you for taking the time to read that article! This piece is part of a book manuscript that I’m currently revising. The project started while I was volunteering at Chicago Animal Care and Control. I was walking a dog outside when I heard an announcement over the loudspeaker calling an animal control officer to the front desk for a “dog redemption.” This is ordinary language in the world of animal shelters. It refers to the process of a person coming to claim their lost companion animal. They pay a fee, show proof of ownership, and then get their animal back. At the same time, the process of redeeming a dog from the shelter takes on a religious dimension, bearing structural similarity to Christian conversion narratives, in which someone is saved from the prospect of death or sin, and thereby “born again.” This religious meaning of redemption is often extended from the dog to the human rescuer through stories that describe an experience of personal healing, moral satisfaction, and unconditional love. Soon, I was no longer writing a dissertation about Jewish-American identity (my original plan), and instead writing about dog redemption narratives in the U.S. I hope that my work will encourage people to think about a multispecies framework of justice – what the ecofeminist Lori Gruen calls “entangled empathy.”

Q: In your article, you conclude that, “Although it seems intuitive to imagine interspecies communication as an absolute good, *Adam’s Task* reveals the dangers of a theology that relies on a structure in which the dog is always—and only—integrated into a human model of the sacred.” What do you think interspecies communication would look like when a theology does not necessitate the integration of the dog into a manmade definition of sacred?

A: This is a great question, and something that I’m still very much thinking through in my work. Part of what I was after there was pointing out the ways in which religion could be used to justify forms of domination or violence against non-human animals. Given that animals are property under the law, we humans have a great deal of power over them. I want us to think about the world from a perspective that de-centers the human, and in turn, to become curious about other ways of being and knowing. Animals speak too; we just have to learn how to listen.



ALUMNI NEWS

Chloe Phillips '21 is starting her second year in the MFA program at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, NY. Last year she gave her first public reading at Brooklyn Poets, which was “scary and really fun!” This year she will be writing her MFA thesis, likely under the direction of acclaimed contemporary poet Matthea Harvey.

Tyler Madeley '18 is a Middle School Teacher and Humanities Department Chair at St. Anne’s-Belfield.

Maggie Lynch '17 is Associate Marketing Manager at Allstate Insurance.

Caroline Warrick-Schkolnik '22 is beginning a Ph.D. in English at the University of Rochester, having just completed her M.A. there in English.

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