Greetings from the Department of English and Comparative Literature. This is a time of great energy and dynamism in the department as we build on our strengths and explore new directions. Propelling us forward is a revitalized sense of the necessity of the humanities in our current historical moment, one that is underscored by our conviction that few other fields offer the tools not only to understand cultural change but also to effect it.

The following pages recount just some of our efforts in this regard, with a range of new courses and initiatives. On a more personal note, in Fall 2017 we welcomed Dr. Laurie Champion to a full-time appointment in the department, and we celebrated the scholarship and teaching of Dr. June Cummins-Lewis, who retired from the university last spring. June leaves an incomparable legacy among the students and colleagues who were fortunate to work with her.

As always, we would very much like to hear from our alumni and emeritus faculty and to feature your accomplishments in future newsletters. Please don't hesitate to write to us, or to stop by the department office at any time. We wish you a bright start to 2018.

Michael Borgstrom
Chair

Department Welcomes New Faculty Member

In Fall 2017, the department welcomed Dr. Angel Daniel Matos to the faculty. Dr. Matos (PhD, University of Notre Dame) is a specialist in children's and young adult literature, with strong interests in LGBTQ+ fiction and media. His primary work explores how queer experiences, histories, and emotions are shaped and narrativized in LGBTQ+ youth fiction; he examines how queer narrative and aesthetic practices foster political and affective frameworks that complicate current understandings of the young adult genre.

In addition to youth literature and queer studies, his research and teaching interests also include space and place, digital fan production, speculative literature, and media studies. His work has appeared in such journals as The ALAN Review and Queer Studies in Media and Popular Culture, as well as the book collections Gender(ed) Identities: Critical Rereadings of Gender in Children’s and Young Adult Literature and Lessons in Disability: Essays on Teaching with Young Adult Literature.

Dr. Matos is currently completing a book manuscript that examines the tensions that arise when the optimistic and socializing frameworks of the young adult genre encounter the pessimism and antiauthoritarianism traditionally associated with queer texts. He is also co-editing a volume on intersectional approaches to space and place in film and media.

Already, Dr. Matos has had a transformative effect on the department's curriculum. In Fall 2017, he offered classes in "Undoing Adolescence" (in which students were asked to rethink common assumptions about adolescence) and "In Search of Queer Forms" (which examined how queer experience is "shaped, organized, and aestheticized" in various genres and contexts). For the current semester, Dr. Matos will be offering courses in "Social Justice and Activism in Children's and Young Adult Literature" and "The Queer Young Adult Novel." With his arrival, Dr. Matos brings together cutting-edge work in both children's literature and LGBTQ+ studies, two traditional strengths of the department. We are delighted to have him here!
Emeritus Spotlight: Alida Allison

It’s difficult writing these things about retired friends. And it’s especially difficult writing one for Alida Allison. When I got the job here at San Diego State University back in 2007, Alida really made me feel at home. Her broad smile, her willingness to share her expansive knowledge about nearly every element of the university. I mean, man, she’d been around SDSU since the 1960s—working on, what? three majors?—and then she was back again in the 80s, when she started studying creative writing in the very department in which she’s now a professor emerita. And she knew her way around the discipline too: Alida’s a well-published and much-admired scholar (her book on Isaac Bashevis Singer came out in 1996, when I was still dorking around in rock and roll bands in Georgia)—and, hell, a decade earlier she was writing and publishing books for kids. I have three of her scholarly books on my shelf, but knowing her, she probably has a few others stashed around somewhere. She likes to write. She’s good at it. And her writing always communicates her incredible history.

So when I got here, the first thing I noticed about Alida (and I’d met her before, but once I got here, she gave me something she wouldn’t before my arrival) was her big, broad smile, a smile which carried (still does, but I’m talking about back when I was new here at SDSU) Alida’s wild, ranging life. Born in Brooklyn, raised in Palm Springs, Alida had an aura of grooviness, even if she didn’t talk about her hitchhiking tours in India back in the 1960s too much. Or her more recent trips abroad—which she still makes as regularly, it seems, as I get up to Los Angeles. And I get up to Los Angeles a lot. I used to joke her about the life-sized Wolverine in her office—not the cartoon, but a full-sized Hugh Jackman Wolverine cutout. She’d say I was just jealous. And I was. She didn’t give it to me when she left for Colorado. I really, really wish she had.

Let me tell you: it’s difficult writing these things about retired friends. I miss Alida a helluva lot. I know the department does. I know everyone involved in the National Center for the Study of Children’s Literature does (it should go without saying, but let me say it anyway: she helped make that Center what it is today). One of things I most miss about Alida is how she’d come out with me to that big tree—now years gone—in front of Storm Hall and share a smoke. She didn’t make me feel like some burnout. She made me feel like a colleague. A friend. And she’d impart some of her knowledge.

But I’m glad Alida’s still out there, hanging in Colorado. Traveling. Doing her groovy thing. But I miss her. A lot. We all do.

Joseph T. Thomas, Jr.

Digital Humanities New Center Opens

We are excited to announce that The Digital Humanities Center at San Diego State University Library (LA 61) opens this semester! The Digital Humanities Center will serve as an interdisciplinary hub for the campus Digital Humanities Initiative and the "Digital Humanities and Global Diversity" Area of Excellence. The Center supports research, teaching, and learning that values the importance of the humanities and the interactions of humans in real time and space in the digital age.

The space, once the Media Center, underwent a major transformation over the last year (you can follow the photo journey of the transformation) to become an important new space on campus for faculty and students to gather, learn, share, and produce creative-critical collaborations and exhibitions.

The mission and design of the new Digital Humanities Center was guided by input from students, faculty, and staff who participated in design workshops led by our new Digital Humanities Librarian, Dr. Pamella Lach.

Last November 2017, we held an unofficial Welcome event in the Center. This “Meet and Greet” introduced over 100 faculty, students, staff, and Deans, to the space and also to our new Digital Humanities Faculty. Five faculty members, including Dr. Lach, were hired under our Area of Excellence initiative. The event featured lightning talks from the new Digital Humanities Core Faculty as well as the officers of the Digital Humanities Collaborative, a student organization.

All of this—the new faculty hires and the DH Center—were spearheaded by faculty from the Department of English and Comparative Literature. Professors Joanna Brooks and Jessica Pressman wrote the proposal for the Area of Excellence in “Digital Humanities and Global Diversity,” which was awarded in 2015. Since then, we have been building a research program and a place to practice for twenty-first-century humanities research and teaching.

Follow our progress: dh.sdsu.edu
In collaboration with SDSU's Jewish Studies Program, the department brought two acclaimed Israeli artists to campus to team-teach a course in screenwriting for Fall 2017. Filmmakers Nir Bergman and David Ofek brought their expertise to the classroom via the Schusterman Visiting Israeli Artists Program, which hosted 13 prominent Israeli artists for residencies at top universities across the United States during the 2017-2018 academic year.

Nir Bergman is the director, writer, and co-creator of the hit HBO TV series "In Treatment," starring Gabriel Byrne. Bergman's college thesis film, "Sea Horses," and feature film debut, "Broken Wings," received numerous awards in Israel and Europe. Bergman has written and directed a number of very successful Israeli TV series, such as "Catching the Sky," "Meurav Yerushalmi," which was a prizewinner at the Israeli Academy Awards (2003), and has been a co-writer and director for "Betipul" (2005). He has also produced the satiric series "Haretseua" (2004). Since 2005, Bergman has been manager of the Israel Channel 10 Drama Department.

David Ofek's works incorporate elements of documentary and feature films. His documentary "No. 17 Is Anonymous" was featured in MoMA's New Directors/ New Films series and subsequently screened in 80 international festivals. Other documentaries have tackled subjects from home hospice care to the Israeli songwriter Eli Mohar. His television series "Bat Yam-New York" and "Home" have won numerous awards in Israel and Europe. He is known, as well, for his work on "The Barbecue People" (2003), "Minimum Wage" (2012), and "The Tale of Nicolai & the Law of Return" (2008).

The opportunity to bring artists like Bergman and Ofek to campus to work with our students was made possible by The Visiting Israeli Artists program. This program is an initiative of the Israel Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based academic institute that aims to enhance the study of modern Israel. The institute brings Israeli filmmakers, choreographers, musicians, writers and visual artists for residencies at universities and other cultural organizations in North America. The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation founded the program in 2008 to foster interactions between the artists and their communities, exposing a broader audience to contemporary Israeli culture.

This is the second successful collaboration between the Department of English and Comparative Literature and SDSU’s Jewish Studies Program; under the auspices of the Schusterman Visiting Artists program, we welcomed acclaimed novelist Assaf Gavron to the department in Spring 2016 when he taught "Techniques of the Novel" to an enthusiastic group of undergraduate and graduate students.

"Stranger Things"

The Department of English and Comparative Literature is always experimenting with new curricular possibilities. This past Fall semester, a group of 37 students signed up for a section of English 503 devoted to the study of the sci-fi-gothic-horror Netflix series "Stranger Things." Professor Phillip Serrato surmises that it was “the first course of its kind ever offered in the history of our world and/or the history of the Upside Down.” Many enrolled in the course as fans of the series, while others not acquainted with it signed up out of curiosity in what such a course would entail. Over the span of the semester, students analyzed and critiqued the entire series, including the second season, which did not debut until midway through the semester.

The course was an experiment that proved to be tremendously successful owing to students’ adventurous willingness to scrutinize a “text” popularly considered a form of entertainment rather than the basis for serious study in an upper-division university offering. Drawing upon, among other things, gothic theory, queer theory, feminism, and psychoanalysis, students performed close readings of all 17 episodes to arrive at critical understandings of the series’ storylines and appreciation for the complexity of assorted details.

Highlights of the semester included not only the close readings and discussions (they’ll never view a Trapper Keeper the same way again), but also a viewing party for the premiere of season 2, the “What about Barb?” projects that they crafted, and the fan production work that they submitted. By the end of the semester the groundbreaking cohort of 37 Liberal Studies, Television & Film Studies, and English & Comparative Literature majors proved themselves to be a brilliant and ambitious bunch. Between their brilliant creativity and analytical dexterity, the result was a splendidly productive experience for all.
Visiting Writers

T
his Fall, our Department hosted several writers who are recognized both locally and nationally. In November, Joe Deegan, a San Diego journalist who’s written many popular cover stories for the San Diego Reader, visited campus to meet with faculty and students. Joe spoke about his career as a journalist and gave an in-depth presentation about various stages of publishing and the editorial process, from getting one’s first assignment in a newspaper to writing regular columns and cover-stories. He also led a lively discussion about the various ways journalism has changed over the years and where it is headed now, in the age of fake news.

This November, we also hosted Victoria Chang, an award-winning poet and non-fiction writer. A child of immigrant parents, Chang went on to receive her BA in Asian Studies from University of Michigan, a M.A. from Harvard University, and a M.F.A. from Warren Wilson. She’s published many books of poems, and edited a groundbreaking anthology: *Asian American Poetry: The Next Generation*. Her work has been recognized by the Guggenheim Fellowship, and she has received multiple awards, including those from the National Endowment for the Arts and PEN Center. Her illustrated book for children, *Is Mommy?* was included on The New York Times’ Notable Books list for 2015.

Chang read from her two most recent poetry collections, *Boss* (McSweeneyys) and *Barbie Chang* (Copper Canyon Press), and discussed the process of writing a book-long, narrative, poetic sequence. A poetry editor at *Tupelo Quarterly*, Chang also discussed the editorial process and the relationship between an author and their editor. She also spoke passionately about the place of a poet in a time of crisis. Chang will be back at SDSU in the Fall of 2018, to read for our Living Writers Series.

—Ilya Kaminsky

A Message from Zine Club

SDSU Zine & DIY Culture Club is the coolest club on campus. During meetings we like to make zines, listen to music, and goof around. Zine is short for fanzine. Fanzines came up in the 1930’s when geeks would write stories and reviews pertaining to Sci-Fi. They would trade and sell their fanzines. Now, zines are anything you want them to be and are often filled with photography, poetry, stories, artwork, political ideas, etc.

One of the perks of making zines is that you are not censored. Because you self-publish your zines (i.e. make copies with a copy machine), you have complete freedom to say and do whatever you want with them. In Zine Club, we like to collaborate on zines as well as work individually. We trade our final copies with each other and also participate in zine fests, such as San Diego Zine Fest. We just submitted an application to table at Los Angeles Zine Fest, so hopefully that will be in our schedule for the summer. Our most recent collaborative project has been our new series called *Lightstrips*, which is a zine where each member contributes one poem. We are also currently working on another one called *The Playlist* where we are compiling a list of our favorite songs and writing about why we like them or making art about how they make us feel.

We’re a friendly group of people and welcome anyone to join no matter your age, gender, religion, sexuality, race, ethnicity, economic status, ability, etc. We’ll teach you how to make zines if you’re new to them! Check out our Instagram and Twitter accounts for official meeting days and times for the Spring 2018 Semester!

Instagram: @sdsuzineclub
Twitter: @sdsuzineclub
On October 4th, 2017, four eminent professors of Children’s Literature—Professors Mary Galbraith, Angel D. Matos, Phillip Serrato, and Joseph T. Thomas Jr.—discussed their views on the current state of the discipline.

Professor Galbraith began the roundtable discussion. Teaching at SDSU since 1996, she focuses her research on childhood studies: an interdisciplinary field that “brings together material from literature, psychology, history, anthropology, and neurobiology.” She briefly discussed aesthetics in Children’s Literature and then began to acknowledge the established dichotomy between child voice and adult voice as presented in Children’s Literature.

Professor Serrato presented next. His research focuses on identity, sex, and gender in Children’s Literature; he discussed his current project, titled “Queer Possibilities: Pleasure, Power, and Identity in Children’s Gothic Literature and Media.” The book will focus on how “queerness functions in multifarious forms in children’s gothic literature” with the intent of trying to “unhook queerness from sexuality by conceptualizing and deploying it more broadly in terms of strangeness, non-normativity, unconventionality, and illegibility.”

Professor Matos introduced after Professor Serrato. Professor Matos was recently hired at SDSU, and specializes in Children’s and Young Adult Literature, LGBTQ+ Fiction and Media, Film and Television, Space and Place. He discussed fan fiction, fan art, and his book project—tentatively titled "Feeling Infinite: Queer Affect History and World Making in LGBTQ Young Adult Literature"—and how it “explores the tension between a history of negative emotion, of negative affect, and what happens when you have more positive emotions and more positive frameworks merging within this [YA] narrative.”

Last but not least, Professor Thomas introduced himself. Director of the Children’s Literature Program at SDSU, Professor Thomas’s research revolves around “the avant-garde, poetry, children’s poetry” and is interested in “how something is determined to be aesthetically beautiful when it comes to Children’s Literature.” He states that even when Children’s Literature became a purely literary study, it was “shaped in a theoretical milieu suspicious of objective claims of aesthetic value—suspicous, even, of the unproblematic category of literature itself” and that “while the discipline does engage with aesthetic debate, these debates are rarely put in terms of aesthetics.”

Many questions were asked—from questions of clarification, to debating the intended audience of Children’s Literature, to the impact of Fan Fiction, and the “Young Adult Renaissance.” Overall, the roundtable talk emphasized to all present the liveliness and wide-reaching presence of the Children’s Literature field. The four scholars presenting—all with a variety of interests—were able to exemplify how much the field is growing and how much it has to offer those interested in the subject matter.

Chris Deming
with Andrea Kade

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The Department of English and Comparative Literature sponsors an essay contest each year recognizing outstanding work in honor of past faculty members of the department. For the 2017-18 academic year, students are invited to submit essays from one of the following fields: modernism; rhetoric. The 2017-18 contest honors the work of Professor Sherry Little, who was a member of the department from 1982 to 2009. Professor Little earned her Ph.D. from Arizona State University. Over the course of her career, Professor Little published several articles and essays, as well as studies of Joyce, scientific and technical communication, and rhetoric. At San Diego State, she served as Chair of the department and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Letters.

The award winner will be recognized at Commencement and will receive $250.

**RULES/GUIDELINES**

- Eligible fields: modernism; rhetoric
- The contest is open to both undergraduate and graduate students.
- The essay must be 10 - 25 pages in length.
- The essay must be turned in to AL-228 by April 20, 2018.
The great novelist and poet James Dickey asserts, “Poetry makes possible the deepest kind of personal possession of the world; the more your encounter with poetry deepens, the more your experience of your own life will deepen.” This speaks to the unique opportunity poetry affords—to look both inward and outward, to discover new possibilities of perceiving the world and our place in it, as Walt Whitman might say, ‘to contain multitudes.’ This fall, the Hugh C. Hyde Living Writers Series delighted in celebrating the accomplishments of three MFA Poetry Program graduates who are writing to deepen our encounters with poetry.

Tana Jean Welch is the author of *Latest Volcano*, winner of the 2015 Marsh Hawk Press Poetry Prize. Her debut collection speaks to both a classic and contemporary sensibility in which timeless tropes of love, sex, and war are made new. In Tana’s mythos, “Norine, whose internet photo is reminiscent of Lara Croft, Tomb Raider,” and “Cleopatra, who unfurls her body on the soft-spun cotton sheets,” are equal conduits for exploration that connect past with present, surmising that “we can never leave the worlds we once inhabited.” Timothy Daniel Welch is the author of *Odd Bloom Seen From Space*, which won the Iowa Poetry Prize in 2016. The poems in his debut collection wield lyrical intensity and intelligence; they are evocative meditations, myths, playful musings, and personal revelations that bring us to the “necessary understanding that we are together, we are watching, and we feel everything.” Author Ronald Wallace calls the collection “a book of marvels, a marvel of a book.” Tana and Timothy gave a spirited joint reading followed by an informative Q&A session that included advice on post-MFA life and the revision process.

Erin Rodoni is the author of two poetry collections, both of which debuted in 2017: *Body, in Good Light*, and *A Landscape for Loss*, which won the 2016 Stevens Manuscript Prize sponsored by the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. She is the recent recipient of the Montreal International Poetry prize, and her poems have been included in the Best New Poets anthology, featured on Verse Daily, nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and honored with an Intro Journals Award from the Association of Writers and Writing programs. Both poetry collections demonstrate Erin’s astute ability to explore the universal through personal, often intimate perspectives. Through precise distillation of image and music and narratives that are at once wise and inquisitive, Erin’s poems explore our multitudes. From a mysterious neighborhood house where “every room is a childhood,” to a restaurant at the edge of the world when “fog hunched, an old ghost, above the bay,” to a tender lesson in a family’s garden: “Oh my darlings we are so small…Feel how we are always falling into that star-spread black expanse…And feel too the way the earth holds us, and we are held.” Her poetry, as Dickey suggests, invites readers to turn both inward and outward, to understand what it means to be human, and revel in that shared wonderment. Of Erin’s work, poet Gerald Fleming raves, “Rodoni’s freshly metaphoric poems exist as if vertically layered, membraned in a glass through which both reader and author apprehend the world. The result is a journey that engages on every page—moves both mind and heart.” Erin read from both collections and conducted a Q&A session that addressed publishing and the writing process.

This spring we continue to celebrate the achievements of MFA Program graduates with readings from poet Ephraim Scott Sommers (*The Night We Set the Dead Kid on Fire*) on February 28, and novelist Chad Stroup (*Secrets of the Weird*) on April 4. We are also excited to feature award-winning poet Hadara Bar-Nadav (conjointly with the Portuguese Program) on March 7, poet, scholar, and translator Ana Luisa Amaral (conjointly with the Portuguese Program) on March 7, as well as author of *Waking Lions*, a NYT Notable Book of 2017, Ayelet Gundar Goshen (conjointly with the Jewish Studies Program) on March 21, and novelist Jade Chang on April 18 as part of the Laurie Okuma Memorial Series.

-Meagan Marshall
Faculty Accomplishments

Michael Borgstrom published "Inside Out: Queer Time in Midcareer" in Educators Queering Academia. Another essay, "Out of Sight: Academic Otherness and the Paradox of Visibility" is forthcoming in Marginalized Identities in Higher Education: Inside and Outside the Academy.

Clare Colquitt (along with colleagues in European Studies and German) has been awarded a 2017-18 Common Experience grant for the group’s joint proposal: "Imagining Europe."

Katie Farris’s new chapbook, Thirteen Intimacies, is out from Five Hundred Places. Also, Katie’s story "Mother Superior in Hell" was chosen by Justin Torres to receive the 2017 Orison Anthology Award.

Yetta Howard’s book, Ugly Differences, is listed in the Spring 2018 University of Illinois Press catalog.

Jenny Minniti-Shippey led a poetry workshop at the Carlsbad Public Library on Sunday, 11/5. Participants dove into three aspects of life as a working poet: the practice of writing, editing and revising poems; the performance of poetry reading; and the best methods for publication of original work. Also, Jenny’s full-length poetry collection, After the Tour, was accepted for publication by Calypso Editions (due out in 2018).

National Center for the Study of Children’s Literature has a wonderful write up in the CSU’s online News Section. See also the terrific interviews of Angel Matos and Phillip Serrato on the NCSCL blog!

Bill Nericcio presented his exhibit, "Mextasy: Seductive Hallucinations of Latina/o Mannequins Prowling the American Unconscious," on Thursday 10/26 at Salisbury University as part of their Annual Hispanic Heritage Month Festival. Bill also provided the keynote lecture for "Lorca in LA," a one-day conference celebrating the works of Federico García Lorca. The conference took place on Friday, 12/1 at the Parkside International Residence College on the USC Campus.

Jessica Pressman was a speaker at Duke University on Friday, 11/17 at the "The Futures of Literature, Science, and Media." This was a one-day workshop hosted by the Program in Literature in honor of Professor Katherine Hayles. The event was part of the FHI Humanities Futures Mellon Foundation grant exploring future trajectories of humanities disciplines in the wake of the interdisciplinary developments of recent decades.

Phillip Serrato and Jessica Pressman have been awarded a 2017-18 Common Experience grant for their proposal: "Children’s Literature and the Digital."
UPCOMING EVENTS AT SDSU

1/31  JUNOT DIAZ (MALAS)
2/7   HADARA BAR-NADAV (LIVING WRITERS)
2/15  MARK C. MARINO (CHILDREN’S LITERATURE/DIGITAL HUMANITIES)
2/19  HOANG TAN NGUYEN OF UCSD (CO-SPONSORED BY LGBTQ-RC)
2/27  KRYS TAL HOWARD (CHILDREN’S LITERATURE)

3/2-3  11TH ANNUAL STUDENT RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM
3/7   ANA LUISA AMARAL (LIVING WRITERS)
3/14  JAN SUSINA (CHILDREN’S LITERATURE)
3/21  AYELET GUNDAR GOSHEN (LIVING WRITERS)

4/4   CHAD STRoup (LIVING WRITERS)
4/18  THE LAURIE OKUMA MEMORIAL READING FEAT. JADE CHANG (LIVING WRITERS)
4/22  CHILDREN’S LITERATURE / E-LITERATURE COMPETITION DEADLINE

Please visit our website for additional information.