

TABLEAU

A traditional Chinese ink and wash illustration. A large, multi-headed dragon with a human-like face and a long, scaly body dominates the center. It has multiple eyes and a fierce expression. A deity or immortal figure, wearing a red robe and a tall, ornate headdress, is positioned in the lower right, holding a long, thin object (possibly a sword or a staff) that extends towards the dragon. The background features stylized waves and rocky terrain. The overall style is characteristic of traditional Chinese art.

THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO | SPRING 2017

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ON THE COVER

The University's Center for the Art of East Asia created the Digital Scrolling Paintings Project to allow students of East Asian painting to view these handscrolls, painted horizontally on silk or paper, as they were intended to be viewed. To see more, visit scrolls.uchicago.edu. Unidentified Chinese artist, *Erlang and His Soldiers Driving Out Animal Spirits* (detail), Ming dynasty (15th century), handscroll, ink and color on silk. Photograph © May 2017, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Dear Alumni and Friends,

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “signature” as “a distinctive technique, attribute, product, etc., which is identified or associated with a particular person or thing.” I can quite readily characterize the cutting-edge scholarship of my colleagues in the Division of the Humanities as “signature” work.

I think of **Agnes Callard’s** (Philosophy) forthcoming book, *Aspiration: The Agency of Becoming*, in which she describes an emergent nondeliberative rationality that aims to bring about a change within, rather than outside, a person. Or **Chris Kennedy’s** (Linguistics) article “Two Sources of Subjectivity: Qualitative Assessment and Dimensional Uncertainty” (*Inquiry* 56 [2013], 258–77), which uses a diagnostic called truth assessment, together with analysis of grammatical structure, to examine the way that certain adjectives convey subjective and nonsubjective opinions.

These erudite and path-breaking studies, honed in graduate seminars, University workshops, and scholarly conferences, contribute to the significant body of work that each scholar is building.

Happily, this research also finds its way into the formation of our undergraduate students. This spring, the College is launching a new initiative, the Signature Course Program. These classes have been competitively selected to introduce College students to exciting themes, ideas, and materials in the humanities and social sciences, and afford unique and memorable learning experiences, exemplary of humanistic inquiry.

The Humanities Division faculty will be offering seven intriguing signature courses. Callard’s class, *Self-Creation as a Philosophical and Liter-*



Anne Walters Robertson

ary Problem, clearly resonates with her forthcoming book, and Kennedy’s course, pithily titled *Truth*, likewise recalls a methodology that he employs in his research. Students will have other options as well—*Big: Monumental Buildings and Sculptures in the Past and Present* (**James Osborne**, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations), *Richer and Poorer: Income Inequality* (**Elaine Hadley**, English Language and Literature), *Introduction to the Middle East* (**Fred Donner**, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations), *Traditional East Asian Literature: Ghosts and the Fantastic* (**Judith Zeitlin**, East Asian Languages and Civilizations), and *Making and Meaning in the American Musical* (**Thomas Christensen**, Music).

What catches my eye in these titles is how skillfully my colleagues have managed to shape their research so that it will introduce undergraduates to unfamiliar disciplines and methodologies, inspiring them perhaps to investigate these areas further. Through these signatures across the Division, College students can engage directly with Divisional faculty research.

As newly appointed dean of the Division of the Humanities, I very much look forward to encouraging this type of direct transfer of knowledge and to supporting the continued excellence of our faculty, staff, and students in the Division over the next five years.

Anne W. Robertson

Anne Walters Robertson
Dean, Division of the Humanities
Claire Dux Swift Distinguished Service Professor,
Department of Music

Shiori Tada performs a solo near the outset of Jephtha’s Daughter, a performance piece by Saar Magal that premiered in Munich in 2015. Graduate and undergraduate students workshoped the piece during a laboratory course at the Logan Center taught by Magal and her collaborator David Levin, chair of Theater and Performance Studies. For more on TAPS, see page 12.

FROM LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEA DIETRICH; PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN ZICH



THE FIGHT FOR TRUTH

BY JEANIE CHUNG

Humanists look at a post-truth world.

The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s 2016 Word of the Year was "post-truth": an adjective "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." But what is truth? The eternal question has some new—and old—answers.

Truth, Lies, and Bullshit

For the ancient Greeks, truth was considered not only a virtue but intrinsic to one's personality. The ancient Greek verb *aletheuein* means "to be truthful," reflecting a sense of action. "Truth," says **Gabriel Richardson Lear**, professor and chair of the Department of Philosophy, "is something we do."

"What Plato and Aristotle really are aware of," she says, "is that when I speak to you, I'm

not just telling you something about the way I think the world is. I'm also showing you who I take myself to be."

Thus, communication "is not just passing information from one person to another. It's a relationship between people."

And like any relationship, truth is based on a certain amount of trust, says **Chris Kennedy**, the William H. Colvin Professor in Linguistics. According to the grammatical and social norms of language, when someone makes a statement such as, "It's snowing in Iowa," the listener assumes two things: the speaker believes it's snowing in Iowa, and the belief is based on some reason, like a weather report. These conditions apply whether or not it is actually snowing in Iowa.

"That's why language is a good vehicle for communication," says Kennedy, who is teaching a course this spring called Truth. "We can use

language to describe the world; we have intuitions about whether these descriptions are true or false, and given these norms of belief and evidence, we can use other people's descriptions to update our own beliefs."

Yet these conventions, he adds, "can be abused." Drawing on contemporary philosopher Harry Frankfurt's essay *On Bullshit*, Kennedy tends to think of much of post-truth as bullshit rather than lies.

Bullshit, Kennedy says, differs from lies in that a liar knowingly speaks untruths, while a bullshitter doesn't care about truth or falsity. The bullshitter's interest lies entirely in getting the listener to act or think in a certain way—regardless of whether the listener's motivation is based in truth or not.

"It's precisely this attitude that erases the substance of debate," Kennedy says, "which is why it's so dangerous to democracy."



Although Roman emperor Trajan (on horseback) lied about some of his military successes, the Romans eventually determined what really happened.

The nature of political disagreement fundamentally changes if you refuse to agree that there are even scientific facts. —Classics professor Clifford Ando

from a democracy to a monarchy, the only historical account he had to go on was the emperor's. Under the democracy, contestation in the public sphere created a space for truth seeking by members of the public. "Under the monarchy, by contrast, Dio can report the official version," Ando says, "and he can report rumors, but he says, 'From the moment of the consolidation of power, it became extraordinarily difficult to verify the truth.'"

In writing histories of nineteenth- and twentieth-century India, **Dipesh Chakrabarty**, the Lawrence A. Kimpton Distinguished Service Professor in History and South Asian Languages and Civilizations, noted an evolution in scholars' accounts. Early "official" histories, produced by English colonizers, eliminated the viewpoints of the colonized. They gave way to so-called objective histories, in which scholars sought to overcome their biases of class, religion, or nationality. Now, historians acknowledge those biases up front.

But whether or not they agreed on, say, the causes or effects of the Partition of India, the scholars would at least agree that it happened. Similarly, Ando says, in the case of Trajan, whether or not the senators agreed on what happened during Trajan's last military campaign, they would have agreed on two things: first, that the emperor either was or was not successful in the military campaign, and second, there would be some way to find out whether it was true.

Ando, who also studies knowledge's history and transmission as a faculty member of the Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge, contrasts this form of truth seeking with the global post-truth era. Whether it be a denial

that smoking causes cancer or a debate about climate change, according to Ando there exists "a process of obfuscation that enacts an endless deferral of the possibility of knowing the truth."

"The nature of political disagreement fundamentally changes," Ando points out, "if you refuse to agree that there are even scientific facts."

Truth and Fiction

Is post-truth a form of fiction? When Japanese noblewoman Murasaki Shikibu wrote *The Tale of Genji*, often called the world's first novel, in the eleventh century, critics condemned her for telling lies, says **Norma Field**, Robert S. Ingersoll Distinguished Service Professor Emerita in East Asian Languages and Civilizations. But supporters argued "that falsehood can be a means to a greater truth."

Certainly writers such as François Rabelais and Octavia Butler created stories to illustrate larger truths. Post-truth, on the other hand, insists on itself as a substitute for truth, says Field, eliminating "the rich ambiguity of traveling between artifice and reality that any notion of fiction always involves."

Truth and Post-Truth

Truth still exists, these scholars affirm. Yet we seem to have created a post-truth world in which many people readily believe "alternative facts" or "fake news." The reasons for this cultural shift are too numerous and complex to contain in this issue. But acknowledging that those reasons exist may be one step toward re-asserting the truth. ■

Multiple Truths

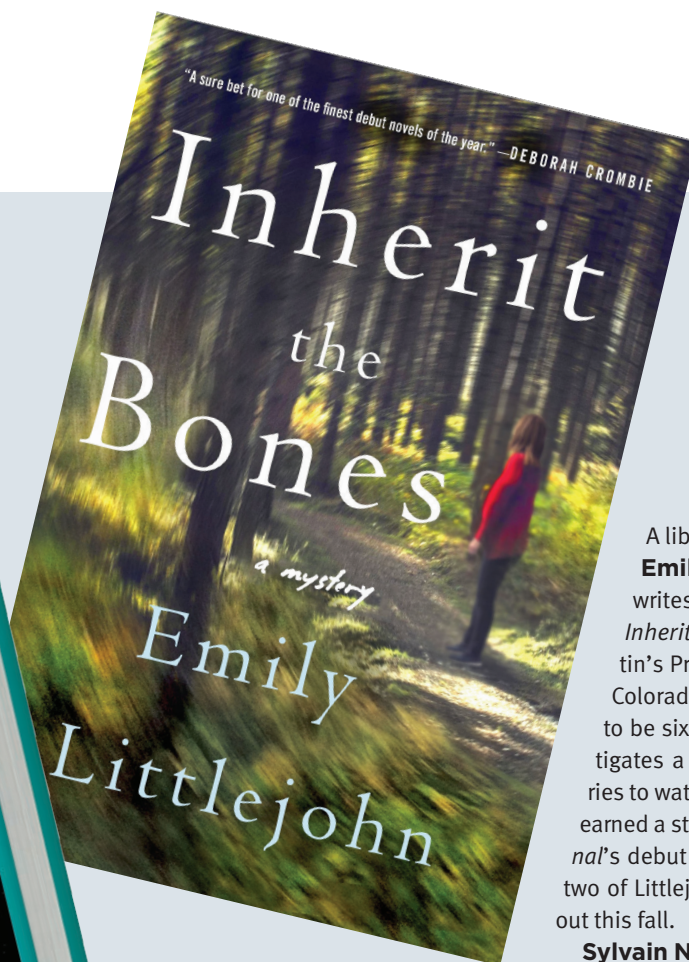
The truth has always been subject to manipulation, especially by those in power.

For example, **Clifford Ando**, David B. and Clara E. Stern Professor in Classics, History, and the Law School, notes that the Roman emperor Trajan sent back reports of great success on the battlefields of the Near East, leading the Roman Senate to award him several honors. But months after he died, it became obvious that Trajan had lied about these victories.

In a large empire in 117 CE, news traveled slowly. "The most efficient mechanisms for moving news," says Ando, "were under the control of the government."

Cassius Dio wrote one of the only histories of Rome from its foundation to the height of the monarchy. Dio wrote that when Rome changed

READ MORE ABOUT KENNEDY'S TRUTH COURSE at tableau.uchicago.edu/truth.



A librarian for 10 years in her day job, **Emily Littlejohn**, AM'02, now also writes her own books. Her debut novel, *Inherit the Bones: A Mystery* (St. Martin's Press, 2016), follows a small-town Colorado police detective—who happens to be six months pregnant—as she investigates a chilling murder. Declared a “series to watch” by *Booklist*, *Inherit the Bones* earned a starred review and was *Library Journal*'s debut of the month last October. Book two of Littlejohn's Cedar Valley Series comes out this fall.

Sylvain Neuvel, PhD'03, spent eight years studying linguistics. Now he works as a director of translation services, a software engineer, and a science fiction author. His first novel, *Sleeping Giants* (Del Rey, 2016)—which landed a movie deal with Sony Pictures Entertainment before it even hit bookstores last spring and was nominated for a 2016 Goodreads Choice Award in Science Fiction—unravels the mystery of a giant alien robot scattered in pieces across the world. The story continues in *Waking Gods*, which came out in April.

What sparked your career as an author?

EL: After Chicago I got a second master's in library sciences and spent the last 10 years as a librarian and then a library director. I'm the library services manager at the Westminster Public Library in Westminster, Colorado. Having read so many things, I'd been exposed to some books that I didn't think were all that great. So my frame of mind was, “Well, if they can do this, why can't I?” That's what made me start taking my writing seriously, about four years ago. My first book was written as a hobby over nights and weekends here and there.

SN: I remember writing comic books as a kid and selling them for 50 cents a pop to the neighbors so I could buy candy. I was five or six years

STORIED STARTS

BY INGRID GONCALVES, AB'08

A librarian and a linguist discuss their paths to becoming published authors.

old. They had spaceships because they were easy to draw, and the earth was saved from invasion from evil-looking little aliens. When I got a bit older, I wrote articles for the local newspapers. I also wrote the script for a TV show that was optioned but never produced.

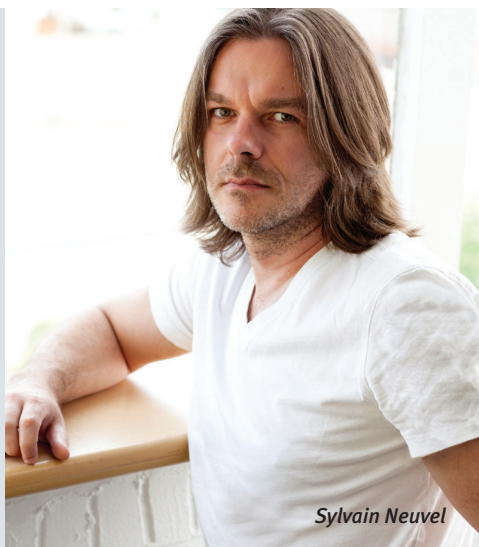
I started writing my first novel mostly for the fun of it. My kid was about two-and-a-half or three at that time. I asked him if he wanted me to build him a toy robot—I work on a computer all day at Onscope in Montreal, so once in a while I like to build a physical object—and he started asking a bunch of questions about the robot, like, “Where is it from? What does it do?” I had no answers, so I started thinking about it. Eventually I began writing what would turn out to be *Sleeping Giants*.

Does your humanities background influence your work?

EL: I’ve always been a huge fan of horror, suspense, and scary stories, especially Henry James and other classical and Gothic horror. I wrote my MA thesis on Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. At the time I was planning to become an English teacher or professor, and MAPH [Master of Arts Program in the Humanities] helped round out my background in terms of more recent literature.

At the very base level, the more you read, the better writer you are. It’s kind of like piano. The more you practice, the more different composers you’re exposed to, the wider repertoire you end up having when you try to do it yourself.

SN: The biggest thing I got out of my PhD is that I spent a few years hanging out with really, really smart people every day. It gets your brain going, and it gets you interested in a bunch of stuff you would’ve never thought about otherwise. So I started reading about different fields, getting books in physics and biology just for the heck of it, and much of that applied to *Sleeping Giants*. There’s way more research in that book than in



Sylvain Neuvel

my PhD, and it’s in a gazillion fields that I know nothing about. I’ve had a lot of fun writing so far just because of that—doing the research and learning about new things. That’s something I owe to my time in Chicago.

In terms of how I apply linguistics, that’s sort of like asking a car mechanic if he drives differently because he knows mechanics. There’s humor in the books, and I can explain in linguistic terms where the humor comes from, but I might’ve made the same joke anyway. *Sleeping Giants* is mostly a series of interviews.

The more you read,
the better writer you are.
—Emily Littlejohn, AM’02



Emily Littlejohn

were happy with it, and she agreed to represent me. That was really the first step to getting published: getting an agent. Pam reached out to editors and publishing houses that she knew, and we ended up with St. Martin’s Press. The second book in the series comes out next fall.

SN: I sent query letters to maybe 55 agents trying to get a publisher. About 20 of them turned me down. The rest didn’t answer. So I figured, “What the hell—I’ll just self-publish the thing

That might be one way my linguistics background influenced me without me knowing it, because the whole book is spoken language written down.

How did you get your first book published?

EL: The first thing I did was to get an agent. I just did a lot of research on things like how to write a query letter, how to figure out which agents represent which genre. I sent out about 50 query letters. Pam Ahearn really liked the story. She had a few suggestions for some revisions, so we went back and forth until we

and see what happens.” I’d been told it wasn’t a great move, that it could hurt your writing career. But I didn’t have a writing career to hurt. I was 40 and had a good job. So I started a little publishing company to promote the book.

One of the steps was to get a quote from a literary magazine to put on the cover to make it look somewhat serious, so I sent the book to *Kirkus Reviews*. They have a reputation for being mean, but I figured I could at least squeeze in a few words. Eventually I got the review and it was insanely good. Before I knew it, I’d sold the movie rights to Sony and landed a three-book publishing deal with Del Rey. ■

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TWO PERSPECTIVES ON COMEDY

Among other media, the Neubauer Collegium's Infrastructures for the Comedic project examined mise-en-scène in sitcoms like The Mary Tyler Moore Show.

Although comedy is as much a part of the human condition as tragedy, researchers for the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society's project Infrastructures for the Comedic felt that its study was "underdeveloped compared to the study of tragedy and catastrophe." Here, the project's researchers address the challenge of studying something funny without taking the fun out of it, and English Language and Literature's David Carroll Simon discusses the value of schadenfreude.

Lauren Berlant, the George M. Pullman Distinguished Service Professor in English Language and Literature; **Zachary Cahill**, MFA'07, curator for the Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry; and **Catherine Sullivan**, associate professor in Visual Arts, collaborated on a Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society project, *Infrastructures for the Comedic*.

Maybe comedy has been less studied than tragedy because there is the risk that what you are working on will be seen as unimportant or just silly. But we were interested in it because comedy is one of the best tools for getting at things that are difficult to talk about. It tests the quality of things and experiments with them over and over. It shows that the mind is as slapstick as the body, pointing to the delicacy of consciousness—how quickly it becomes destabilized, disorganized, confused and confusing, inappropriate and amorally creative. This is why comedic exploration requires protection from censorship, while constantly raising the question of the proper, the ethical, and the ordinariness of aggression.

Look at comedy's relationship to power. Philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin puts the grotesque in the context of festivals during the Middle Ages, where the king could create a zone for everyone to be on the same playing field, and in the carnival people could make jokes at the expense of power. On the other hand, philosopher Achille Mbembe talks about the grotesque in the context of postcolonialism, where people aspire to the grotesqueries of power and wealth: ostentatious displays of riches and behavior that are above the law. Bakhtin has a horizontal view of how comedy plays out in society in relationship to power, and Mbembe has a vertical or aspirational view of the comedic as it pertains to power.

We've also talked about the ways in which the comic is expressed in visual terms in relation to character and mise-en-scène. If you look at single-woman TV sitcoms in the 1970s, such as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, the art direction is a huge part of introducing a new identity to the public.

We've learned that if you analyze anything to death it becomes less funny, but if you analyze it past death it starts to become hilarious. This is why professors are both wise and comic figures: we explain things to generate new capacities for insight, and we can't stop explaining things, stumbling into jargon—always funny from the outside—obsessiveness, ridiculous analogy, the king's grandiosity, the fool's playful narcissism, and so on.

The University's annual Latke-Hamantash Debate on campus is one such local ritual of pedantry out of control. Another famous demonstration is the Monty Python "Dinosaur Sketch," in which a professor played by John Cleese takes three minutes to state a "theory" that brontosaurus are thicker in the middle than they are at the ends. Deflation of the self-inflated is a classic comic move.

—Edited and adapted by Jeanie Chung

David Carroll Simon is assistant professor in the Department of English Language and Literature and an affiliate of the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality. His research focuses on the literary and intellectual history of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, often in connection with continental (especially French) cultural phenomena.

Philosophers have often condemned *schadenfreude*, the pleasure someone takes in someone else's suffering, as proof of moral failure. Meanwhile, witnesses for the defense go as far as to deny the guilt routinely assigned to apparently malevolent enjoyment—by, for instance, identifying it with an appetite for justice that rightly takes satisfaction in the correction of vice. I wish to provide an alternative to both accusatory and apologetic perspectives—but not by offering a competing moral evaluation. Instead, I offer a new description of the experience, which turns out to be both disquieting and comic.

Drawing inspiration from Michel de Montaigne's *Essais* (1572–92), I suspend the familiar view of *schadenfreude* as the smug satisfaction of the eminently safe. Montaigne proposes that the ground of the cruel pleasure one might take in someone else's suffering is actually a powerful awareness of danger: the perception of a threat from which one finds oneself spared. What distinguishes Montaigne's perspective on *schadenfreude* from that of other philosophers is his insistence that susceptibility to harm is a fundamental premise rather than an attribute of certain situations. Like the contorted face that accompanies the body's wincing retreat from near injury, the *freude* (joy) in *schadenfreude* (harm-joy) is distorted by an ongoing sense of vulnerability. Yet such alertness to the possibility of harm, interrupted but not suppressed by the pleasure it enables, does not necessarily generate fear. Instead, Montaigne directs our attention to a physiological reaction we do not ordinarily associate with existential danger. We can listen for the alarmed elation of *schadenfreude*, he suggests, in rumbles of laughter.

Although it will not surprise us that comedy can be cruel, my point is less about genre than it is about what it feels like to laugh and to be caught off guard by feeling amused. Rather than the serene delectation of safety, mirthful *schadenfreude* is the affective recoil of the vulnerable. In someone else's misfortune, Montaigne discovers a portent, uncertain but nonetheless foreboding, of his eventual unhappiness. Because his own failure to uphold the moral good would be, as far as he is concerned, an especially terrible misfortune, his experience of unsympathetic laughter should itself be understood as a bitterly comedic foretaste of suffering: evidence that he can't quite trust himself to adhere to a standard of behavior to which he nonetheless remains attached.

—Adapted from Simon's essay, "The Anatomy of *Schadenfreude*; or, Montaigne's Laughter," in *Critical Inquiry* 43 (Winter 2017).

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AMERICAN JOURNEY

BY SUSIE ALLEN, AB'09

In poetry and prose, Mitsuye Yamada, AM'53, probes the Japanese immigrant experience.

For years, **Mitsuye Yamada**, AM'53, never spoke of the 18 months she spent interned in the Minidoka Relocation Center during World War II. Yamada was 19 when she, her mother, and her three siblings were forced to leave their Seattle home with no certainty about when they might return.

They were among the 120,000 West Coast Japanese Americans ordered by the US government to remote camps in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, and Utah. Yamada's father, Jack Yasutake, who had worked as a translator for the Immigration and Naturalization Service for 25 years, was sent to a prisoner of war camp in New Mexico under suspicion of spying for the Japanese. The FBI never found any evidence to support the charge, and Yasutake was exonerated and released from prison before the end of the war.

"It was just something that we never talked about," reflects Yamada, now 93 and living in Irvine, California. "It's an experience that one had to be ashamed of. If it happened to you, it must have been something that you did." Only in 1962, after her 11-year-old daughter saw a news report about Japanese internment camps, did Yamada reveal to her children that she had been held in one.

Fourteen years later, Yamada broke her silence on a wider scale in *Camp Notes and Other Poems* (Shameless Hussy Press, 1976), a book inspired in part by her internment. The collection, hailed as "vivid, pain-filled, and weighted with irony" by the *Los Angeles Times*, launched Yamada's writing career.

The language in *Camp Notes* is spare. "I remember taking a pen and just crossing out words on the page," Yamada says, "simply because I thought they were not central to the meaning of the poem itself."

What remains are stark accounts of the mundanities and injustices of life inside the barbed wire fences of camp Minidoka. In one poem, she describes "the trick" to enduring camp life: "keep the body busy / be a teacher / be a nurse / be a typist / ... / But the mind was not fooled." Yamada worked as a nurse's aide in the camp's medical clinic.



Mitsuye Yamada refers to her white boots in this photo in her poem "Minidoka, Idaho" from her collection Camp Notes.

Yamada's love of poetry was shared by her father, who wrote senryu and founded a club devoted to the seventeen-syllable form. (Senryu resembles haiku in style though not in content—in contrast to the more refined themes of haiku, senryu are often satirical and funny.) Yamada remembers Yasutake and his friends gathering at the family's home to read their poems aloud. Another friend, a calligrapher, would inscribe the poems on a large piece of paper tacked to the wall.

"It was a beautiful process, very artistic," Yamada says. "And I grew up with that. It was just something that seemed wonderful to me."

In high school she wrote short stories for the creative writing club—the heroines of her early efforts, she recalls, were "mostly blue-eyed blondes"—and began keeping a journal. In camp and afterward, she continued to write, "sticking little bits of paper into a shoebox like a lot of closet women poets did." By the late 1960s, she'd begun to teach writing at Cypress Junior College in Southern California and to publish and edit poetry, though she considered herself a hobbyist, "like a Sunday painter." It wasn't until the release of *Camp Notes* that she saw herself as a poet.

Through her publisher, the feminist poet Alta, Yamada was introduced to an entirely new world. At readings in San Francisco coffeehouses, she met women active in the feminist movement, which was "quite a revelation to me," Yamada says. Their ideas emboldened her, providing a contrast to her own calm life as a mother of four.

Traveling in these more radical circles exposed Yamada to other Asian American writers and activists, including Merle Woo and Nellie Wong. Wong and Yamada were the subject of the 1981 documentary *Mitsuye and Nellie: Asian American Poets*, which explored the Chinese and Japanese immigrant experience in the United States. During that time, Yamada also became active in the human rights group Amnesty International and served on its board.

The influence of Yamada's new friendships and experiences is apparent in her second collection, *Desert Run: Poems and Stories* (Kitchen Table Press, 1988), including "Masks of Woman": "This is my daily mask / daughter, sister / wife, mother / poet, teacher / grandmother. / ... / Over my mask / is your mask / of me / an Asian woman."

Yamada sees a kind of power in the directness of *Camp Notes* and *Desert Run*. "We seem to think that we have to be distanced from the pain in order to write," she pointed out in a 1988 interview. "And I say that there should be a place for that kind of poetry."

In recent years, Yamada has shifted from poetry toward memoir; she recently completed a biography of her father, who died in 1953 only weeks after becoming an American citizen. "You realize your mortality," she says. "I'm going to have to write these things down as fast as I can so that my children will remember."

She knows stories like hers and her father's can get lost easily. "Maybe it's a survival instinct of a sort, to forget those kinds of things and to go on with our lives," she says. "You forget the struggles of the past." ■

In "The Question of Loyalty," she describes the dilemma of the "loyalty questionnaire" given to interned adults, which required them to forswear all allegiance to Japan. Some refused on the grounds that they were American citizens who had never been loyal to Japan. Others, barred by law from becoming American citizens, worried they would be left in stateless limbo if they renounced their Japanese citizenship.

The poem gives voice to the agonizing decision faced by the Issei—immigrants born in Japan: "If I sign this / what will I be? / I am doubly loyal / to my American children / also to my own people. / ... / I wish no one to lose this war."

The poem's narrator speaks for many Nisei (the mostly American-born children of the Issei) who saw in the questionnaire a chance at release: "I signed / my only ticket out." Some Nisei, like Yamada's brother Tosh, left camp Minidoka to serve in the Army. Yamada was permitted to leave in 1943 to attend the University of Cincinnati.

She went on to study English literature at New York University and at UChicago. "I had heard from somewhere that a master's degree from the University of Chicago was the equivalent to a PhD, and I thought, well, that's for me," Yamada says.

DISCOVER MORE ABOUT YAMADA at mag.uchicago.edu/yamada.

TUNING UP

BY CARRIE GOLUS, AB'91, AM'93

Braxton Shelley takes a pioneering look at the structure and meaning of gospel music.

There's an important moment in many African American church services, near the end of the sermon, when it begins to "shift from speech into song," **Braxton Shelley**, AM'16, a PhD candidate in the history and theory of music, writes in his dissertation.

Depending on the preacher, this shift might be melodic or it might be rhythmic. Either way, during this moment of "tuning up," as Shelley terms it, the accompanist and choir begin to join in, repeating a simple, compelling musical phrase—a vamp—over and over. Finally the congregation joins in too, singing and sometimes dancing.

Tuning up is not simply a strategy to make the sermon more effective, Shelley claims. As he writes in his dissertation, "Sermons in Song: Richard Smallwood, the Vamp, and the Gospel Imagination," tuning up is "the sonic manifestation of the gospel imagination," which provides "the formal logic for gospel performance."

In February Shelley won the prize for Best Graduate Student Paper for "Tuning Up: Towards a Gospel Aesthetic," at the annual meeting of the Society for Christian Scholarship in Music. The paper was also awarded the Paul A. Pisk Prize for the best scholarly paper presented by a graduate student at the American Musicological Society last November. A version of the paper became chapter two of his dissertation.

Shelley is "one of a kind in so many ways," says his adviser, **Steven Rings**, associate professor in Music. His dissertation takes a musicological approach—a close reading of notes, chords, harmonies, and forms—which is a first for gospel. "There is no precedent in music theory, if you can believe it," says Rings. Musicology and music theory initially focused on European classical music, and more recently on contemporary music like the Beatles. Shelley is the first to apply this approach to understanding how gospel music works. (Shelley's preferred "writing music" is actually Chopin piano nocturnes: "It gives me something to work against subconsciously.")

At the same time, Rings says, Shelley's work includes an ethnographic component; he's interested in understanding the cultural context and how gospel is meaningful for cultural insiders. Researchers usually approach music from the viewpoint of either music theory or ethnomusicology, but "Braxton does both," Rings says, "and at such a high level."

Shelley began playing piano by ear at age four, had his first lesson at seven, and was performing in church by nine. As an undergraduate at Duke, he considered majoring in political science or economics. But his love for music set him on another path.

This spring Shelley will complete both his doctoral work in music and a master of divinity—a practical degree for future ministers—in the Divinity School. Earning two graduate degrees simultaneously is unusual at UChicago, especially in just five years, says Rings: "He has just blazed through the program."

Every Sunday Shelley plays the piano and directs the choir for the Martin Temple AME Zion Church in Woodlawn. After he finishes his MDiv he plans to become an ordained minister in addition to finding a job in academia. "There is a pervasive linkage between music and expressions of belief," Shelley says, "from Sufi practice to the work Jewish cantors do. Even the recitation of the Koran is musical."

The genre of gospel is broad. Rev. Richard Smallwood, whose work Shelley examines closely in his dissertation, brings classical influences to his compositions. Other artists' gospel songs are inflected by jazz or soul, he says. But Shelley sees the vamp—the repeated musical phrase that marks the transition from sermon to song—as the genre's defining characteristic: "To me that's what makes music gospel. It's a sacramental medium through which people experience God in their bodies."

During this moment of tuning up, the preacher, musicians, and choir together facilitate a communal religious experience. "The shift to a more musical approach—whatever its specific form—calls forth a different brand of audience participation ... that can only be found at the level of the collective," Shelley writes. Music becomes "the medium of exchange between heaven and earth."

Shelley's analytical work on how music functions to heighten the religious experience has not diminished his own belief: "My work is not about demystification; it's about explanation. It's not that I think music has a power to affect these ends alone," he says.

"This music works in the ways it does because people intend. The intention to experience God affects the way you perceive or attend to mu-



There is a pervasive linkage between music and expressions of belief.
—Braxton Shelley, AM'16

Shelley's musicological study of gospel has "no precedent in music theory, if you can believe it," says his adviser, Steven Rings.

sic." Despite his close reading of how vamps function, "there is an ineffable quality that you can't pin down, you can't explain."

Along with his analysis, Shelley's dissertation includes a brief excerpt from an interview with Smallwood about his own musical practice. "I have a commitment to understanding how others understand themselves to be acting," Shelley says. "Listening to musicians talk about music, how they think about it, helps to articulate a richly detailed account of these kinds of human practices."

At a 2015 concert to honor Smallwood at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church in Memphis, Tennessee, Shelley was invited to give a lecture. Afterward he and Smallwood did a question-and-answer session together.

"So there's an interest" in his academic research among the broader public, Shelley says, "and certainly a recognition that value and honor are being ascribed to gospel through this work."

For churchgoers who attend the kind of services he describes, the central argument of his dissertation is "widely accepted in an unspoken way," Shelley says: that's how people in church know how to respond. His dissertation attempts to make those practices "legible in scholarly terms for people who aren't invested in this religious tradition."

He hopes to continue to take his insights back to the communities that are invested in it. "I have multiple publics," he says. "The academy is one. The church is another." ■

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IN DIALOGUE

The division offers a new joint doctoral degree in Theater and Performance Studies.

Having always been interested in both literature and theater, earning a BA in each, **Marissa Fenley** joined UChicago's PhD program in English Language and Literature to work at the intersections between literary and theatrical modernism, "particularly around issues of perception and spectatorship."

Now in her second year, Fenley found support for her wide-ranging interests through English

courses that apply a theatrical lens to their subject matter, such as assistant professor **John Muse**'s Staging Modernism and the workshop in the Theater and Performance Studies (TAPS) program. She expects her future work will "investigate experimental puppetry practices within the modernist theatrical avant-garde," so when the Division of the Humanities created a new PhD program in TAPS, it seemed a natural fit.

The TAPS PhD program—the Division's first new doctoral degree since Cinema and Media Studies began admitting students in 1999—started in Autumn Quarter 2016 and accepted its first cohort of PhD applicants in February.

The Committee on Theater and Performance Studies includes 24 faculty members from 10 different departments in the Division of the Humanities. The joint PhD program—unusual in the field of theater and performance studies—em-

TAPS's new doctoral program offers Marissa Fenley an opportunity to explore both the literary and theatrical aspects of puppetry.

braces the interdisciplinarity that is so important to students like Fenley.

Participants will enter the program through a cooperating Humanities department: Art History, Cinema and Media Studies, Classics, East Asian Languages and Civilizations, English Language and Literature, Germanic Studies, Music, or Romance Languages and Literatures. Degrees from those departments typically take five years to complete, and the joint TAPS PhD might involve up to an additional year of course work, yielding two separate doctoral degrees.

The program's design helps ensure that theater and performance "will be centrally in dialogue with other departments at the University," says **David Levin**, TAPS chair and Addie Clark Harding Professor in Germanic Studies and Cinema and Media Studies. Levin, a principal architect of the program, along with **Christopher Wild**, associate professor in Germanic Studies and TAPS, anticipates the program eventually will reach beyond Humanities to other divisions, into areas such as anthropology.

Because it is a joint degree program, the "ideal student can only be thought of plurally," says Levin. A student with an interest in performance and extensive academic training in, for instance, ethnomusicology would be an ideal candidate. "Performance, after all, reaches far beyond the stage to encompass a disparate group of cultural, historical, and political practices."

The TAPS PhD program reflects a new model of graduate education, Levin says, encompassing traditional academic training in two fields rather than one, while also offering students an opportunity to pursue career paths beyond the academy: as curators, founders of theater companies, cultural policy administrators, and more. In addition to an array of course work in TAPS, encompassing history and theory as well as practice—such as directing, choreography, or design—students will complete two internships with a professional theater, dance, or performance company. —Maureen Searcy ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL VENDIOLA

MEET ANOTHER TAPS-INFLUENCED GRADUATE STUDENT at mag.uchicago.edu/stebbins.

THE SCHOLARSHIP OF SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

Candace Vogler leads a search for the meaning of life.

Candace Vogler, David B. and Clara E. Stern Professor in Philosophy, is invested in her fellow human beings, and she's determined to help them—us—find fulfillment. To tackle such a complex issue, she proposed the collaborative research project *Virtue, Happiness, and the Meaning of Life*, the aims of which are every bit as ambitious as its name implies. With major support from the John Templeton Foundation, this multiyear initiative—jointly led by Jennifer A. Frey, a philosopher at the University of South Carolina—explores self-transcendence, a feeling of connection to something beyond the individual self.

Of course, there's no single way for human beings to attain self-transcendence: it can happen through spiritual practice, professional drive, familial bonds, or any number of commitments to a higher cause. Vogler's group includes psychologists, philosophers, and religious thinkers from a variety of traditions. Many are UChicago colleagues: assistant professor **Marc G. Berman** and professor **Howard C. Nusbaum** in Psychology, associate professor **Tahera Qutbuddin** in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, and, in Philosophy, assistant professor **Matthias Haase** and **Josef Stern**, the William H. Colvin Professor Emeritus. The 30-scholar cohort represents institutions throughout the United States, Middle East, and Europe; they have been meeting and teaching since October 2015.

When she devised the project, Vogler says, "The ambition was to get a kind of deep integra-



*An essay linking Thomas Aquinas's writings and psychological studies of children's food preferences epitomizes the work done by Candace Vogler's project *Virtue, Happiness, and the Meaning of Life*.*

tion between people working in very different disciplines" without relegating their work to the margins of less widely read, explicitly interdisci-

plinary publications. And it worked: the participants are "doing disciplinary work, they're publishing in the disciplinary journals, and the inspiration for it is coming out of the frame of the project."

These discussions have informed 10 published or forthcoming articles—a figure that "pretty dramatically exceeded" her initial expectations—with many more on the way. One essay that encapsulates the spirit of the project is being developed by Notre Dame theologian Jean Porter, about studies by Cornell University psychologist Katherine Kinzler on early childhood food preferences. Porter finds parallels between contemporary psychology and the views of Catholic philosopher Thomas Aquinas on the influence of group identity on what children choose to eat.

Like Porter's essay, much of the project is "built on things that ought to be super interesting to people who are not academics," says Vogler. She hopes a broad audience will attend the culminating conference at UChicago over the weekend of October 14–15. From there, Vogler plans to share her team's findings with educators—from early childhood through MBA programs and beyond—to help promote self-transcendence at every stage of development. "There's a big difference," she points out, "between leading a life that's super busy and leading a life that's *full*." Her hope is that the group's work, as it reverberates out into the broader world, will help people achieve the latter. —Courtney C. W. Guerra, AB'05 ■

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Humanities Day 2017

Saturday, October 21

Mark your calendar for UChicago's annual Humanities Day celebration featuring faculty members from the Division of the Humanities. All events—lectures, tours, and exhibits—are free and open to the public. Registration opens in mid-August; visit **humanitiesday.uchicago.edu** to sign up for email alerts and program updates.