

Future Traditions



PLEASE GIVE BACK TO RUTGERS ENGLISH • POSTAGE-PAID ENVELOPE INSIDE



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about RUTGERS ENGLISH

The Department of English is the largest humanities department in the School of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Our faculty strives to instill students with a deep and lasting understanding of literature and literary traditions. Each year, more than 11,000 undergraduates receive instruction in humanistic reading and writing through our writing program. Our comprehensive undergraduate program reaches more than 900 majors and enrolls more than 8,000 students annually. Our top-ranking graduate program prepares the next generation of literary scholars and teachers for professional success.

The Department of English is proud to be home to the Plangere Writing Center, the Center for Cultural Analysis, and Writers House, which represent the department's commitment to excellence in written expression, to the interdisciplinary study of culture, and to the promotion of creative writing and multimedia composition. In addition to its curricular programs, the department sponsors lectures, conferences, and readings for the university community and the general public.

about FRIENDS OF RUTGERS ENGLISH

Members of Friends of Rutgers English (FoRE) include alumni of our undergraduate and graduate programs, faculty, current students, staff, and other supporters of the Department of English. Cheryl A. Wall established FoRE in 1998 during her tenure as departmental chair. Richard E. Miller, the chair of the English department, also serves as the executive director of the organization. FoRE raises public awareness about the value of studying literature and the literary arts, broadly construed. The organization also raises funds to support the scholarly and pedagogical endeavors of Rutgers English faculty and students.

about FUTURE TRADITIONS MAGAZINE

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stealing BEAUTY

by Richard E. Miller



The summer after I completed sixth grade, I traveled overseas for the first time. I went with my sister, my mother, her band of teachers, and some

sixty undergraduates on their way to six weeks of intensive language training in Tours.

I'd like to say I was the perfect companion, but the mind of a twelve-year-old boy is not home to particularly nuanced thoughts. Everything about the experience annoyed me—the tours of the museums, the unfamiliar language, the undergraduates, the food. What really drove me crazy, though, was the role cameras played at every event: ubiquitous, they were always at the ready, not only shaping the experience for the camera holders, but actually standing in for the experience of seeing. On the precipice of adolescence, I floated on a sea of superiority and took no pictures.

My relationship to photography remained unchanged until the arrival of affordable digital cameras. During my past two sabbaticals, I walked the streets of European towns, wandered down country paths, and scrabbled up hillsides in search of a view—letting the camera serve as both a teacher and a prosthesis, allowing it to literalize the act of focusing, letting it open me to the possibility of being in the moment. For brief periods of time, I could slow down and feel my endlessly nattering inner monologue subside.

Writing has always met my need for calm reflection. But, when the English department received a gift to establish an undergraduate learning community committed to writing, the question of what "writing" is at this moment in history took on a fresh urgency. Could we create a learning community for students who are "born digital"—who experience reading and writing, first and foremost, with computers, cell phones, instant messaging, and Facebook? Is calm reflection a part of the digital world?

Fortunately, in designing the learning community that has since become Writers House, we never had to choose between a space for digital students and a space for students more comfortable in a world of paper and print. At Writers House, we decided, writing would be "broadly construed"—a phrase that imagined members of this learning community producing poetry, plays, and fiction, but also documentary films, visual essays, spoken word performances, podcasts, and graphic narratives. So, we built three seminar rooms to engage students with the written word, an instructional space to promote collaborative writing with new media, and a lounge where students could meet and talk about their work. Then we stepped back to see what would happen.

These snapshots of co-curricular programming during the first year at Writers House stand out in my mind: the establish-

ment of the Bookmark Series, where recently-published Rutgers faculty from various disciplines discussed the inspiration for their scholarly projects with an audience of undergraduates; the first Writers House Student Film Festival, where student projects from our documentary filmmaking and digital storytelling courses were screened to a standing room only crowd; and Alison Bechdel, author of the bestselling graphic memoir, *Fun Home*, describing how digital photography has transformed her composing process.

There was also this: Mark Doty, who read in the Writers at Rutgers Reading Series and returned on another occasion to give a lecture on mourning in *Leaves of Grass*. He later accepted our offer to join the English department as a Distinguished Writer and to assist in further developing the programming for Writers House.

There's more, of course, but finally there is this: when we designed the student lounge, we installed a set of track lights that cast these words on the wall: beauty, connection, inspiration, expression, imagination, creativity, horizon, now. They were meant to incite conversation and reflection, but, at some point in the spring semester, someone made off with the light and the lens that had the word "beauty" etched into it.

In a world where beauty is often lost among the clutter, the aspirations, the disappointments, the anxieties of everyday life, I was, in an odd way, charmed by this theft. It literalized our hopes that our students would strive to make a place for beauty in their lives. Stealing beauty, one moment at a time, I thought. Leaving room for beauty. The blank wall as an open invitation to compose.

Because we're a university and not a museum, we expect wear and tear, even some low level of vandalism, as students move through our hallways, as they settle in, as they test out and try on new ideas. Learning is, of necessity, a messy business; it involves stumbles and falls, the pushing of boundaries, and the encounter with what is yet unknown.

Do we need to replace the missing light? I'm of two minds. The arguments for replacing it are self-evident. But, I am drawn to the idea that Writers House is a place where beauty is in abundance as a topic of conversation, an ideal, an enigma, the vibrant result of a thriving learning community in action. There's the word on the wall and there's the ineffable, evanescent activity. One is easily replaced. The other can only be realized moment by moment and thus can never be stolen. At Writers House beauty isn't something that hangs on a wall or gets projected on a screen; it's something we're trying to do.

We thank you for your continued support. It's been an extraordinary year, as the following pages attest. We've added several new sections in this issue of *Future Traditions Magazine* to capture the multifaceted life of the department, our faculty, our students, our alumni, and our friends. It's our biggest issue yet. We value your input and, as always, invite your feedback. Keep on giving. \Box

The S. Mith

Inspiring by Carolyn Williams



Thile having an espresso the other day, I was struck by the word. Espresso comes from the same Latin root that gives us "expression." The

I'm reminded of a related myth about creativity, also worth decoffee is denser and more intense because hot water is bunking: that expression means self-expression. It can be disabling to think that we must express our "selves," when there's so much forced at high pressure through finely-ground beans. more out there to express than that. Think about the terrible command: "Express yourself!" I'm sure most students are more intimi-Like expression, espresso is literally pressed out, generdated than enabled by this command. How frustrating the demand for self-expression can seem, until we realize that it's something like ated under pressure. writing, a process that must be done again and again and again. All writing is really revision, and inspiration comes during the pro-The meaning of this little analogy is that pressure is imporcess—not before the process begins.

tant to the creative process. (So too, perhaps, are heat and a finelyground texture; but I won't take the metaphor too far.) Pressure can be a good thing, an inspirational force.

We were certainly under pressure during the exciting process of creating Writers House on the ground floor of Murray Hall. In February 2007, Rutgers alumnus Thomas J. Russell—who holds a BA in biological science (1957) and a PhD in physiology (1961)—made a generous gift that enabled us to begin a process that unfolded at a breakneck pace. As a result of the efforts of an overwhelming number of people who worked through the summer to make this dream a reality, Writers House was opened to students by the fall semester of 2007

The inspiration for Writers House was also a team effort. Inspiration literally means "in-breathing," with the implication that inspiration is given from without. In classical antiquity, the idea was that the Godhead comes down, comes in, and fills the poet with divine breath. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a secularized version of the idea gained prominence. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, for example, used the image of the Aeolian harp as a figure for poetic inspiration. Also called a wind harp, an Aeolian harp was a stringed instrument that could be placed in a window, hung in a tree, or placed on a hill so that when the wind blew across its strings, the harp produced music. According to this model, the poet still receives inspiration from outside, but the wind is no longer imagined as divine breath.

More and more, since then, imagination, genius, and inspiration have been theorized as internal qualities. Unlike skill, those qualities were characterized by irrationality, since no one could explain how one could depend on getting access to them. Dreams, visions, even madness can contribute to a refreshed sense of perception, helping one to "think outside the box." But we shouldn't forget that there are still plenty of sources of inspiration outside the self. To think of inspiration as a solitary matter is a myth well worth debunking.

The Muses have their modern counterparts in colleagues and friends who add to, shape, and expand a project together, in time. Writers House is a great example of the communal, cumulative growth of such a vision. But there is another sense in which inspiration still comes from without, for a feeling of being inspired comes periodically when you are totally immersed in the process of creation. It feels as if inspiration comes as a gift-in a sudden eureka moment, for example—but these bursts of inspiration tend to occur when one is devoting time, day after day, to the process.

And this is where pressure comes in. What forces can press the thoughts, feelings, ideas, images, and voices out of us? A course, an assignment, a waiting audience, a writing group, a self-generated plan of so many words per day, or so many minutes spent writingall these can produce the necessary pressure toward expression. So too can the hope that we might lend inspiration to others.

When engaged in writing as a process, we are submitting to a regular discipline of pressure—not too much, not too little—under which expression will emerge. Unclear and inchoate at first, it will take shape in time. Then, too, the pressure must be periodically alleviated. During those times of relaxation—times of play, sleep, dreams, listening, watching-ideas will come, as long as you're involved in the process enough so that you know them when you sense them. This is how a "voice"—and even a sense of self—is created, through successive experiences of concentration and relaxation, pressure and its release.

True for all forms of traditional writing, this model of inspiration and expression is also true for the expanded sense of creative writing we are developing in Writers House. There, writing, "broadly construed," includes digital and web-based forms of writing as well as essays, poems, plays, and fiction.

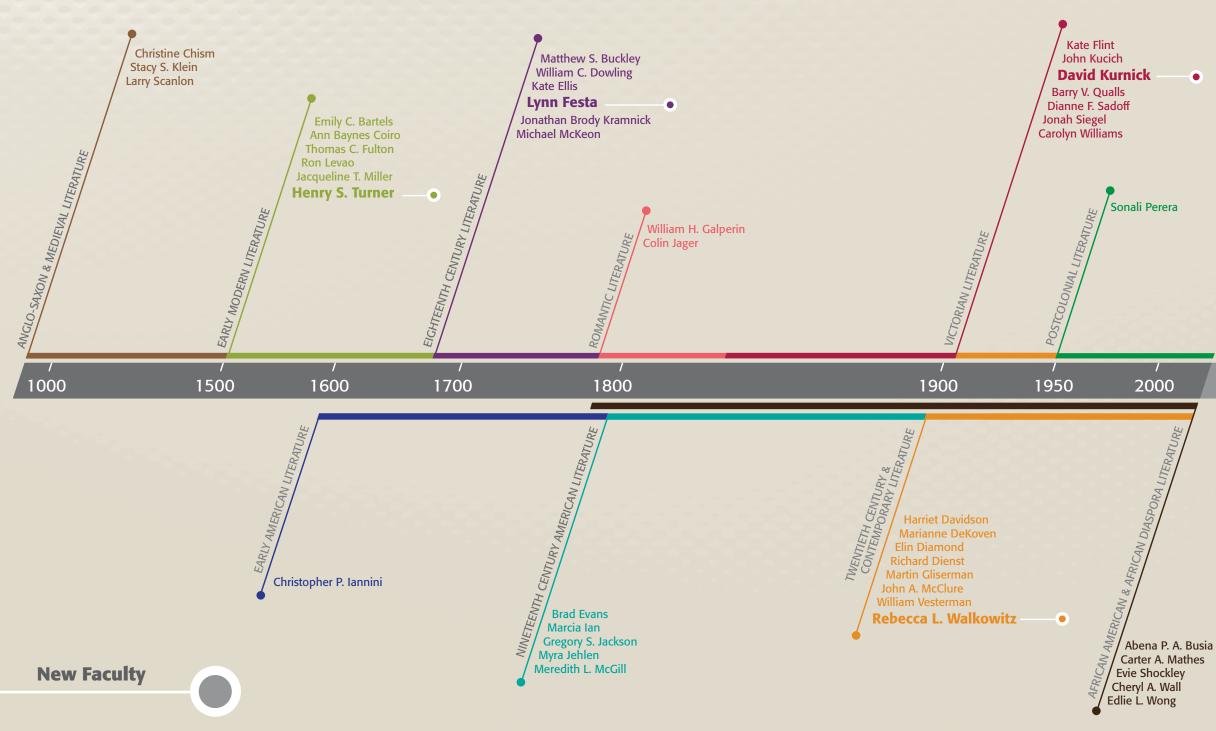
If we want to help our students "come into voice," what we really must do is give them enough confidence in the writing process so they will believe and know that a voice will come into being. Learning how to go through the process is what's important. Voice is not an essence; it is a practice.

In this sense, inspiration can't be given. It must be taken.

Carolyn Williams



Rutgers English Faculty Primary Areas of Specialization



/ John Belton Sandy Flitterman-Lewis Richard Koszarski



New Faculty Profiles

Lynn Festa by Michael McKeon



In my teaching, I try to give students a sense of what makes the eighteenth century exciting and relevant to our historical moment, but I also want them to see how deeply alien it was. This was a period whose technologies, belief systems, and social structures were completely unlike those that construct the modern world. Part of why I love teaching eighteenth century texts is because of that electric contact with a way of thinking that is so emphatically not our own.

— Lvnn Festa

most recent addition to the Department of English faculty is Associate Professor Lynn Festa, who arrived in January 2008 from the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

Previous to that appointment, Festa had taught for a number of vears at Harvard University.

Professor Festa is a specialist in eighteenth century British and French literature, best known for her book, Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France. In this widelypraised study, she traces two developments central to modern life, which appear to have little to do with each other: colonialism and imperialism, and the culture of humanitarian sensibility. The relationship between them, Festa shows, is complex and profound. As the autonomy of the individual gained increasing credence during this period, people's heightened sense of self also heightened their sense of others' identities. The more distant the others, the more available individuals became for sympathetic identification, the kind of emotional and virtual knowledge that flourishes in the absence of actual contact. But identification could also create a crisis of identity, in which the borders between self and other seemed in danger of dissolution and in need of rigorous reinforcement. This ambivalent dynamic of a culture in the throes of modernization, torn between individual and society, is the dynamic of sentimentalism, and it suffused, although in different ways, all levels of life in eighteenth century France and Britain.

With originality, force, and based on the evidence of a very diverse range of writings, Professor Festa shows that empire was, of all institutions, perhaps the most subtly and thoroughly dependent on the sentimental dynamic. In both fiction and reality, sense merged with sensibility. Identification with the suffering of distant strangers bred the pleasures of a pity that fed off the suffering it deplored. The empathetic defense of the victim could induce self-defense against the victim responsible for creating that vulnerability. Rapacious exploitation and violent conquest abroad became softened into moving spectacles detached, by their very emotional power, from the squalor of actuality. Festa's expertise in both national cultures deepens the plausibility of her readings, which are trenchant without being reductive.

Festa arrives at Rutgers University having won numerous awards, among them the James L. Clifford Prize for the best article of the year awarded by the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies; fellowships from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Radcliffe Institute, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the National Humanities Center; two teaching prizes at Harvard University; and numerous fellowships from Yale University and the University of Pennsylvania, where she completed her undergraduate and graduate studies in comparative literature. We are extremely pleased that Professor Festa has joined our department.

t the 2005 annual conference of the North American Vicprivacy and inwardness that was encouraged by the form of the torian Studies Association, I ran into a colleague from nineteenth century novel. He contends that evidence of the the-L Lanother university, who was in a state of some rapture. atrical permits the expression of a historical malaise in ways that She had just heard, she said, an extraordinarily brilliant presentafitted only awkwardly with the direction that fiction was taking tion from a graduate student about William Makepeace Thackat the time. For even if the narrative voices within Victorian ficeray's novel, Vanity Fair, and its relationship to the theater. She tion often perceive the theatrical as being distinct from the genre was a judge for the best graduate paper delivered at that year's of the novel, this was simply not true. Nor should the novels in conference, and although it was early in the proceedings, she said question be thought of as having in some sense vanguished the she thought that there could be no doubt for whom she would theatrical: they feed off it, and they reflect both their authors' be voting. desires to partake in theatrical culture, and their understanding David Kurnick was, indeed, that year's winner of the prestithat their readers share many of the same desires.

gious award. Even then, he was already making a name for himself in Victorian studies circles before we were fortunate enough to hire him at Rutgers in 2006—to the envy, it must be said, of the other departments who made him offers the same year that we did. Kurnick took up a postdoctoral fellowship in the Columbia Society of Fellows in 2006-2007, and we were delighted to welcome him to the department in the fall of 2007.

A Harvard University graduate with degrees in American history and literature, Professor Kurnick obtained his PhD from Columbia University for a dissertation entitled "The Vocation of Failure: Frustrated Dramatists and the Novel," which he is now revising for publication in book form. In this outstanding and original study, Kurnick explores the writing of several novelists whose careers were marked by unrealized theatrical projects: Thackeray, George Eliot, Henry James, and-reaching into the twentieth century-James Joyce. They were the authors of plays, whose projects never saw the light of day because they were censored, unperformed, or, quite simply, unperformable. Yet, although these plays might be considered by some as showing dramatic ineptitude, Professor Kurnick argues that they should not be seen as write-offs, but quite the reverse: their failure can

profitably be understood as being intimately linked to novelistic innovation.

> Kurnick demonstrates that the lingering presence of the theatrical in the work of these novelists allows them to voice dissatisfaction with the

David Kurnick

by Kate Flint

The concept of the reader is of continuing importance to Professor Kurnick's scholarship. His recent essay in ELH: English Literary History, entitled "An Erotics of Detachment: Middlemarch and Novel-Reading as Critical Practice," points to a hypothesis about reading that he intends to explore further. This is the idea that promiscuous desire-whether within the novel, or indeed for the novel as a genre—is, in fact, a wish to achieve a social understanding that is both detached and critical. His interest in reading as a practice is also reflected in a collection of essays that he is coediting with Rachel Ablow, of the State University of New York at Buffalo, entitled Feeling Victorian Reading, and which is currently under contract with the University of Michigan Press.

Since joining the department, Professor Kurnick has made his presence felt in many important ways. In addition to teaching courses on "Promiscuity and Fidelity in the Novel," "Victorian Literature and Culture," and "The Social Imagination of the Nineteenth Century Novel," he has taught "Queer Theories and Histories." He has been very much engaged with our co-curricular programming of speakers and events in nineteenth century studies and in gender and sexuality studies. Last year, he was a fellow at the Center for Cultural Analysis as part of the yearlong working group on "New Media Literacies, Gutenberg to Google," and he served on the program committee for the Northeast Victorian Studies Association.

Professor Kurnick's many interests complement our existing strengths in Victorian and modernist literary studies, in gender and sexuality studies, and in theater and performance studies. His intellectual energy and the originality of his insights make him a wonderful addition to our already distinguished Victorian studies faculty at Rutgers English.

Teaching is the most important, exciting, and difficult thing I do, and I think learning should be exciting and difficult as well. I try to make my classroom a place where the stakes feel high, and where no one knows exactly what might happen next. I really appreciate students' capacity to surprise me and each other, to address issues from unexpected angles, and not to believe everything I tell them simply because I'm standing in front of them with a piece of chalk in my hand.

Henry S. Turner

by Emily C. Bartels

I really enjoy being in the company of students, both undergraduates and graduates. I learn a lot about my teaching by putting myself in my students' positions and by thinking about what they understand or don't understand, or how they might view a problem. Observing the teaching of my colleagues also makes a very strong impression on me and gives me very good ideas for things I can do more effectively in my teaching.

- Henry S. Turner

enry S. Turner joined the Rutgers English faculty as an associate professor in the fall semester of 2008 as part of an initiative, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, to increase the department's strengths in "traditional" literary fields. A specialist in Renaissance drama, Professor Turner received his PhD in 2000 from the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. He also earned an

MA and an MPhil from Columbia, a BA from Wesleyan University, a Diplôme Supérieur d'Études Françaises from the University of Bourgogne, and another MA from the University of Sussex. Before attending Columbia, he taught for a year in the Department of English at the University of Nice. Turner came to Rutgers from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, where he had been teaching since 2000 and where he received the English department's Graduate Teaching Award.

Intellectually imaginative and energetic, Professor Turner is one of the few—and the finest—scholars now writing on the historical intersection of literature and science. His first book, *The English Renaissance Stage: Geometry, Poetics, and the Practical Spatial Arts, 1580-1630*, was awarded honorable mention from the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts, in competition for being the best book in interdisciplinary science studies in 2007. The book innovatively links the origins of "plot" in Renaissance drama to mathematics, arguing that the structure of dramatic action took its shape not simply from the literary precedents of Aristotelian theory, classical and medieval drama, and Italian romances, but at least as much from scientific inscriptions of space—in the fields of geometry, surveying, cartography, engineering, and navigation. Turner's theatrical world is one deeply invested in the "productive arts" that propelled an

increasing urbanization of early modern England. Demanding that we think outside the literary box to understand the materials within it, Professor Turner's book is an engaging *tour de force*, which brings theatrical and material culture into a dynamic dialogue and exposes the conceptual developments that were revolutionizing literature, science, and English life in the early modern period.

Turner is gifted not only at describing provocative interdisciplinary intersections but also at making them happen. In *The Culture of Capital: Property, Cities, and Knowledge in Early Modern England,* Turner gathered together essays by historians and literary critics on the complex question of "capital," creating a space where literary texts and cultural institutions, poetics and politics, have equal and interrelated play. For a new series on "Shakespeare Now!," he brought *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into the "now" by connecting Shakespearean visions of "life" and our own, structuring the book, entitled *Shakespeare's Double Helix,* around the architecture of DNA by positioning its two extended essays on facing pages.

In Professor Turner's classes at Rutgers, literature stands beside history, philosophy, psychoanalysis, politics, studies of technology, phenomenology, and French linguistic theory. He brings these disciplines to the level of "the human," to their impact on "everyday life," and he challenges both his graduate and his undergraduate students to engage seriously in the rich complexities that defy institutional and intellectual boundaries. In his hands, the work of William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Thomas Dekker, and Thomas Middleton, among others, become fascinating vehicles for exploring a broadly based social and scientific self-fashioning, both in the early modern period and our own. In his teaching and his scholarship, Professor Turner takes us on a lively intellectual adventure of the highest order. To borrow words from his Shakespeare's Double Helix, his goal is to "engage with that kind of thinking, in any field, that begins by asking questions to which one does not yet know the answers and that releases itself into the unknown." We are very lucky to have him pursue that goal at Rutgers. \Box

e are very fortunate that Professor Rebecca L. Walkowitz has joined our faculty. She received her PhD in English and American literature from Harvard University in 2000, and was tenured and promoted to associate professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 2006. She has received a number of prestigious fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the Institute for Research in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin, the Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The recipient of several teaching awards at the University of Wisconsin, Professor Walkowitz was recognized by the university as the most distinguished faculty member to receive tenure in 2006. She has edited Immigrant Fictions: Contemporary Literature in an Age of Globalization, and co-edited, with Douglas Mao, the influential collection, Bad Modernisms. Her other publications have appeared in collections and journals such as ELH: English Literary History, Contemporary Literature, MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly, and Modern Drama.

Professor Walkowitz's book, Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism beyond the Nation, is a signal contribution to the new work on modernist cosmopolitanism and transnational modernism. There have been important recent studies on this topic, including Jed Esty's A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England and "Making the Heart of the World: Internationalism and Anglo-American Modernism, 1919-1941," the dissertation written by our own Alex Bain (PhD 2004). But the modernism that Professor Walkowitz writes about is very much her own. She is engaged in deep conversation with a wide range of contemporary theorists of cosmopolitanism, most of whom propose a reconfigured, redefined cosmopolitanism as an alternative to virulent contemporary localisms and globalisms. Walkowitz is in their camp, but she uses modernist style both to unsettle and to remake cosmopolitanism, and uses cosmopolitanism to reclaim modernism from the denigration of many contemporary politically oriented literary theorists and critics.

Building on the legacy of Oscar Wilde, Walkowitz designates a "perverse cosmopolitanism," which is congruent with, but not identical to, critical cosmopolitanism. In treating cosmopolitanism "not simply as a model of community but as a model of perversity, in the sense of obstinacy, indirection, immorality, and at-

One of the advantages of teaching large undergraduate lecture courses is what I call 'the recruitment effect. Each semester, I find that a handful of the juniors and seniors who enroll in my advanced courses were in my introductory lecture course. It's nice to see these students again, but it's also nice to have them there to introduce new students to the peculiarities of my classroom. The recruitment effect lends intimacy and continuity to a program that, because of its size, can lack the personal contact that students and faculty often receive at smaller schools. The recruitment effect: it reminds me that teaching is not just about what happens inside the classroom, but about the intellectual exchange, the sociability, and the mentoring that happens outside as well.

— Rebecca L. Walkowitz

Rebecca L. Walkowitz

by Marianne DeKoven

titude," she seeks to "consider the relationship between gestures of idiosyncratic contact or distance and those of sympathetic association." This critical cosmopolitanism encompasses both unlikely gestures of extra- or transnational affiliation and disturbing gestures of intranational redefinition or reconstitution.

The first half of the book, "Cosmopolitan Modernism," analyzes three canonical figures of British modernism: Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf. Each of these writers developed a unique, characteristic tactic within and through modernist formal practice. For Conrad, the tactic is what Walkowitz calls "naturalness." Through the paradox of the Polish Conrad, for whom English was a fifth language, she develops the idea of Conrad's naturalness as a deep challenge to notions of British racial sameness and centrality. For Joyce, the tactic, "triviality," deploys the ordinary, banal, and everyday in the service of a decentering project. For Woolf, Walkowitz develops the tactic of "evasion"—a brilliant insight which clarifies a great deal of what had heretofore seemed elusive and insufficiently motivated in Woolf's work.

In the second half of the book, "Modernist Cosmopolitanism," the argument for critical cosmopolitanism is easier to make, because the intention to produce some kind of original, inventive relation to cosmopolitanism is apparent in the authors and texts Walkowitz discusses: Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, and W. G. Sebald's *Vertigo*. Walkowitz argues that the late twentieth century has produced a reemergence of modernism in these three writers who, through their use of formal techniques associated with modernism, displace and destabilize fixed understandings of the local and the global in order to forge a critical cosmopolitanism.

Professor Walkowitz's new project, entitled *After the National Paradigm: Translation, Comparison, and the New World Literature,* considers the effects of globalization on national paradigms of literary culture and argues for the emergence of new forms of "comparative writing" in contemporary transnational literature. This book promises to extend the work of *Cosmopolitan Style* in ways that will speak directly to the contempo-

rary interest in cultures of circulation, while remaining faithful to Professor Walkowitz's overriding interest in the forms of literary texts.