

## Literature

The [Literature](#) faculty at MIT embraces an expansive mission of textual study from a variety of perspectives. We study narrative, lyric, and drama in a host of historical contexts and media forms. Our scholarship and teaching range from the ancient world to the 21st century. We help students develop critical sophistication through analysis not only of epics, novels, poetry, drama, and tales, but also of film, television, comics, memoirs, and folk music.

The Literature faculty at MIT is all about balance. Along with our other humanities colleagues at the Institute, we are here to ensure that MIT's superlative students have the opportunity for a fully balanced education. We complement subjects taught in the science or engineering disciplines in which many students will major. We conduct mainly small, seminar-style classes and afford undergraduates direct and continual interaction with full faculty members, an approach one might expect to find at leading liberal arts colleges such as Williams College or Amherst College. At the same time, we are committed to hiring and promoting faculty whose scholarly work can compete with that carried out in leading PhD-granting departments of English, such as the University of California, Berkeley; Stanford University; or Harvard University, where graduate-level teaching tends to take precedence over undergraduate instruction.

Being a humanities faculty member at MIT also calls for balance. Our faculty members sustain excellent records of productivity and innovation in scholarship even though they lack the stimulus of a graduate program in their discipline and devote considerable effort to general undergraduate education. When we hire, we seek the special kind of scholar who can thrive in our distinctively challenging environment. We are proud of our ability to find and nurture such special talents.

The Literature Section at MIT teaches about one-quarter of MIT's undergraduate population each year, and all of our faculty members, regardless of rank, spend one-half of their teaching loads on introductory subjects that are part of the Institute's general requirements. We also deliver a top-quality major to those who choose to pursue it, and over the past several years we have sent literature majors to graduate programs in English at such leading institutions as University of California, Berkeley; Stanford University; University of California, Los Angeles; Cambridge University; University of Chicago; and Yale University.

Literature faculty members must possess the agility to shift their mode of approach to their discipline, between a generally accessible idiom and a rigorously professional one. We welcome this challenge, believing that the study of literature needs to maintain its ties to broad extra-professional audiences that can benefit from exposure to the knowledge and skills our discipline deploys. We help students become familiar with the traditions out of which the expressive culture of our time has evolved, and also help them develop crucial skills of interpretation they will draw upon later in life as citizens and professionals. We do this while also interacting with and influencing our scholarly communities at the highest level.

Because the Comparative Media Studies program prepares its own report to the president, I will let my colleagues, James Paradis and William Uricchio, address developments particular to Comparative Media Studies, in addition to Professor Uricchio's own accomplishments for the year, in that report.

### **Overview of 2010–2011**

The Literature Section continues to operate as a highly effective unit within the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. Our members continue to publish vital works of scholarship, to pursue innovation in research and teaching, and to explore interdisciplinary partnerships and projects. They continue to win distinguished fellowships and other honors and to share their ideas with professional peers at a variety of national and international conferences and meetings. For reasons I will detail below, the past year was not without its challenges, but the commitment and professionalism of our Literature community have enabled us to withstand them and to keep moving forward in our scholarly and pedagogic missions.

Two of our faculty members, Mary Fuller and Shankar Raman, spent this past year furthering their research on prestigious fellowships elsewhere. This summer Mary Fuller is hosting one of the highly competitive National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminars for college instructors at the Institute, focused on her research area. The seminar, titled "English Encounters with the Americas, 1550–1610: Sources and Methods," has been a wonderful opportunity to showcase some of the innovative interdisciplinary scholarship in the humanities that takes place at the Institute.

In other developments, Arthur Bahr was promoted to associate professor without tenure on the strength of his impressive research in medieval literature and his stellar performance as a teacher. Our versatile and creative senior lecturer, Wyn Kelley, was reviewed and enthusiastically renewed for another five-year contract. And we were thrilled when our beloved administrative officer, Jackie Breen, was recognized with an Infinite Mile Award from the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences for her positive energy, organizational intelligence, and tireless work ethic. We were also delighted when our Mellon postdoctoral fellow, Joel Burges, who was in his final year with us, received a tenure-track assistant professorship at the University of Rochester. We had taken great pleasure in mentoring Joel Burges and in learning from him, and while we are sorry to see him go, we know he will flourish in his exciting new position.

Literature faculty contributions to the larger MIT community continued in many forms, collective and individual. We conducted our annual, highly popular series "Pleasures of Poetry" during the Independent Activities Period, a daily, hour-long discussion of poetry organized by David Thorburn. The series was led by Literature faculty members, as well as friends, and open to Institute faculty, students, staff, and the public. We also continued our annual marathon reading event during the activities period, this time focusing on the ancient, timeless *Beowulf*. Faculty, students, and staff took part in this one-day revisiting of the Anglo-Saxon epic, with Arthur Bahr introducing participants to the original language of the text. Our weekly literature "teas" carried on this year, bringing together a number of students and faculty members for informal conversations and helping to sustain a community interest in literature.

We also participated enthusiastically in MIT's 150th Anniversary open house, doing readings, singing folk ballads, demonstrating projects, and distributing many free books to visitors. We were happy to take part in this event, which offered us such a great opportunity not only to make ourselves known to the wider public, but also to encourage encounters with great literature, film, and all the other media forms we study. In addition, we repeated our thriving Freshman Pre-Orientation Program, which introduces new MIT students to the greater Boston area by way of its storied literary associations. We also restarted our in-house faculty workshop, at which members of our group presented their current work to their colleagues; in particular, we had the great pleasure and stimulation of hearing and discussing papers by Arthur Bahr, Wyn Kelley, Alisa Braithwaite, Shankar Raman, and our Mellon postdoctoral fellow, Joel Burges.

There have been some important changes to our staff. We hired Daria Johnson to fill our one full-time support staff position, that of undergraduate academic administrative assistant, and we have been very satisfied with her performance so far, and very pleased by her warm personality. Our part-time staff member, Jamie Graham, is preparing to depart in order to pursue studies in psychology, and we have already hired a replacement. Our other part-time staffer, Kevin McLellan, is still with us, and we are happy to have him.

For the past two years, the Literature Section has been operating under the shadow of a reorganization, proposed by Dean Deborah Fitzgerald, which promises to have significant effects on us and our neighbors in Foreign Languages & Literatures and Writing and Humanistic Studies, as well as on the interdisciplinary program Comparative Media Studies, to which we all contribute. It has been a difficult two years, particularly this past one, which has to some extent undermined the confidence expressed about this reorganization in last year's report. Uncertainty about the process and its potential outcome has been a major distraction and has not helped us build good working relationships across section boundaries. The Literature faculty, the original administrative home for Comparative Media Studies, has long understood its mandate in cross-media terms, as I have suggested above. We believe we have an important contribution to make to a "comparative media studies" that would live up to its name by being comparative across cultures, historical eras, and platforms. Literature faculty members work on such topics as digital humanities, book history, the history of folk music, film, photography, and so forth. Literature faculty members were active in the creation of Comparative Media Studies because, like their colleagues in other sections, they were looking to establish a distinctive, interdisciplinary program that was particularly suited to the MIT environment and would allow Humanities faculty to teach both undergraduate and graduate students. Comparative Media Studies, as originally conceived, was a brilliant instantiation of that desire. But now that it seems Dean Fitzgerald intends to create a separate media studies section (the title is not yet settled) consisting mainly of faculty from the former Foreign Languages & Literatures and the Writing and Humanistic Studies sections, Literature faculty members feel excluded. We would like to be recognized as full partners in media studies at MIT, not as permitted outsiders beholden to the judgment of a separate media studies section. In our view, Comparative Media Studies would do best if it followed the model of its creators and remained an interdisciplinary center for research and teaching, rather than becoming an academic section in its own right.

The visit of the biennial visiting committee—now for the first time limited to Literature, Foreign Languages & Literatures, Writing and Humanistic Studies, Comparative Media Studies, and Women’s and Gender Studies—was a rewarding event, but it was dominated by the topic of this proposed reorganization, and we wonder if our message will have any weight in the long run. We also enjoyed our interactions with the committee (headed by incoming chair of the faculty, Samuel Allen) that was appointed by Dean Fitzgerald to review her proposed reorganization plan, but again, we don’t know if our views will have any effect. We are concerned that the report issued by that committee, which was staffed by very knowledgeable and influential members of the MIT community, does not appear to have been taken very seriously. And I should emphasize that our concerns go far beyond issues that matter to Literature alone. As significant contributors to the MIT Undergraduate Educational Commons, we have questions about some of the possible repercussions of the proposed plan, especially with regard to instruction in writing, oral communication, and foreign languages.

One of the peculiarities of this two-year shadow has been the question of reassigning faculty from the soon-to-disappear sections of Foreign Languages & Literatures and Writing and Humanistic Studies. At Dean Fitzgerald’s request, Literature has agreed to bring associate professor Margery Resnick, from Foreign Languages & Literatures, into our faculty. We do this even though Professor Resnick specializes in the literature and film of Spain and we have mostly been a faculty that works in the English language, with a few exceptions (mainly in the classical or biblical languages that are foundations of the English-language tradition). As a faculty of “literature,” rather than “English,” we are happy to branch out into other languages, but we will never have enough faculty members to cover the world. So Professor Resnick’s incorporation into our group will involve some stretching and poses a challenge to the coherence of our identity. None of this reflects on Professor Resnick, a colleague whom we respect and welcome; it simply reflects our desire to see a well-thought-out plan for the future of humanities disciplines, like ours.

A few other members of Foreign Languages & Literatures and Writing and Humanistic Studies have indicated a desire not to be included (solely) in the proposed new section of media studies, and some have asked to join Literature, either wholly or as joint appointments. However, the dean has asked that we hold off on these types of discussions until the larger issues of the reorganization become clearer. We hope we will be able to work through this situation and foster collaborative and productive relations with our institutional neighbors and new members.

Two other developments particular to the Literature Section need to be mentioned. Our colleague, John Hildebidle, suffered a serious health crisis during the past academic year. It is unknown at this time whether John will fully recover and be able to return to the faculty. The provost has given permission to Literature to conduct a junior faculty search in fall 2011. On another front, I regret to report that our colleague, Alisa Braithwaite, failed to win promotion to the rank of associate professor without tenure this past year. She will remain with us for AY2011. We wish her the very best as she pursues other career opportunities.

## Research and Publications

Literature Faculty members continued to publish and advance significant works of scholarship during the past year. Associate professor Shankar Raman saw two books to completion, *Knowing Shakespeare: Senses, Embodiment and Cognition*, a coedited volume of essays, and *Renaissance Literatures and Postcolonial Studies*. He also made progress on a further manuscript, *Before the Two Cultures: Literature and Mathematics in Early Modern Europe*. We will be presenting a case for his promotion to professor in fall 2011.

Other book projects that made progress during the past year include Sandy Alexandre's *The Properties of Violence: Claims to Ownership in Representations of Lynching*, a study of race, representation, and violence in the American South. It is under contract with the University Press of Mississippi. Likewise, Arthur Bahr's manuscript on medieval compilations, *Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London*, was accepted by the University of Chicago Press. Also close to completion are Peter Donaldson's book *Shakespeare, New Media and the Digital Revolution*; Alvin Kibel's co-edited book on *Darwin's Origin, Darwinism, and Literature*; and Stephen Tapscott's edition/translation of selected poetry by Georg Trakl, titled *Georg Trakl: Poems* (Field Translation Series). Longtime lecturers in Literature also brought out new works this year, namely Howard Eiland's edition/translation of the *Early Writings (1910–1917)* of Walter Benjamin and Ina Lipkowitz's *Words to Eat By*.

Members of the Literature faculty published numerous scholarly articles during the past year in distinguished venues, including the following:

Expanding her reach in the field of African-American literature, Sandy Alexandre had two pieces published, one on Suzan-Lori Parks's *Topdog/Underdog* in the *Journal of American Drama and Theatre*, another on Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*.

Alisa Braithwaite published three new essays, including "First Lady Fashion: How the US has Embraced Michelle Obama," in *Fashions: Exploring Fashion Through Culture*; "Reading About Reading in the Anglophone Caribbean Novel," in *MLA Options for Teaching Series: Teaching Anglophone Caribbean Literature*; and "Connecting to a Future Community: Storytelling, the Database, and Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber*," in *The Black Imagination, Science Fiction, Futurism and the Speculative*.

Our most recent hire, Eugenie Brinkema, continued her astonishing rate of publication in the fields of film studies and critical theory with articles including "Rot's Progress: Gastronomy According to Peter Greenaway," in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*; "How to Do Things with Violences: Benny's Video," in *A Companion to Michael Haneke*; "The Fault Lines of Vision: *Rashomon* and *The Man Who Left His Will on Film*," in *Rape in Art Cinema*; "Laura Dern's Vomit, or, Kant and Derrida in Oz," in *Film-Philosophy*; "Rough Sex," in *At the Limit: Pornography and the Humanities*; "Burn. Object. If.," in *World Picture 5: Sustainability*; "Nudity and the Question: *Chinese Roulette*," in *A Companion to Rainer Werner Fassbinder*; and "A title of nothing would visualize sound; this is not about silence, anyway."

Literature Section head James Buzard published several new articles in the areas of 19th-century literature, including the commissioned “Trollope and Travel,” for *The Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope*; “‘The Country of the Plague’: Anticulture and Autoethnography in Dickens’ 1850s,” for a special issue of the journal *Victorian Literature and Culture*; and “Portable Boundaries: Trollope, Race, and Travel,” for a special issue of *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*. Buzard’s “Ethnographic and Narrative Frontiers in Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*” is forthcoming in the journal *Raritan*, and he has recently completed the essays “An Item of Mortality: Lives Led and Unled in *Oliver Twist*,” “Impressions of *Theophrastus Such*” (for a Blackwell Companion to George Eliot), and “Travel’s Others,” on Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*. Work in progress includes essays on Lawrence Durrell’s *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*, on Dickens and colonialism for *The Oxford Handbook of Dickens*, and on “intranationalisms” in British literature.

Peter Donaldson has recently completed articles in connection with his pathbreaking digital humanities scholarship, namely “Shakespeare and Media Allegory,” forthcoming in *Shakespeare and Genre: From Early Modern Inheritances to Postmodern Legacies*; “Hamlet, the Heike and the Fall of Troy,” for the online journal *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation*; and with Alexander Huang, “The Task of the Performance Archive: Shakespeare Studies and Digital Humanities,” under review at *Shakespeare Survey*.

Mary Fuller’s new pieces include “Arthur and Amazons: editing the fabulous Hakluyt’s Principal Navigations,” in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, and “The Real and the Unreal in Tudor Travel Writing,” in an edited collection on Tudor-era travels.

Diana Henderson has produced a significant number of new essays on Renaissance literature and performance, including “Mind the Gaps: The Ear, the Eye, and the Senses of a Woman in *Much Ado about Nothing*,” in *Knowing Shakespeare, Senses, Embodiment and Cognition* (co-edited by Shankar Raman); “Afterlives: stages and beyond,” in the forthcoming *Thomas Middleton in Context*; “The sonnet, subjectivity and gender,” in the upcoming *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet*; “Catalyzing What? Remediation, History, and What of *Love’s Labour’s Lasts*,” forthcoming in *Shakespeare Survey*; and “Shakespearean Comedy, *Tempest-Toss’d*: Genre, Social Transformation, and Contemporary Performance,” upcoming in *Shakespeare and Genre: From Early Modern Inheritances to Postmodern Legacies*.

Americanist Wyn Kelley has three articles in press and forthcoming in 2011: “Out of the Bread Box: Eleanor Melville Metcalf and the Melville Legacy,” in *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies*; “‘Free Robe and Vest’: Melville and the Uncollected Fragment,” in an edited collection on *Melville’s Poetry*; and “Writ in Water: The Books of *Moby-Dick*,” in *A Companion to the American Novel*.

Intellectual historian Alvin Kibel has completed an essay on the relation between “thought experiments” such as Leibniz’s Mill or Turing’s Imitation Game and the nature of science fiction and science fantasy.

Ruth Perry authored new pieces from her current major research project on the ballad traditions of Britain and North America. These include “War and the Media in Border Minstrelsy,” in the edited collection *Ballads and Broad-sides in Britain, 1500–1800*; “Self and Society: Attitudes Towards Incest in Popular Ballads,” in the collection *A Cultural History of the Human Body in the*

*Enlightenment*; “The Printed Record of an Oral Tradition: Anna Gordon Brown’s Ballads” in *Britain and Italy in the Long Eighteenth Century*; “The Maternal Body and the State,” in *Changing Places*; and forthcoming “The Famous Ballads of Anna Gordon, Mrs. Brown,” in *A Cultural History of Women in the Age of Enlightenment*.

Shankar Raman co-authored the introduction to *Knowing Shakespeare: Senses, Embodiment and Cognition*, and published one of his own essays, “Hamlet in Motion,” in that collection. Raman completed a long essay on European exploration in the early modern period, titled “Learning from De Bry: Lessons in Seeing and Writing the Heathen,” for the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*. He also published a new article connected to his literature and mathematics project, “Specifying Unknown Things: The Algebra of *The Merchant of Venice*,” in a collection of essays called *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge*.

Beyond taking their scholarship forward in these books and articles, members of the Literature faculty also wrote numerous reviews of other scholars’ work and published these in widely respected academic journals and in popular venues such as the *Times Literary Supplement*.

Several of our members also made progress on collaborative projects. Peter Donaldson continues to develop and expand his pioneering accomplishments in digital humanities, chiefly in the ever-evolving and globalizing Shakespeare Electronic Archive. Wyn Kelley has recently been deepening her involvement in digital humanities research, through her association with the Melville Electronic Library and her work with MIT’s HyperStudio to develop a digital program for editing, annotating, and sharing student work on multimedia texts. This project, MIXIMIZE: Editing for Readers, focuses on sharpening reading and writing skills through text manipulation and social uses of research. Kelley will host a Melville Electronic Library planning group meeting at MIT in October 2011, during which library director John Bryant will address the Comparative Media Studies colloquium. The Literature faculty will sponsor meetings and a reception for the group. Finally, Arthur Bahr is co-editing a special issue of the distinguished journal *The Chaucer Review*, which will be focused on his research interests at the junction of interpretation and codicology.

### **Fellowships and Awards**

Literature faculty members were acknowledged during the past year with a number of awards and honors. Chaired professorships were awarded to our colleagues Peter Donaldson and Ruth Perry. I have also mentioned the prestigious fellowships won by our colleagues Mary Fuller and Shankar Raman that supported their research. Fuller spent the year on a National Endowment for the Humanities long-term fellowship at the Huntington Library. She had been offered a long-term fellowship at the John Carter Brown Library, which she declined. Meanwhile, Raman held the Beatrice Shepherd Blane Fellowship at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. In addition, professor Stephen Tapscott held a Residence Fellowship at the Virginia Center for Creative Arts.

In 2010, we learned with great pleasure that our new hire, Eugenie Brinkema, had been awarded the Joukowsky Outstanding Dissertation Award from her PhD-granting institution, Brown University. This was a welcome confirmation of the great ability

and potential we had seen in her when we hired her. We were also very pleased by the decision made by the prestigious journal *Modern Drama* to present Sandy Alexandre with its award for Outstanding Article for the Year 2009.

Within MIT, members of our faculty won support for several projects. Peter Donaldson received additional support for his project, Expanding the Shakespeare Electronic Archive. He also received support from the d'Arbelloff Fund for Excellence in Education to support the project, Mixed Learning Modules for Global Shakespeare, and funding from the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences Teaching and Learning Fund for his work on the Global Shakespeare Curriculum Initiative, a collaboration with Diana Henderson, Shankar Raman, and Music and Theater Arts colleagues Janet Sonenberg and Jay Scheib. Wyn Kelley received awards from both the Alumni Class Fund and the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences Teaching and Learning Fund in support of her MIXIMIZE project. Lecturer Howard Eiland had years of successful teaching acknowledged by being honored with the James A. and Ruth Levitan Award for Excellence in Teaching. And, as mentioned above, Jacqueline Breen, administrative officer, was awarded an Infinite Mile Award. We took joy in celebrating all these tributes to Literature faculty and staff members' excellence in research, teaching, and organizational and administrative work.

### Lectures and Appearances

Literature faculty members continued to hone their ongoing research by delivering a host of invited and panel lectures over the past year at conferences and meetings held in locations ranging from Texas to Paris, Siena to Oklahoma, Barbados to the United Kingdom, Canada to Romania.

Among the invited or keynote lectures that our members presented, it is especially gratifying to note assistant professor Eugenie Brinkema's public lecture, given at the invitation of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, for its series on film genres. It is quite a tribute for a scholar less than a year from her PhD to be accorded such a mark of distinction. Brinkema's lecture was on the subject of much of her research, the horror film.

James Buzard gave two plenary lectures: "Travel's Others," for a conference on Travel in the Nineteenth Century held in Lincoln, UK (summer 2011), and "An Item of Mortality," for the annual Dickens Universe at the University of California, Santa Cruz (summer 2010). He also delivered an invited panel lecture, "'He Can't Bear his Name': Autobiography, Autoethnography, *David Copperfield*," at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association in Los Angeles, CA (January 2011). Additionally, he conducted an invited seminar on his current research at the annual conference of the North American Victorian Studies Association in Montreal (November 2010).

Mary Fuller spoke on "Bringing Roanoke Home: The Media of Early Modern Geography" at the Early Modern Studies Institute in Pasadena, CA (October 2010), and on "Preachers, Voyages, Texts" at UCLA's Clark Memorial Library. Noel Jackson, associate professor and specialist in British Romanticism, gave a plenary lecture titled "Coleridge's Criticism of Life" at the annual Coleridge Summer Conference in Cannington, England (July 2010). Ruth Perry lectured on "The Printed Record of an Oral



Tradition” at the Scots and Gaelic Song Conference on the Isle of Skye (summer 2010) and on “The Ballad of Chevy Chase” for the Chevy Chase Historical Society in Maryland (November 2010).

Shankar Raman gave invited lectures on “How to Act Poetically: Descartes, Sidney” at a University of British Columbia symposium in Vancouver (April 2011); on Theodore de Bry’s *India Occidentalis* and *India Orientalis* at Duke University in Durham, NC (March 2011); and on “Forming and Reforming Selves: Geometry and the Re-making of the Public Sphere” at a conference at the Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico in Trento, Italy (October 2010). Poet and translator Stephen Tapscott spoke on “The New Metrics” in Timisoara, Romania (summer 2010).

In addition, our faculty members read papers at a wide variety of conferences as panel participants, including the following:

Sandy Alexandre presented three papers: “Televising Time Versus Doing Time: T.I.’s ‘Road to Redemption’ & the Failure of Conversion Narratives” on a panel at the American Studies Association conference in San Antonio, TX (November 2010); “Constructive Criticism as Creative Criticism in Toni Morrison” at the Sixth Biennial Conference of the Toni Morrison Society in Paris (November 2010); and “Richard Wright’s Haiku: Nature Poetry as a State of Black Culture” at the Futures of American Studies Institute at Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH (summer 2010).

Arthur Bahr spoke on “Rethinking the Fascicle: Booklet 3 of the Auchinleck Manuscript as Fragment and Assemblage” at the New Chaucer Society conference in Siena, Italy (July 2010).

Eugenie Brinkema gave a paper on “Forcing the Issue: Rape/Pornography/Representation” to the World Picture Conference on Representation at Oklahoma State University (October 2010), and spoke at a conference sponsored by the Society for Cinema and Media Studies in New Orleans (March 2011).

Peter Donaldson lectured on “*Hamlet*, the *Heike* and the Fall of Troy” at the International Shakespeare Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon, UK (August 2010)

Diana Henderson addressed the International Shakespeare Conference on “Catalyzing What? Remediation, History, and What of *Love’s Labour’s Lasts*” (August 2010). She also served as post-performance panel chair for a discussion of *Henry IV, Parts One and Two* for the Actors Shakespeare Project in Boston (October 2010).

Noel Jackson read his paper “Coleridge’s Westward Dejection and the Criticism of Life” at the annual Modern Language Association Convention in Los Angeles (January 2011).

Wyn Kelley spoke on digital archives and on her Melville Remix project at a meeting of NINES (Nineteenth-Century Scholarship Online), at a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and at the Melville Society international meeting in Rome (June 2011).

Shankar Raman gave a panel talk on “Infinite Finitude: Enumerating the Sonnets” for a seminar of the Shakespeare Association of America in Bellevue, WA (April 2011).

## Teaching

The Literature faculty regularly teaches about one-quarter of the undergraduate student body each year, playing a major role in the general Institute requirements by offering many popular Communication-Intensive (CI-H) Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences subjects as well as a wide range of middle- and upper-tier classes, and a growing number of Communication-Intensive subjects that focus on writing (CI-HW). Our teaching performance remains very strong, with some of our members routinely receiving student evaluation scores above 6.5 (out of 7). We also have four MacVicar Faculty Fellows—David Thorburn, Ruth Perry, Stephen Tapscott, and Diana Henderson—about one-quarter of our total number of faculty. Ours is a faculty passionately devoted to excellence in undergraduate education.

Toward that end, we are always innovating, seeking new ways to engage students with our rich and complex materials. Peter Donaldson, Diana Henderson, and Shankar Raman have joined with our Music and Theater Arts colleagues Jay Scheib and Janet Sonenberg in a Global Shakespeare Curriculum Initiative (supported by the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences Teaching and Learning Fund) to revitalize the study and theatrical experience of Shakespeare worldwide. They are also collaborating with Donaldson’s digital humanities partners at Penn State (on Shakespeare in Asia), Boston University (on Shakespeare in the Arab world), and the University of Delhi (on Shakespeare in India). This ambitious venture models the ways in which tradition and innovation might enrich each other.

Mary Fuller deserves special notice for so regularly setting an example for the rest of us by her active pursuit of new interdisciplinary teaching collaborations. She has been a member of an interdisciplinary undergraduate class on the supernatural, working with colleagues from Anthropology and Music and Theater Arts. She has reached beyond the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, launching a new freshman seminar (with Lindy Elkins-Tanton from Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences) on exploration, scientific discovery, and representation (eventually to become a regular undergraduate class). Fuller has been remarkably responsive to the distinctive intellectual environment of MIT, resourcefully adapting the method, and even the content, of her teaching to meet student interests and needs. With Stephen Tapscott, John Hildebidle, and Noel Jackson—and with the support of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences Teaching and Learning Fund and the Alumni Class Fund—she has recently worked on an updated design of our popular CI-H offering, 21L.004 Reading Poetry.

Diana Henderson has long been distinguished as a standard bearer for curricular innovation and pedagogic collaboration. Her latest venture in this context is a new variety of the CI-HW type of class, taken by roughly one-third of MIT undergraduates. 21L.010J Writing with Shakespeare, to be offered this coming autumn, will combine an intensive writing workshop experience with an introduction to Shakespeare’s work. The

class reflects our belief that student writing can flourish when it involves the challenge of reading and responding to subtle and profound literary texts. Noel Jackson will also pilot a new CI-HW class this coming year, expanding our commitment to engage in intensive communications training for that segment of the student body most in need of such training. Literature believes it has a crucial role to play in the effort to make our students more effective writers and speakers.

As part of our commitment to sustaining Comparative Media Studies, we employed John Picker for a second year as a visiting scholar in Literature and in Comparative Media Studies. Picker has been a valuable bridge between the two programs, teaching half of his classes in each. His work as a scholar of 19th-century sound technologies offers a model of humanistic, historically informed media research. He will be with us for one more year, after which he takes up a tenured associate professorship at Virginia Commonwealth University, where his experience working in both our programs will serve him well: Virginia Commonwealth University has hired him in both the Department of English and the interdisciplinary Media, Art, and Text program.

Wyn Kelley's pedagogic innovation has already been noted: her project, MIXIMIZE: Editing for Readers, is being developed this summer and will be tested this coming academic year in her classes, 21L.000J Writing About Literature, for CI-HW, and 21L.501 The American Novel. Arthur Bahr continued his very successful collaboration with historians Eric Goldberg and Will Broadhead in teaching in the recently revamped interdisciplinary Ancient and Medieval Studies program.

Several faculty members offered brand new subjects during this past academic year. These include Sandy Alexandre's subject on issues of social class and economics in the American novel; Alisa Braithwaite's class, 21L.434 Science Fiction and Fantasy; Eugenie Brinkema's new subjects, 21L.315 Prizewinners: *High-Art Horror* and 21L.435 Literature and Film—At the Limit: Violence and Contemporary Representation, plus her entirely reinvented versions of 21L.012 Forms of Western Narrative (finally living up to its multimedia potential) and 21L.011 The Film Experience (our largest class, which involves coordination of a team of four to five teaching assistants); and finally Noel Jackson's seminar Media, Modernity, and the Moment.

I should also mention James Buzard's work during this past year as the MIT faculty member in charge of curriculum development of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences subjects for the new Singapore University of Technology and Design, expected to open in April 2012. Since September 2010, Buzard has worked with MIT faculty, Singapore University of Technology and Design representatives, and postdoctoral fellow, Ghenwa Hayek, to develop a small but vital Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences curriculum for the new university. Hayek's particular role has been to plan a two-semester sequence for first-year students that will represent a globalized version of the traditional Western-focused "Great Books" classes offered at such schools as Columbia University and the University of Chicago. The goal is to prepare students for working and living in our global economy by commencing their university education with a single conversation taking in foundational texts of literature, philosophy, and social thought from around the world. This coming year, Hayek will come to MIT to pilot the sequence, in

preparation for its official launching in Singapore next April. She will be accompanied by postdoctoral fellow Liyan Shen, who will observe and assist in the classes, then travel to Singapore to assist in teaching them there. Other Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences subjects will follow, in fields ranging from economics and sociology to the history of science.

### Professional Service

Our faculty members continue to play important roles in their scholarly communities. We regularly serve as executive committee members, delegates, chairs of ongoing seminars, advisory board members, manuscript reviewers for presses and journals, outside readers of PhD dissertations, doctoral defense examiners, and outside referees in tenure and promotion cases. I will not specify each instance of this type of work we do since there are so many of them. Clearly, our opinion on all sorts of professional matters is highly valued. As is not surprising, most of this professional activity is done by comparatively senior members of our faculty.

Sandy Alexandre is now a member of the New England Black Studies Collective and an external advisory board member for the Carter G. Woodson Institute for African-American and African Studies at the University of Virginia. Arthur Bahr is a founding reviewer for a new peer-edited journal devoted to the works of the Medieval *Pearl* poet, the subject of his second book project. James Buzard serves on the advisory board of five journals in English literature, 19th-century British literature, and travel studies, having joined the board of *Victorian Literature and Culture* during the past year. He continues to be a participating faculty member of the Dickens Project (headquartered at the University of California, Santa Cruz), where he has lectured and taught graduate seminars since 1999. He frequently serves as an external reviewer for promotion cases at other universities, most recently at the University of Pennsylvania, Williams College, the University of Notre Dame, and Harvard University. He also reviews proposals for the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Humanities Center.

During the past year, Peter Donaldson served as external reviewer for a senior appointment in Shakespeare studies at Stanford University and as a member of the General Editorial Board for the Internet Shakespeare Editions. Mary Fuller reviewed a manuscript for Ashgate Press and articles for the *William and Mary Quarterly* and *Studies in Travel Writing*. Diana Henderson continued as cochair of the Women and Culture in the Early Modern World seminar at the Humanities Center at Harvard University. She also served on the nominations committee for the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women, the Burckhardt Fellowship selection committee for the American Council of Learned Societies, and on the editorial board of the *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*. In addition, she reviewed a tenure case for the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and is working now as part of the local arrangements committee for the 2012 Shakespeare Association of America's 40th Annual Meeting, to be held in Boston.

Noel Jackson has been an external member of the dissertation committee for a graduate student at the University of Rhode Island whose PhD is expected in 2012, and an external examiner on a PhD dissertation defense in the Department of Language and Literature at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (September 2010). Wyn Kelley read two

manuscripts on 19th-century American literature for presses during the past year. Ruth Perry chaired the Eighteenth-Century Seminar at Harvard University's Humanities Center, and served as a reader of manuscripts for the Elphinstone Institute at the University of Aberdeen, and for the journals *Tulsa Studies in Language and Literature*, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, and *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*. David Thorburn read manuscripts for Oxford University Press.

### Service at MIT

What I wrote last year remains true: Diana Henderson must be mentioned first in this category. She is widely known across the Institute for her many forms of service to our intellectual community, and she exemplifies a spirit common among our faculty. Her work as dean for curriculum and faculty support in the Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education has received widespread praise. She continues to work tirelessly and creatively on all aspects of the MIT curriculum, with special concern for the Undergraduate Educational Commons and the communication requirement. Henderson serves as well on the Creative Arts Council and is a participating faculty member of the Women's and Gender Studies Program, the Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies, and Comparative Media Studies. She participates on the numerous committees connected to her administrative position, including the Committee on the Undergraduate Program; the Subcommittee on the Communication Requirement; the new committee on the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences requirement; the Council on Educational Technology; and the Student Systems Steering Committee. Henderson never runs out of ideas and energy to enrich the experience of the MIT community.

Late this past spring, we learned that our colleague, Mary Fuller, had been appointed incoming associate chair of the faculty. We are delighted by this recognition and look forward to watching her excel in this important role.

During AY2010, Peter Donaldson became faculty director of HyperStudio. His experience in that role has been somewhat mixed. Communications among the Dean's Office, Comparative Media Studies, Literature, and HyperStudio have been less than perfect, and Donaldson has sometimes found himself omitted from meetings on HyperStudio matters, such as where HyperStudio administration and funding would be based. HyperStudio has, by this point, been moved under the umbrella of Comparative Media Studies.

Among the many other roles performed by our faculty members on behalf of the MIT community, Sandy Alexandre has been a Women's and Gender Studies steering committee member. Arthur Bahr has been on the Literature faculty's diversity committee, and was also an invited speaker at the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences Family Weekend forum. He also served as thesis advisor for a senior who was a double major and graduated this year. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, Bahr organized the marathon reading of *Beowulf* during the Independent Activities Period. Peter Donaldson was on the Council on Educational Technology and on this year's dean's committee to recommend Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship candidates. Noel Jackson continued his role as a member of the Committee on the Undergraduate Program, and on the committees to select the MacVicar Faculty Fellows and to advise on the disbursement

of resources from the Kelly-Douglas Fund. Alvin Kibel was a member of the Faculty Environmental Network for Sustainability, working to develop a new subject as part of the minor in literature and the natural environment. Ruth Perry served on the d'Arbeloff Fund for Excellence in Education selection committee, the Burchard Scholars selection committee, and the dean's committee on plagiarism, as well as continuing as a member of the Women's and Gender Studies steering committee. David Thorburn organized our popular Independent Activities Period event, "Pleasures of Poetry," and continued as director of the MIT Communications Forum, which hosts discussions of critical issues in contemporary media.

## **Conclusion**

As I have indicated above, the past year has presented some significant challenges, particularly in connection with the prolonged and uncertain process of reorganization. During AY2010 members of the Literature faculty came to feel that though they had been very open-minded about the prospect of reorganization, this open-mindedness had gained them little: they felt they were being cut off from a new proposed autonomous section in media studies comprised mainly by faculty from the current Foreign Languages & Literatures and Writing and Humanistic Studies sections. We have had difficulty gaining a hearing for our point of view from our dean, even though we believe the committee she charged with reviewing the proposed changes agrees with us about the potential pitfalls of the proposal being put forward. As I write, the Literature faculty members are deeply concerned about the impact this reorganization will have not only on humanistic study at the Institute, but also on issues of broader concern related to fundamental elements of the MIT Undergraduate Educational Commons.

Having said that, the members of the Literature faculty continue to be highly productive in research, deeply engaged in important professional and Institute business, and proficient and innovative in undergraduate teaching. We look forward to expanding our contributions to MIT's curriculum and to our professional fields. We are proud of the strength and cohesiveness of our professional community.

**James Buzard**  
**Section Head**  
**Professor of Literature**