

# Postings

The Annual Newsletter of the Idaho State University Department of English and Philosophy

Volume 11

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## Eating, Working, Walking, and Eating: Adventures in the Fulbright-Nehru World



### Alan Johnson

*Alan Johnson is a Professor in English currently on Fulbright in India. He wrote this article in November when he first arrived in India.*

November 9 in Chennai, on India's southeastern coast, began like any other day, gently and with sun. It ended with two hammer blows: the US election, and Prime Minister Modi's stoppage of all 500- and 1000-rupee notes. In India, the second one is causing far more immediate pain. The aim is to undercut counterfeit currency and the undeclared, un-taxable money that greases half the country's economy. The result is a scarcity of petty cash needed for everyday transactions, from street vendors to buses and autos (three-wheeled rickshaws). ATMs and banks are short on currency, and the new flashy-purple 2000-rupee note I got after standing in a long queue is an albatross because no one can break it. It's a unique case of cash-rich, cash-poor.

Which is why I've been walking everywhere. Here on the campus of the Indian Institute of Technology, this is pleasant. The two-

mile stretch from my guest house to the main gate is canopied with tamarind, banyan, sal, and other trees. This was, and still is, a 600-acre protected deer park—especially fitting for someone studying forests in literature. Spotted deer and blackbuck, an endangered antelope with corkscrew horns, munch happily on grass, unmindful of their human co-wanderers.

Off campus, the story's different: motorbikes, scooters, dogs, cars, buses, bicycles, pedestrians, dogs, autos, and a goat vie for inches of road. The trick is to cross a street at a steady pace, so that vehicles can calibrate the centimeters they need to avoid you. Math is a strong suit here.

Back at IIT, faculty in the Humanities and Social Sciences Department have been very welcoming, and I've met some of the post-graduate (in the U.S., graduate) students. Several have been on Fulbrights to the States. India's IIT's, with their focus on engineering, have not generally been home to such fields, but the Dean of Administration, Dr. Sriram, tells me that IIT's around the country see this one as a model. They see the value of having students learning to think beyond bytes and equations.

Last week, I flew to the city of Aurangabad, in west-central India, to speak at a conference organized by my friend Dr. Hameed Khan and his colleague Dr. Parvez Aslam. It brought together presenters from literature, journalism, and political science, so I talked about how slow, active reading opens our minds to a variety of truthful interpretations, and is therefore the opposite of the unexamined, often contradictory, tweeting that passes for political "debate." I lamented that on November 8, the latter had gained the upper hand. Very few in the audience disagreed with me, even the ones who were tweeting.

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## Acting on Our Humanities-Based Values



### Jennifer Eastman Attebery, Department Chair

On this snowy March morning I write for a May audience. March is suspended in the academic year, just after the rush of semester start-up, just in the midst of the state legislature's deliberations and ISU's budget hearings, just before the April speed up of final papers and thesis and dissertation defenses culminating in May's commencement ceremonies. Suspended, we have a moment to ponder and plan. As it so happens, this year's planning at the department, college, and university levels is coalescing in March.

The department is crafting a revised mission statement that describes what we do but also takes a visionary stance. Dovetailing with that draft mission is a draft plan for actions over the next few years. The college has had a strategic plan for the past couple of years and is actively

using that plan to prioritize its work. The university is on the verge of finalizing a draft five-year strategic plan that will go to the State Board of Education in June. Because I have enjoyed opportunities to participate across these conversations, I have been able to perceive ways in which they healthily converge and am considerably heartened by the mutual direction.

Across all levels, there is a strong focus on outreach in southeast Idaho: creating "partnerships" with Idaho communities, recruiting students from our region, providing scholarship support for regional students, and communicating more effectively the unique qualities of our institution. The college and department are involved in our region already through many forms of outreach: Philosophy for the Public (a monthly speaking/discussion group in a public venue); Liberal Arts High (a speakers-in-the-schools program of the college); dual-enrollment liaisons (full-time faculty mentoring dual-enrollment teachers); and individual faculty involvement in the Humanities Cafés and Idaho Humanities Council Let's Talk About It and Speakers Bureau projects. Developments over the next few years are likely to focus on sustaining and strengthening the quality of these existing ties and seeking a few communities to add to the many already served.

A significant goal for the department is its move to provide the Professional Writing track fully on the Idaho Falls campus. Our two faculty in Idaho Falls, Jennifer Fuller and Cathy Peppers, are nurturing the presence of English studies in Idaho Falls. Our rotation of courses for the English major began in earnest last fall semester. This year, also, our creative writers Susan Goslee and Bethany Schultz Hurst piloted a Teaching Creative Writing in the Schools course in partnership with Chief Tahgee Elementary Academy at Fort Hall. This spring, Tom Klein, Mike Stubbs, and David Lawrimore collaborated with the College of Education in lively presentations featuring a recreation of a medieval classroom and readings of Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel *Persepolis*, and Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" for an audience of prospective education majors brought in from regional high schools.

The Department of English and Philosophy has a long tradition of connectedness with our region through what can be broadly characterized as the public humanities. Indeed, for most of our faculty, making a strong distinction among teaching, research, and service or between international/national and local levels of involvement are artificial divisions, as they take their research on local materials to international audiences or bring their research on international materials back to local audiences. Exemplars of this tradition are Professor Alan Johnson, currently on Fulbright in India, and emeritus faculty member Susan Swetnam, who at the end of March will be honored as the 2017 recipient of the Idaho Humanities Council's award for Outstanding Achievement in the Humanities. Dr. Swetnam's publications on regional foodways and Carnegie libraries, for example, reached national scholarly audiences but were also the basis for numerous public lectures in the region and the inspiration for her teaching of magazine writing and regional literature. My own awareness of this departmental tradition makes ISU's 2016-17 planning efforts feel like a welcome return to action based on our shared humanities-informed values.

### Help support the Department of English and Philosophy

The department is truly grateful for the generosity of its donors and alumni, who make possible a wide variety of learning and research opportunities for our students, our faculty, and our community. Your gift can:

- ◆ Bring visiting speakers, writers, and artists to campus
- ◆ Develop our technological resources for pedagogy and research
- ◆ Fund *Black Rock & Sage*, our literary magazine
- ◆ Provide scholarship opportunities for outstanding students
- ◆ Help support the Teaching Literature Book Award
- ◆ And so much more

To make a gift in any amount, please visit

<https://pledge.isu.edu> and

complete an Idaho State University Pledge Form. Be sure to indicate that your gift is for the Department of English and Philosophy.

**Thank you for your support  
of the humanities at ISU!**

## Visiting Writer Series Benefits ISU Students and Pocatello Community

The Visiting Writer Series gives ISU students and Pocatello community members the chance to meaningfully interact with writers of national reputation through master classes and guest readings. Each fall, we host a visiting poet, and in the spring, we spotlight prose writers. Nationally acclaimed guests, such as Shawn Vestal, Alyson Hagy, and Nicole Walker, write about our intermountain west region and its culture, which helps our students see how their concerns can fit into larger cultural conversations. In the last few years, we've expanded the spring Visiting Writing Series into mini-residencies lasting several days, which ensures that the writer makes multiple contacts with ISU students and community members. Visiting Writers teach creative writing workshops for advanced ISU creative writing students. And to facilitate community interaction and potential recruitment to ISU, we've included a community outreach aspect where the Visiting Writer interacts with local middle school or high school students.

### Shawn Vestal, Author of *Godforsaken Idaho* and *Daredevils*

The Department of English and Philosophy hosted visiting writer Shawn Vestal on Thursday, March 8th. Vestal read from his fiction and presented a brief talk on the importance of the humanities in connecting individuals to larger communities, particularly in geographically removed locations such as Southern Idaho. Vestal began his presentation by stating that he had never been shipwrecked, growing up in landlocked Idaho, but that works such as *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare, *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe, and even *Gilligan's Island* take him outside his landlocked experience. He emphasized the importance of the arts and humanities by explaining that they expand our experiences, illustrating how his own life experiences have been mediated by the arts. Vestal then read an excerpt from his novel *Daredevils* about a young boy's experience watching Evel Knievel's attempt to jump the Snake River Basin. His reading was laced with humor and made audience members laugh. Vestal also held a writing workshop with ISU students on Friday, March 9th. Students turned in writing samples beforehand, and Vestal led a discussion on their works, giving specific suggestions on how to develop their pieces.



Vestal, who grew up in Gooding, Idaho, is the author of a short story collection, *Godforsaken Idaho*, and a novel, *Daredevils*. Both works prominently feature Southern Idaho as a setting and often take the region's culture as subject. *Godforsaken Idaho* was named the winner of the PEN/Robert W. Bingham Prize, which honors a debut book that "represents distinguished literary achievement and suggests great promise." The Washington Post describes *Daredevils* as "about the opposing forces at play in the American West. On the one hand, we have the wild freedom epitomized by Evel Knievel, whose voice punctuates the narrative, exhorting the younger characters to risk everything. Running counter to this is the strict discipline of the Mormon faith, which allowed Brigham Young and his followers to build a community in an inhospitable wilderness." Vestal currently lives in Spokane, WA, where he writes a column for The Spokesman-Review and teaches in the MFA program at Eastern Washington University.

### Matt Daly, Poet and Educator



On October 13, ISU was privileged to have Jackson poet and educator Matt Daly visit our campus. He gave a lecture and a poetry reading to two well-attended events. His lecture was entitled, "Learning Is a Work in Progress," and detailed benefits and methods for bringing creative writing into other classes in primary and secondary education curricula. According to Daly, expressive writing has the short term benefits of decreasing blood pressure, boosting the immune system, and increasing the individual's sense of well-being. As part of a curriculum, the long term benefits can be realized with better memory, higher GPAs, and even increased sporting performance.

Daly described four different projects he has collaborated on with teachers throughout the public school system in Jackson, WY. In one project, eighth graders did a chemistry lab and then took two days to write poems about the lab, drawing parallels between syllables, words, or parts of speech and the similarity to chemical reactions in the lab. The project wrapped up with a costumed poetry slam in which all the kids dressed up and performed their poetry for peers and administrators.

Another project he described brought the Jackson Historical Society to the classroom for a history project mashed up with creative story telling. Students chose a historical photo and wrote a 500 word creative story about what they thought was going on in the photo or around it. At the end of the project, they displayed their photos and stories for the public and the Historical Society. Daly says one of the keys to getting school administration on board with these kinds of creative cross-projects is to focus on the technical aspects of writing, and to emphasize the three core standards being met: speaking, listening, and writing. He suggested inviting administrators to the final presentation event so they get to see the results.



## Black Rock and Sage

### Annelise Ferris– Poetry Editor

*Black Rock & Sage*, Idaho State University's journal of creative works, annually publishes a wide range of material—from art to poetry to music, as well as other unique student creations—by undergraduate and graduate students from various departments on campus. The current *Black Rock & Sage* staff is composed of Susan Goslee, the faculty advisor, Jeff Howard, the Editor-in-Chief, Christopher Swenson, the Prose Editor, and (myself) Annelise Ferris, the Poetry Editor, along with a group of talented assistant editors enrolled in this year's literary magazine production class.

Not only does *Black Rock & Sage* offer students a fantastic way to get published (a reward in itself!), but the magazine offers other incentives as well. The work that we receive during our open submissions period (September 15th to February 14th) is eligible for prizes, namely, the Ford Swetnam Poetry Prize and the Prose Writing Prize. Additionally, in an effort to spread the literary arts off campus as well, *Black Rock & Sage* hosts the 1B, 4B, 8B High School Creative Writing Contest which invites high school students from Bannock, Bonneville, and Bingham Counties to submit poetry and/or prose.

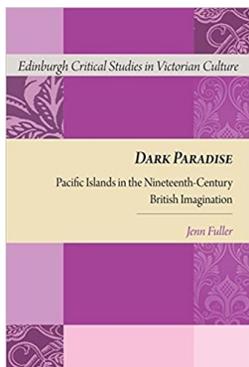
On our brand new website you can still find submission guidelines, contest details, and information on how to purchase merchandise. We have made several exciting new additions as well. In an effort to establish ourselves as the “arts hub of Southeast Idaho” we have created a regional events calendar that is updated monthly with readings, concerts, and other arts events in the surrounding area. We also maintain a list of active creative writing journals and small presses that may be of interest to our readers. Finally, the addition the staff at *Black Rock & Sage* is most enthusiastic about is our blog, which is updated with a new post every Monday.

The first week of each month, readers can look forward to our “staff picks” post, which features recommended reading/viewing by our staff. The staff has a wide range of tastes, so it's a great place to get recommendations for books and films that you might not come across otherwise. The second week of each month we publish a “spotlight post” on a past editor of *Black Rock & Sage*. These posts are among our most popular as they always manage to be both entertaining and encouraging. The next monthly feature is a series we are running called The Life and Times of a Literate Sasquatch, and yes, it is exactly what you think. In this series, we post random entries from Sasquatch's diary (anonymously of course to protect his true identity), and they range from the philosophical to the humorous to the tragic. And finally, we end the month by sharing a piece of work from one of our previous issues.

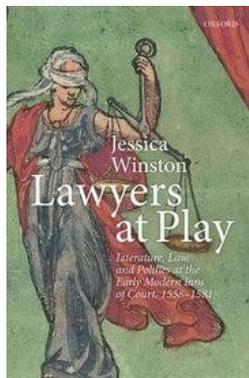
Although we only publish work by students of ISU, we are always looking for ways to connect to the Pocatello community and the budding literary arts scene in Southeast Idaho. Our growing social media presence is one way we hope to achieve this, so please like, share, and connect with us! Honestly, who can resist a literary Sasquatch? Check it out at [www.blackrockandsage.org](http://www.blackrockandsage.org).

## Faculty Book Publications

Two of our faculty published important books in 2016:



**Jennifer Fuller's *Dark Paradise: Pacific Islands in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination*** (Edinburgh University Press) traces the changing British attitudes towards imperial settlement. *Dark Paradise* argues that while the British originally believed the Pacific Islands to be commercial paradises or perfect sites for missionary endeavors, as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, their optimistic vision transformed to portray darker realities. As a result, these islands act as a 'breaking point' for British theories of imperialism, colonialism, and identity. The book traces the changing British attitudes towards imperial settlement as the early view of 'island as paradise' gives way to a fear of the hostile islanders and examines how this revelation undermined a key tenet of British imperialism - that they were the 'superior' or 'civilized' islanders.



In ***Lawyers at Play: Literature, Law, and Politics at the Early Modern Inns of Court, 1558-1581*** (Oxford University Press), **Jessica Winston** provides a framework for understanding the connections between the literary and legal cultures over the whole of the early modern period, when many poets and playwrights were also members of the legal societies the Inns of Court. Focusing on the first decade of Elizabeth's reign, the period when a large literary network first developed around the societies, this study demonstrates that the literary surge at this time developed out of and responded to a period of rapid expansion in the legal profession and in the career prospects of members. Poetry, translation, and performance were recreational pastimes; however, these activities also defined and elevated the status of inns-of-court men as qualified, learned, and ethical participants in England's "legal magistracy": those lawyers, judges, justices of the peace, civic office holders, town recorders, and gentleman landholders who managed and administered local and national governance of England.

## IHC Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Humanities

The Idaho Humanities Council honored Idaho State University Professor Emeritus Susan Swetnam with IHC's Award for "Outstanding Achievement in the Humanities" at an award ceremony on Wednesday, March 29 in ISU's L.E. and Thelma E. Stephens Performing Arts Center. The award, along with a \$1,000 honorarium, was presented to Swetnam, to honor her career in teaching, scholarship, and personal writing, as well as her devotion to the public humanities over the last 30+ years.

ISU's Department of English and Philosophy is proud to have been Susan's academic home from 1979 until her retirement in 2013. During that time she was recognized multiple times for outstanding teaching, research, and public service. Over the years she has authored numerous articles and seven books, including both personal essays and scholarship, most recently *A Season of Little Sacraments* (Liturgical Press, 2016) and *Books, Bluster, and Bounty* (Utah State University Press), which won the Idaho Library Association's award for Idaho Book of the Year in 2012.

Over the years, Swetnam has served as a scholar in numerous IHC programs, developing her own programs, working as a consultant on humanities projects for many other organizations, and traveling the state as a lecturer and moderator for scores of "Let's Talk About It Programs" in the public libraries of some of Idaho's smallest communities. On the national level, she has served as a consultant and grant reviewer for the National Endowment for the Humanities, and as an evaluator of humanities programs in several other states. Currently she is working on a new book while establishing her own small business, Balsamroot Massage. She is the widow of the poet and Wordsworth scholar Ford Swetnam, and she remains committed to making the humanities more accessible to the general public.

The Idaho Humanities Council is a statewide, nonprofit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities dedicated to promoting greater public understanding of literature, history, ethics, law, and other humanities disciplines. The Council has presented its award for "Outstanding Achievement in the Humanities" annually since 1986.



## New Faculty and Staff

### Dr. Cathy Peppers



Senior Lecturer in English

PhD in English, University of Oregon

Dr. Peppers is teaching Technical and Professional Writing on the Idaho Falls campus. Prior to moving back to the English Department, she spent ten years in the College of Business. She won the College of Business Outstanding Teacher award in 2012, and an ISU Outstanding Teacher award in 2015.

Teaching Specialties: Applied creative processes, professional communication, and poetry.

### Dr. Evan Rodriguez



Visiting Assistant Professor in Philosophy

PhD in Philosophy and Classics, Yale University

Dr. Rodriguez is working on a method he calls 'exploring both sides' and its development through Plato and beyond. His historical interests extend through early modern philosophy and across east/west boundaries.

Teaching Specialties: tools to understand ancient texts and put them in conversation with modern problems.

## Fulbright, Continued From Page 1

It was good to see that women made up at least half the audience, their dress reflecting various degrees of orthodoxy. Progress in women's education in a city that has historically been somewhat conservatively Muslim owes much to the vision of Dr. Rafiq Zakaria, an eminent educator, writer, and government cabinet minister. His widow, Fatima Zakaria, continues to oversee several educational institutions in the city. (Their son is CNN and Time Magazine policy-thinker Fareed Zakaria.) She very kindly invited us to her home for a wonderful, chef-prepared meal that included fried prawns, three types of breads, curried eggplant, rice, and, for dessert, ras malai, one of humankind's great inventions.

In a few days, I meet a writer at the Goa Arts and Literature Festival, Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, whose novel on tribal peoples in forested lands to the north I've written about. A week after that, I'll participate in the Bangalore Literature Festival, whose organizer saw my bio on a Fulbright-related site. And the end of December, I head to the eastern state of Orissa for a conference on ecocriticism.

I'd better finish this so I can make it to a Fulbright dinner at a Parsi restaurant in the city. They never tell you how hard this eating business can be. I'll have to walk, of course.

## Faculty Publications and Accomplishments

**Brian Attebery**, Professor of English is editor of the Library of America's series of reissued major works of Ursula K. Le Guin and gave the keynote address at the James Tiptree Jr. Symposium.

**Jennifer Eastman Attebery**, Chair and Professor of English, was honored with the *Idaho State Business Journal's* Business & Achievement Award for 2016 in the university-level education category.

**Jacob Berger**, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, published "Relationalism and Unconscious Perception," with Bence Nanay, in *Analysis* and "Virtue, Situationism, and the Cognitive Value of Art," with Mark Alfano in *The Monist*.

**Hal Hellwig**, Associate Professor of English, presented his paper "Venice: Mark Twain, A Vulgar Tourist Among the Phantoms of Poetry and Romance" at a Mark Twain Special Session at the South Central Modern Language Association conference.

**Bethany Schultz Hurst**, Assistant Professor of English, was awarded a literary arts fellowship from the Idaho Commission on the Arts.

**Alan Johnson**, Professor of English, published "Sacred Forest, Maternal Space, and National Narrative in Mahasweta Devi's Fiction" in *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 23.3 (2016): 506-25.

**Sonja Launspach**, Associate Professor of English, presented "Innovative Pedagogy in the Linguistics Classroom" at the Linguistic Society of America meeting in Austin, TX.

**Matthew Levay**, Assistant Professor of English, was named one of the SE Idaho Professionals of the Year, an award sponsored by the *Idaho State Business Journal*.

**Evan Rodriguez**, Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy, presented "'Pushing Through' in Plato's Sophist: A New Reading of the Parity Assumption," at the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy, Pacific Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association in Seattle, WA.

**Roger Schmidt**, spoke at the opening of the Eli Oboler Library exhibit "Malady: Physiological, Psychological, and Social Disease in 18th-Century Texts."

**James Skidmore**, Associate Professor of Philosophy, presented "Making Sense of Heroic Supererogation," at the Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress, at the University of Colorado.

**Michael Stubbs**, Associate Lecturer in English, published "Along with Tom: on the Centennial Trail" in the November 2016 issue of *Idaho Magazine*, pp. 18-23.

**Susan Swetnam**, Professor Emerita, published "Look Wider Still: The Subversive Nature of Girl Scouting in the 1950s," in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 37.1 (2016): 90-114. She also published her book *A Season of Little Sacraments: Christmas Commotion, Advent Grace* through Liturgical Press.

**Robert Watkins**, Assistant Professor of English, published "Sequential Rhetoric: Using Freire and Quintilian to Teach Students to Read and Create Comics," in a collective issue of *Digital Humanities Quarterly* that was awarded the prize for 2016 Best Online Comics Studies Scholarship.

**Curt Whitaker**, Professor of English, presented a paper titled "Living Waters: Pre-Industrial Waterways" at the Under Western Skies Conference in Calgary, Canada.

**Lydia Wilkes**, Assistant Professor of English, has been selected to be an editor-in-training for the annual *Computers & Writing Proceedings*, working with chief editor Cheryl Ball.

**Jessica Winston**, Professor of English and Chair of History, published "Rethinking Absolutism: English *de casibus* Tragedy in the 1560s," in the edited collection *A Mirror for Magistrates in Context: Literature, History, and Politics in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

**Brent Wolter**, Professor of English, published "Collocational Processing in Light of the Phraseological Continuum Model: Does Semantic Transparency Matter?" with Henrik Gyllstad of Lund University in *Language Learning* 66.2 (2016): 296-323.

**Amanda Zink**, Assistant Professor of English, and **Margaret Johnson**, Professor of English —and seven graduate students in English —**Corinna Barrett Percy**, **Jennifer Cox**, **Quinn Grover**, **Steve Harrison**, **Jeff Howard**, **Shelley Louise**

**McEuen**, and **Liz Onufer** —presented papers at the 2016 Conference of the Western Literature Association in Big Sky, Montana.

## Student Publications and Accomplishments:

**Amy Brumfield**, **Diantha Smith**, and **Emily Treasure**, Ph.D. students, presented papers at "Beyond the Frontier: First Year Composition," a series of panels at RMMLA.

**Deidre Carney**, Ph.D. candidate, attended the Committee on Teaching About the UN (CTAUN) Conference at UN Headquarters in NY. The theme was "Refugees: The 21st Century Challenge."

**Anelise Farris**, Ph.D. student, presented in the panel "The Folk Awakens: *Star Wars*, Folkloristics, and the Intersection of Hollywood, Narrative, and Memory" at the American Folklore Society annual conference in Miami, FL.

**Jeff Howard**, Ph.D. candidate, curated "Malady: Physiological, Psychological, and Social Disease in Eighteenth-century Texts."

**Jacob Thomas**, Ph.D. candidate, was named as one of Snow College's "40 Distinguished Young Alumni." Jacob also presented "C.S. Lewis: Life and Works" to New Knowledge Adventures.