Dear Alumni/ae and Friends of the Department of English and Comparative Literature,

It's midway through another fall term, and the department has entered its crazy race toward final papers, final exams, and the holiday break. As a department we are in excellent shape, though we have felt the results of university budget constraints in the slackened pace of hiring in recent years. Universities emerge from recessions more slowly than many other institutions, and that has certainly been true at Columbia. The Department of English and Comparative Literature is therefore excited to be searching for two new junior colleagues this year, one in early modern drama and one in the long eighteenth-century. These searches are in full swing, and both should be successfully completed in the spring term. The young assistant professors who are hired will energize work in early periods of British literature and help to sustain our national rankings as one of the four or five best English departments in the country.

The work being done in the department has never been more exciting, and you will read about some of that work in this newsletter. We remain committed to the teaching of writing and of the full range of English and American literature, and also to work in comparative fields, in the ecological and the digital humanities, and to the study of texts written in English from across the globe. Our faculty continues to win prizes and fellowships, and to be elected to prestigious positions in national organizations; our graduate students persist in producing the astonishing scholarship of tomorrow’s academy.

All of this is occurring, however, against a backdrop of anxiety about the future of humanities disciplines. The number of students electing to major in English has decisively declined nationally, though much less so at Columbia than elsewhere, and humanities faculties are shrinking. We can argue that the humanities are urgently needed for the crucial role they play in understanding languages, ethical systems, and histories that are not one’s own, and for the development of taste, judgment, and the capacity for critique, ethical action, and engaged citizenship. These things are true, but the economic vulnerability felt by many families drives students toward utilitarian and pre-professional fields of inquiry, and by their funding priorities state legislatures and boards of trustees reveal a loss of faith in the intrinsic value of the liberal arts. This is not a jeremiad, but an acknowledgment that the daily excitement of teaching in one of the great English departments in America is now tempered with anxiety about its future. The need for a strong and persistent public defense of the humanities has never been greater.

Best,
Jean E. Howard

Comments should be addressed to Jean E. Howard, Chair of English & Comparative Literature, at jfh5@columbia.edu or to Aaron Robertson, Coordinator, at ar3488@columbia.edu
Professor Sarah Cole has been awarded a Guggen-heim Fellowship for a book project on H.G. Wells. The Guggenheim Fellowship is awarded to established scholars who show exceptional capacity for productive scholarship. In her manuscript titled “The Wells Era,” Cole seeks a full revaluation of H.G. Wells’ significance for literary modernism and for the 20th century more broadly.

Although often admired for his science fiction, Wells was a true polymath whose writing exhibits incredible range and depth. His most popular works today—*The Time Machine*, *The War of Worlds*, *The Invisible Man*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*—were written in just a five year period (1895-1900) and represent a fraction of the novels, articles, political pamphlets, short stories, nonfiction, and even film scripts he wrote over five decades. Wells wrote multivolume works of popular science, economics, and history, collaborating with experts in those fields. His most widely read book during his lifetime, *The Outline of History*, presents a history of the whole world. All of this, Cole explains, is depicted in rich prose that deserves to be set next to many modernist authors.

The quantity and quality of Wells’ work is all the more exceptional considering his modest origins. In England’s stratified class system, Wells was from the lowest rung of the middle class. His destiny from birth was to be a draper: to work as an apprentice in a drapery shop and perhaps graduate to managing his own. His mother was a “lady’s maid,” a personal assistant to the wealthy, while his father was a shopkeeper, out of work for much of Wells’ life. Wells was only significantly exposed to reading and writing while recovering from a series of physical accidents and illnesses. Subsequently, Wells became a teacher, which required no formal training in 19th century England. Teaching allowed him to apply for fellowships, many of which he won. What Cole calls his “big break” occurred when he was invited to study at The Normal School of Science, a major technical and scientific institute of the era. Here, he studied under Thomas Huxley, a great Victorian biologist, sometimes known as “Darwin’s Bulldog.” “If the prototype for the modernist was the artist,” Cole says, “Wells chose the scientist.” After a period of writing scratch journalism, Wells published *The Time Machine* in 1895, which became a sensational success.

Outside of his vocation as a writer, Wells had remarkable influence in politics at an international level. He had the ear of world leaders and was an early champion of the League of Nations, a prototype for the U.N. As a true public intellectual, he published a range of predictions about the future that were internationally renowned and often accurate. Wells coined the term “atomic bomb” more than twenty-five years before its invention, and his other prophecies range from aerial bombardment to air conditioning.

For Cole, writing a book on H.G. Wells started with an epiphany. “I just started noticing him everywhere,” she explains, “and it mostly started in the negative.” Like most scholars of modernism, she was familiar with Virginia Woolf’s habitual dismissal of Wells. Cole discovered in her research a history of unacknowledged borrowing from Wells and reciprocal influence with several prominent writers. Joseph Conrad’s 1907 novel *The Secret Agent* was dedicated to Wells, and Cole notes that even *Heart of Darkness* borrows material from Wells’ *The Time Machine*. Similarly, German filmmaker Fritz Lang uses many Wellsian tropes in the film *Metropolis*, most notably the moving walkways and the dichotomy of under and upper worlds.

Despite such convergences, several modernist writers denigrated Wells in order to specify their own achievement, portraying him as a foil for the literary genius of modernism. These writers, such as Woolf and Eliot, defined their craft in opposition to authors of contemporary fiction, against which they set their own standard of artistry. In exploring this history, Cole points out that what was considered artistic accomplishment—then and now—was originally formulated by only a few writers.

The modernist rubric for artistry favored precision over breadth; Cole offers the examples of the “gem-like beauty of one novel or the perfection of the imagist poem.” Cole elaborates, “the idea is about scarcity and about a certain kind of honing in on the perfect literary moment.” Alternately, appreciating or even understanding...
Wells requires a totally different approach; “With Wells, you need to read five novels or ten novels. Or, you need to read ten novels and some of his social pamphlets because what he was doing was at a different scale.” One clear result of Cole’s research is that even critics of his time recognized that the emblematic piece of work was the wrong unit for Wells. Cole notes Queenie D. Leavis’s 1939 review of popular fiction, Fiction and the Reading Public, which provides a chronology of popular titles. Instead of featuring a title, her entry for 1909 simply reads: “Wells becomes popular as a propagandist in fiction.” Cole interprets the 1909 entry as a testament to Wells’ exceptionality; “It’s not about the particular work, it’s the phenomenon.” But the aspects of his work that defy easy classification also seem to have contributed to his neglect in English departments.

Cole suggests that Wells’ invisibility in literary studies is the result of many forces, among them the dominance of literary modernism itself. To demonstrate this point, Cole refers to a simple experiment. Charting the popularity of the terms “Virginia Woolf” and “H.G. Wells” over a period from 1915 to around 2010, the number of textual appearances of the two authors presents a stark picture: Wells dominates the beginning of the graph but, around mid-century, the lines cross and the trends reverse. The latter half of the graph follows what Cole names the “midcentury moment when modernism achieved its absolute ascendancy.”

Despite Cole’s effort to focus in on the exclusivity of the modernist definition of artistry, she explains that her project has no intent to diminish the work of writers like Virginia Woolf. Instead, she hopes that a vigorous reevaluation of the period with Wells at the center will provide a new set of models for how we understand the 20th century. “So much of our aesthetic taste has been determined by modernism,” Cole explains, “we don’t even realize it.” Thus, revisiting Wells requires one to think about literature beyond individual works. This way of analyzing an author or a period, Cole admits, “is very hard for literary critics to accept: that it’s not about the accomplishment of one novel or two novels. It is about the accomplishment of a body of work or an agenda.”

**Department Welcomes New Faculty Member,**

**Jennifer Wenzel**

The Department’s newest faculty member, Jennifer Wenzel, comes to Columbia from the University of Michigan, where she was an Associate Professor of English, with affiliations to the Center for South Asian Studies and the Department of Afro-American and African Studies. Specializing in postcolonial theory and environmental humanities, Professor Wenzel’s scholarship offers a politically salient perspective on African and South Asian literature.

Having earned her Ph.D. at the University of Austin with a specialization in Ethnic and Third World Literatures, Professor Wenzel has long studied literature from a comparative vantage. Her publications have focused on a range of authors and literary figures, including Bengali activist and writer Mahasweta Devi, the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, the Nobel-Prize winning J. M. Coetzee, and the assassinated Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba.

While disciplinary boundaries often work centrifugally to prevent interaction between fields, Professor Wenzel seeks to create an interdisciplinary dialogue among environmental, economic, and humanist modes of inquiry. Her first course at Columbia, “Postcolonial Ecologies,” has precisely such a focus, which Wenzel describes as an effort to examine the emergent conversations and mutual blindspots between postcolonial studies and ecocriticism.

Professor Wenzel’s first book, *Bulletproof: Afterlives of Anticolonial Prophecy in South Africa and Beyond*, analyzes the colonial history of the Xhosa people of southern Africa, whose culture and livelihood were centered around cattle. In the mid-1850s, many of the Xhosa people followed the commands of a young female prophet, Nongqawuse, who promised that the ancestors would return and colonial invaders would be swept away if they killed their cattle and discarded their grain. Ultimately, the re-
sulting famine killed thousands and intensified the very conditions of colonial subjugation that the prophecy sought to end. As the title suggests, the book focuses as much on the subsequent memory of the Xhosa cattle killing as on the event itself. For example, Wenzel examines a number of subsequent literary and artistic renderings of the cattle killing such as the 1936 play A Girl Who Killed to Save by H.I.E. Dhlomo. The story also lives on after apartheid, which prompts Wenzel to argue that the Xhosa prophecy hints at the unrealized aspects of South African liberation. All of the texts about the cattle killing, from the mid-19th century to the present, thus demonstrate that the “afterlives” of millenarian movements are not mere requiems for a horrific moment in national history, but productive narratives for future emancipatory projects. In connection with the Xhosa prophecy, Wenzel also vividly demonstrates the global range of anti-colonialism in millenarian movements such as the Ghost Dance in North America.

Wenzel is also helping to build the emerging interdisciplinary field known as energy humanities. She has co-edited with Imre Szeman and Patricia Yaeger a forthcoming volume, Fueling Culture: Politics, History, Energy, a compendium of over 100 very brief essays on keywords related to energy ranging from Anthropocene and Arctic to Whaling, Wood, and Work, written by scholars from around the world and across the humanities and social science disciplines. Fueling Culture seeks to move beyond the limits of current crisis discourse in charting this new and urgent area of research.

Wenzel’s plans for the future include a course in Spring 2015 entitled “Global Best Sellers.” With an eye toward the transnational economic forces and cultural politics that shape literary supply and demand, Wenzel and her class will read popular texts from the global South such as Khalid Hosseini’s The Kite Runner and Edwidge Danticat’s Breath, Eyes, Memory. Wenzel is also working on two book manuscripts, Reading for the Planet: World Literature and Environmental Crisis and Contrapuntal Environmentalisms: Nature, North and South, both of which will contribute to her project of bringing the insights of postcolonial literary analysis to bear on environmental questions at scales ranging from the local to the planetary.

SHARON MARCUS APPOINTED DEAN OF HUMANITIES

This past July, the Executive Committee of Arts and Sciences appointed Professor Sharon Marcus Dean of Humanities. In this role, Marcus oversees the thirteen academic departments in the Division of Humanities at Columbia as well as numerous research centers and institutes associated with the humanities. As dean, Marcus advises the Executive Vice President on hiring priorities and on policies related to faculty research. Marcus joins a cohort of women currently serving as divisional deans at Columbia: the Dean of Social Science is Alondra Nelson, a professor of sociology who specializes in race and science, and the Dean of Science is Amber Miller, a physics professor whose research focuses on experimental cosmology.

Professor Marcus joined the Columbia English Department in 2003 after teaching for many years at the University of California, Berkeley. She specializes in nineteenth-century British and French literature, with particular interests in gender and sexuality, urban and architectural
history, and theatrical performance culture. She has published two books, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London* (University of California Press, 1999) and *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton University Press, 2007), which won four major book prizes and has been translated into Spanish. All of Marcus’s work has a foundation in feminist theory, and her 1992 essay “Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention” has become an indispensable resource for scholars and activists alike. Marcus has taught undergraduate lectures on the Victorian novel and seminars on “Odd Women and Queer Men in Victorian Literature” and “Nineteenth-Century Literature and the City.” Her graduate courses have included “Literature and Politics: 1857 in England and France” and “The Theater of the Novel.”

When asked about the goals of her work as dean, Marcus mentions increasing support for faculty research and for the classroom innovations that result from it; creating more connections across departments, divisions, and schools; and helping the humanities to grow in traditionally strong areas as well as in important emerging ones. We asked Marcus to name some of the most exciting new areas of inquiry in the humanities today. One of the fields she mentioned is digital humanities, which has professors and students “recasting both print and digital culture as material culture, creating frameworks in which anything from the inscriptions on statutes to books, manuscripts, floppy disks, chairs and lecture might be fair game for the history of literacy.” Another was ecocriticism; scholars in many humanities fields are responding to the problem of climate change “by rethinking ideas about nature, about the human/animal boundary, and about the just distribution of resources and risks.”

Looking beyond the university walls, Marcus is an advocate for the public humanities, which can include scholars writing for a broader public beyond academia; engaging with alumni as lifelong learners or with high school students not yet in college; and working in tandem with public institutions such as museums and theaters in New York City and throughout the world. She has served for the last two years as one of the senior editors of *Public Culture*, and recently guest edited a special issue of that journal, which will appear in 2015, on celebrities and publics in the Internet era. In 2012, Marcus co-founded *Public Books*, a review of arts and ideas that features writing by academics at all career stages “who write accessibly without sacrificing sophistication or depth.” Marcus has also published political and cultural commentary in *The Huffington Post* and *Pacific Standard Magazine*.

As dean, Marcus will work with various units on campus to increase awareness of faculty research and will also provide faculty interested in reaching a wider public with opportunities to do so. For example, this year she will collaborate with faculty at the Columbia Medical School and the Mailman School for Public Health to bring the Op-Ed Project to campus. The Op-Ed Project “promotes more diversity of opinion in the media” by training academics in the art of writing effective opinion pieces and by offering participants access to skilled editors. Marcus also celebrates traditional academic discourse, noting that peer review defines the scholarly community and is valuable in its own right: “We are here to be geeky, nerdy folks who know way too much about our subjects and who love to communicate our passion for them to others.”

**Julie Crawford Debuts ** *Mediatrix: Women, Politics, and Literary Production in Early Modern England*

Julie Crawford, a professor of early modern literature in our department and currently serving a three-year term as Chair of Columbia’s famous course, Literature Humanities, has published a new book, *Mediatrix: Women, Politics, and Literary Production in Early Modern England*. In it Professor Crawford reverses conventional notions about gender and political influence in the 16th and 17th centuries. The term “mediatrix” points to women who were intercessors among members of England’s political class. That is, they circulated ideas and advanced the careers of their favors among those holding religious and political power. The main figures of the book—Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke; Lady Margaret Hoby; Lucy Harrington Russell, the Countess of Bedford; and Lady Mary Wroth—were so-called “saints of the court” and had authority that was enhanced by their roles as mediators in political, as well as religious and cultural activities, including the production and circulation of literature. Women, Crawford suggests, may have been more effective at communicating political ideas than men of the era. When poet John Donne, for example, sought to advance his ideas, it was Lucy Harrington Russell to whom he went for support. Russell’s long career as a mediator stands in stark contrast to her less fortunate husband, the Earl of Bedford, who was among the casualties of the Essex rebellion—an illustration of the perils of official political tenure.

While Renaissance England produced a vastly greater number of male writers than female, Crawford shows that women were frequently crucial to the production and circulation of literary texts. While some of the women discussed in *Mediatrix* wrote literary texts, many more were patrons, dedicants, and readers, whom Crawford contends had an equally active role in the literary process as agents or supporters of texts. Often a mediatrix
would be recognized in a title or dedication. When read now, dedications that appear in works from the 16th and 17th centuries appear to have a similar purpose as they do today: acknowledgement of support, appreciation for a loved one, or an acknowledgement of influence. Crawford argues, however, that these dedications were neither merely titular nor ornamental. Dedicatees often provided “table to poets,” which meant anything from supporting the livelihood of the writer to the physical production and circulation of books. A writer in need of a patron would solicit women like Lucy Harrington Russell who were sought after for their covert interventions with those who might provide financial or other kinds of support. The literary texts produced in such communities were often used to promote and foster political activism, called “politically active” humanism.

Scholars of politically active humanism explore the production, translation, and circulation of classical texts as they were used for political purposes. Monarchs, for example, might support the publication of historical texts that advocate for their legitimacy, or they might support religious writing that champions their beliefs. Whereas previous studies explored these literary-political activities (usually performed by university educated men seeking their way into rarified political circles), Crawford’s inclusion of women in these practices rectifies this male-centric history. Creating a distinction between her conclusions and those of earlier feminist scholars, Crawford finds that women’s writing and women’s involvement in literary circles in general had a broader significance than what we generally assign to the politics of gender. She continues, “the idea that women wrote only about women—or that women wrote out of a proto-feminism that looks like what we think of as feminism—is really anachronistic.” Like men, Crawford writes, women of the early modern period wrote “for literary experimentation and pleasure; for fame, or its mitigation; for economic survival and socioeconomic ambition; for friends, supporters, and communities; for purposes of criticism and advice.” Crawford’s book shows the myriad other ways, besides writing texts, through which women influenced events at the centers of their culture.

ACLA Appoints Joseph Slaughter as President

Professor Joseph Slaughter has been elected for a three-year ascending term to serve as President of the American Comparative Literature Association. Founded in 1960, the ACLA is the leading academic society in the United States for scholars whose work involves several literatures and languages as well as the premises of cross-cultural literary study itself. In addition to hosting the premiere gathering of scholars working in comparative literature, the Association also offers a number of awards to members of all rank, an online clearinghouse for those working in the field, and monetary subventions for members who are writing their first books.

Known for his work in African, Caribbean, and Latin American literatures, Slaughter has contributed to areas of investigation that benefit from an interdisciplinary and comparative lens such as postcolonial studies, narrative theory, and human rights. Most recently, he has taught courses on timely topics such as intellectual property. His book Human Rights, Inc: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law (Fordham, 2007) explores the cooperative narrative logics of international human rights law and the Bildungsroman; it was awarded the 2008 René Wellek prize for comparative literature and cultural theory. He is currently working on two book manuscripts, “Pathetic Fallacies: Essays on Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and the Humanities” and “New Word Orders: Plagiarism, Postcolonialism, and the Globalization of the Novel.”

As president of the American Comparative Literature Association, Professor Slaughter will oversee an organization that has seen tremendous growth in the last ten years.
years. There were 300 participants at the annual convention in the early 2000s but more than 4000 proposals for the 2014 conference. Slaughter has been a member of the Advisory Board for five years and recently helped to overhaul the governance and administrative structures of the organization to respond to the challenges raised by the increased interest in comparative literature and the explosion in membership. Professor Slaughter says he seeks to expand the ACLA’s publishing initiatives, first book subventions (to be named in honor of the extraordinary Fordham and Stanford editor, Helen Tartar), and the annual ACL(s) conference that serves as an incubator for trying out dynamic modes of scholarly exchange. Similarly breaking with convention, the 2014 Annual Meeting in Seattle, Washington will have no central theme; instead, submissions will be grouped into individual seminars as similarities between papers are recognized.

Currently producing its decennial state-of-the-discipline report, the ACLA will take into consideration the increased size of the organization as it identifies opportunities and challenges for the future. Challenges include the narrowing of disciplinary knowledge, the cynical instrumentalization of higher learning, and the increasing monolingualism of the international realm. Ultimately, Slaughter considers his role as being responsible not only for his field but for inter-cultural learning more broadly; “As a professional organization dedicated to the diversity of languages and the knowledges they represent, the ACLA has an obligation to promote and defend not only our institutional interests but also the learning of languages and the study of literatures generally.”

ELEANOR JOHNSON TAKES MEDIEVAL STUDIES IN NEW DIRECTIONS

In the classroom of Professor Eleanor Johnson, what was old is new again. The undergraduate course “Experimental Middle English and Contemporary Poetry” and the graduate course “Medieval Ecopoetics” infuse the traditional medieval literature curriculum with contemporary works and concepts. “One thing I wanted, from a polemical standpoint,” Johnson explained, “is to knock the support poles out from under this antiquated idea that medieval literature is stolid and not experimental.”

In “Medieval Ecopoetics,” Johnson joins an emergent conversation among medievalists, who are seeking to apply an ecocritical lens to a period of history seemingly irreconcilable with the politics of environmentalism. She points to similar projects elsewhere in Columbia’s English Department, such as Susan Crane’s 2011 book, Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain, which discusses across-species relationships in medieval Britain from an ecocritical perspective. The guiding question for Johnson has been: what is “ecological thought” in the Middle Ages, how does it manifest, and how and why does it matter in medieval literature? Indeed, how would medieval writers think critically about something when a robustly articulated vocabulary for that thing doesn’t yet exist? Johnson and her class aim to find these modes of knowing the world ecologically in the literature of the era without relying on a vocabulary familiar to modern readers. In one etymological example, Johnson considers the Middle English word kynde, which means “natural” or “innate” but also “well-mannered,” “kind,” “gentle,” and “noble.” In Piers Plowman, kynde associates what is natural with what is moral, and uses that word as a focal point for orienting ecological meditations.

Different in content but not in ambition, Johnson’s undergraduate course “Experimental Poetry in Middle English and Contemporary Poetry” similarly takes a trans-historical view of innovative medieval poetry. Examining works from the 14th and 15th centuries alongside those of the very late 20th and 21st centuries, Johnson demonstrates how poetry in both periods is transformed by technological change. For her, poetic writing in the 14th and 15th century, is “hugely experimental…for analogous reasons to those that explain why experimental poetry right now is so exciting.” In the case of the former, it was in part the burgeoning London book trade and eventually the printing press that underpinned poetic experimentation. In the latter, the advent of the internet has spawned opportunities for experimental poets to create new forms and concepts.

A writer as well as teacher, Johnson is now finishing a book manuscript, “Aesthetic Contemplation: Partici-
patory Theology in Middle English Prose, Poetry, and Drama,” which focuses on the spiritual contemplation and the “participatory” style of literature that it generated. More than just deep thought, the act of spiritual contemplation was for Christians of the era a true experience of one’s relationship with God, a way of participating in godly greatness; in the literary works Johnson examines, the participation of the reader in the contemplative work, facilitates or even pre-forms his or her participatory contemplation of the divine. Johnson examines how a diverse group of texts—The Cloud of Unknowing, Piers Plowman; a medieval cycle play, “The Mary Sequence,” and a morality play, “The Play of Wisdom”—all enhance mystical contemplation through the reading of purposely artful and compelling language.

To Johnson, poetic devices were both formal and spiritual tools for the medieval writer. Artistic and spiritual participation work together when, for example, a simile causes a reader to slow down and become more imaginatively invested with the writing on the page. They work together when an author creates a stylistic reflex of “atomic prayer” in the monosyllabic syntactic structures of his prose style. Middle English itself, Johnson ultimately suggests, offers a unique artistic resource for those writers precisely because of its distinctive aesthetic and formal properties.

Whether she’s analyzing how the technologies of literary production shape experimental poetry, or examining the readerly effect of contemplative literature, Johnson proceeds with an attention to the formal and the aesthetic. In her first book, Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages, she argues that if medieval scholars want to look at how literature works, and particularly at theories of how literature is ethical, one has to look to form. As an example, Johnson considers Boethius’ The Consolation of Philosophy, a 6th century, mixed-form work written in both prose and meter, which develops what she describes as “a very, very concise and very, very elaborate theory of how prose and poetry are mutually necessary to ethical renovation in a narrator or a reader.” In the end, Johnson reveals, the formal aspect in the writing of medieval literature is inextricable from its ethical and moral considerations.

In both her scholarship and her teaching, Johnson is focused on matters of form, indeed, on how form is in fact the matter of medieval literature and literary experimentation. She asks and prompts students to ask how medieval writings work, how they produce their ethical, philosophical, and spiritual effects through the aesthetic field of literary language. And she hopes to do so in a way that will promote conversation with other literary periods and theoretical orientations.

Jean Howard and Marianne Hirsch Lead “Mobilizing Memory for Action” In Istanbul, Turkey

English Department faculty Marianne Hirsch and Jean Howard, along with Diana Taylor, Director of the Hemispheric Institute at NYU, led a five-day workshop at Columbia’s Global Center in Istanbul, Turkey in September 2014. The workshop’s theme, “Mobilizing Memory for Action,” highlighted the way cultural memories, especially of devastating events, have often spurred a rethinking of the present and its political arrangements. Participants included academics, photographers, performance artists, novelists, and activists from the U.S., Turkey, and Chile whose scholarship and art bring occluded histories to light and make the past a tool to disrupt the status quo and generate both utopian thought and practical alternatives to current conditions.

The more than thirty participants in the workshop took part in panels dealing with such topics as how feminism affects and enables the mobilization of memory for political resistance, the politically complex role of memory museums, the efficacy of different media in using memory as a catalyst for social change, the counter-appropriation of memory by the state, and innovative ways to make connections between different sites of historical trauma. A number of presentations dealt with the complex and often suppressed history of Armenian and Kurdish women within present-day Turkey, and on the final day of the workshop participants took part in a gathering of the Cumartesi Anneleri, or Saturday Mothers, a group composed of mothers of Kurdish and other victims of state violence who have been “disappeared.” Holding pictures of lost family members, the group combines a vigil with civil disobedience as a form of protest, using testimony, performance and street action to affect public opinion.

The workshop also included a full day of public
programming, which was well attended by Turkish artists, political activists, and students, at Istanbul’s DEPO Museum. There the audience could also engage with the exhibit, “Mobilizing Memory: Women Witnessing,” that had been prepared in conjunction with the workshop by a group of primarily Turkish artists, all of whom work not only with memories of violence and terror, but also with those of resilience, resistance, and survival. In her talk, Marianne Hirsch discussed the work of several of these artists who use small, fragmentary archives such as family photos that challenge the monumentalization of memory, create connections across sectarian and national divides, and inaugurate new forms of community in the face of state policies of exclusion and disappearance. Jean Howard wrote about political theater and the ways in which performance can work with memories of everyday, slow forms of gendered violence in ways that reveal repressed histories and provoke a desire for transformation.

The workshop is part of the work of the Center for the Study of Social Difference that represents a collaboration between Columbia’s Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality; The Institute for Research on African-American Studies; the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race; the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society; and Barnard’s Center for Research on Women. The Center for Social Difference focuses on collaboratively produced, interdisciplinary research initiatives, some of which are international in nature and make use of Columbia’s Global Centers. The workshop directed by Jean Howard and Marianne Hirsch has also met in Santiago, Chile, and will meet next fall in New York City.

GRADUATE PLACEMENT

2013-2014

TENURE-TRACK POSITIONS

Anna Clark, Iona College
Jang Wook Huh, SUNY Buffalo
Irvin Hunt, University of Illinois, Urbana
Daniel Larlham, St. Mary’s College
Olivia Moy, Lehman College
Lytton Smith, SUNY Geneseo
Adam Spry, Florida Atlantic University

CONTINUING NON-TENURE-TRACK:

Beth Elliot Lockhart: St. Paul’s Girls’ School, London (1 year)
Jessica Teague: University of Nevada, Las Vegas

OTHER PERMANENT POSITIONS

Gania Barlow, Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program Coordinator, Columbia
Delano Copprue, Principal of Charter School
Saskia Cornes, Duke University Campus Farm
Matt Sandler, Program Director of the MA in American Studies at the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race, Columbia

POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

Fred Bengtsson, Columbia University (2 Years)
Annie Holt, Columbia University (2 Years)
Katja Lindskog, Columbia University (2 Years)
Hiie Saumaa, Columbia University (2 Years)

2012-2013

TENURE-TRACK POSITIONS

Minou Arjomand, Boston University
Jen Buckley, University of Iowa
J.C. Cloutier, University of Pennsylvania
John Hay, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Mary Kate Hurley, Ohio University
Alvan Ikoku, Stanford University
Anjuli Raza Kolb, Williams College
Ivan Lupic, Stanford University
Imani Owens, University of Pittsburgh
Kathleen Smith, American University
Shirlana Stokes, Ohio State University
Autumn Womack, University of Pittsburgh
Danny Wright, University of Toronto

Emine Sevín Gözde (2014)
Ethnicity and Race; the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society; and Barnard’s Center for Research on Women. The Center for Social Difference focuses on collaboratively produced, interdisciplinary research initiatives, some of which are international in nature and make use of Columbia’s Global Centers. The workshop directed by Jean Howard and Marianne Hirsch has also met in Santiago, Chile, and will meet next fall in New York City.

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OTHER PERMANENT POSITIONS

Deborah Aschkenes, Riverdale Country School
Sarah Rose Cole, University of Virginia, Assistant Dean
Marina Graham, Newark Academy

POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

Alice Boone, University of California Los Angeles (2 Years)
Jeff Brown, Ursinus College (2 Years)
Anne Diebel, Columbia University (2 Years)
Alvan Ikoku, Stanford Humanities (2 Years)
Darragh Martin, Columbia University (2 Years)
Sherally Munshi, Georgetown Law (2 Years)
Joe North, Columbia University (2 Years)
Imani Owens, Princeton University (1 Year)

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You may also write to the Department’s Chair, Jean Howard, at jfh5@columbia.edu

JOSEPH V. RIDGELY 1921-2014

The Department of English and Comparative Literature is saddened to announce the death of Professor Joseph Ridgely who taught in this department from 1958 to 1989. An expert on 19th century Southern literature, he wrote a 1966 biography of novelist John Pendleton Kennedy and another on writer William Gilmore Simms. Dr. Ridgely was also a scholar of Poe. He was the co-author, with Burton R. Pollin, of *The Collected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe: Writings in The Southern Literary Messenger*, published in 1997. He died on September 27th, 2014 in Silver Spring, Maryland.