



ADVANCED STUDIES IN ENGLAND

ALUMNI NEWS, 2020



Contents

- **Director’s Welcome.** 1
 - Jonathan Hope (Dean & Director)
- **Advanced Studies... Everywhere!** 4
 - Rob Jones (Alumni Association Coordinator)
- **Testimonials for ASE Continuing Education** 7
- **Black Indian. An interview with Shonda Buchanan** 11
 - Sun Cooper
- **Well, Hello Henry!** 15
 - Emma Hurry (Admissions & Student Affairs Manager)
- **Introducing ‘The Ralph’.** 16
 - Andrew Butterworth / Kara Chambers-Grant (Accommodation Manager)
- **ASE Alums Reflect on 2020** 19
- **Pursuing the Ideal at ASE in 2014.** 23
 - Jeff Tucker (Associate Professor of English, University of Rochester)
- **ASE Writers in Print!** 25
- **Afterimage.** 27
 - Maddie Anthes (Alum of Summer’09, Denison)
- **Five Years of Legends.** 28
 - Bex Lyons (former ASE tutor)
- **Mother Tongues, Borderlands and Beyond.** 30
 - Margaret Lee (former Professor of English & Linguistics, Hampton University)
- **River Waltz.** 32
 - Jules Sebock (Alum of Spring ’17, Gettysburg College)
- **ASE Alumni Updates** 33

Director's (much-longer-than-usual) Welcome

Dearest ASE Alums,

It's a long-standing tradition that the Director's Welcome to the ASE Alumni News should be pithy and determinedly upbeat, and that the content that follows should be a celebration of all that's been BEST, for the Programme and for our contributors, about the previous year.

While you can be sure that much of what you read in this (rather belated, again – sorry!) 2020 edition will indeed be uplifting, I'm going to break with tradition and give a rather fuller, less breezy account of the past extraordinary year than is customary.

I'm also going to start by acknowledging what must have been, for those directly affected, hardest to endure about the past 12 months. Some of you will have suffered the worst effects of the current pandemic in a very personal and painful way. If you are one of the many who has lost a loved one to Covid-19, my heart goes out to you; and, I feel confident in saying, so do the hearts of all those in the ASE Alumni community reading this.

Others among you have, no doubt, been working 'on the front line', seeing up close the damage and distress inflicted by the current medical emergency. I imagine what you have endured makes the privations and difficulties most of us have had to put up with – prolonged separation from friends and family, the disruption of our private and professional lives etc. – seem relatively insignificant in comparison. Then there are those of you who've been labouring to provide the essential services we all need to get by from day to day – in schools, in the emergency services, in the retail sector and more. To all of you key workers, THANK YOU for your efforts.

Everyone has their particular story to share about this uniquely challenging year. You'll find, I think, all of the articles in this edition universally but differently inflected by the pandemic and its impact, and by this year of tremendous social and political upheaval.



ASE in the Pandemic

So how has ASE fared, amid all the turbulence?

Well, the most important and positive things I want to share with you are:

- i) that WE ARE STILL HERE; and
- ii) that we have a PLAN (indeed multiple plans) to steer us through what will, no doubt, be a tricky and unpredictable next year (or more).

As many of you have no doubt surmised, ASE's survival of the Covid crisis was (and remains) by no means guaranteed. The Programme depends wholly on student fees, and clear-cut financial provision existed for no more than one cancelled semester (we had never previously had to cancel *any* semesters). In the past year, we saw THREE sessions made impossible: Summer and Autumn 2020, and Spring 2021.

Thanks, however, to a mix of strategy, opportunism and (frankly) sheer good fortune, we were able to set up invaluable bespoke experiences for a limited number of undergraduates, even mid-pandemic. In the Autumn, we hosted two small, delightful cohorts. One was a group of seniors from Wellesley College, which was almost unique among our partner institutions in allowing study abroad at all. The other cohort consisted of first-year international students – from China, India, Spain, the Ukraine, Brazil, Rwanda, Egypt and Madagascar – who, unable to enter the USA, instead started their Franklin & Marshall undergraduate careers with us in the UK. Despite restrictions and obstacles aplenty, all 16 took full advantage of their opportunity, and of the novelty of exploring a virtually tourist-free Bath!

ASE Team Heroics

Though none of us was even vaguely prepared for an entire academic year to be so radically disrupted, it won't surprise you to learn that the ASE Team has dealt with the unfolding crisis with resourcefulness, creativity, commitment, flair and (almost) unwavering good humour. All of us have been forced to work on unfamiliar tasks in unfamiliar ways at unfamiliar hours; and all of us have seen our working days cut under the UK government's 'flexible furlough scheme'. There's no question that the ASE Team's dedication is one of the key reasons we have made it through, so far.



I'd like to share a few of many examples. Spring 2020 students will know already that Lucy Marten did an extraordinary job, for instance, of successfully moving their semester courses online; and I can add that in doing so she established a new platform for the academic programme that has enabled us to 'flex' between online and in-person learning ever since, as circumstances have required. Rob Jones, meanwhile, took on with a warrior's zeal the task of designing and delivering a programme of online learning for our Alumni community – which has allowed more than 100 former students to rekindle their love of learning, ASE style. Then there's Su Underwood, who's grappled heroically with Visa regulations for students from all over the world, and with bottles of anti-viral gel at Nelson House; and Kara Chambers-Grant, who's worked tirelessly to save vital funds by temporarily sub-letting ASE's rented student accommodation, as well as mastering the complex art of drafting protocols for Covid-19 safety; and Rika Seeman-Sterling, who taught herself coding so that we could create application forms 'in house', and whose superb video editing skills have bolstered our online marketing immeasurably. And where would we have been without Karyn Jones and her sterling efforts to keep us abreast of US partner institutions' rapidly shifting study abroad policies? Or without Andrew Butterworth and his endlessly inventive tours of Bath, when travel outside the city was impossible, not to mention the 'Butterworth's Bath' series, which kept us all smiling and sane in the most stressful of situations?

(If you haven't yet had the pleasure, you can find both Rika's and Andrew's videos on ASE's YouTube Channel, [HERE](#).)

We've been helped enormously, too, in our pandemic-induced struggles, by the dedication and adaptability of a small group of ASE faculty, who've deftly turned their hands to online, blended, and Covid-safe in-person classes (the latter from behind masks and Perspex visors). Many other tutors, unfortunately, have seen courses which usually run without fail postponed until further notice. We honestly can't wait to welcome them back to Nelson House when normal service, or something like it, resumes.

As for me, personally, well I have certainly done my utmost to make smart decisions at critical moments, to coordinate, direct, and redirect again the Team's efforts, and to steer ASE safely through the Covid storm. It's a

responsibility I relish, and feel honoured to have – but it's also one that's stopped me, so far, from teaching on the Continuing Education Programme myself, which I would LOVE to do. I hope to put that right in the coming year when, with luck, we'll be back on a more even keel!



Looking to the Future

If the past 12 months have taught us anything, it is that predictions of the future are unwise, at best; and that it's essential to be adaptable, resilient and ready to redraw plans that have been carefully made, often at very short notice.

As I write, however, and as we close in on the one-year anniversary of the rapid evacuation of our unfortunate (and marvellously resilient) Spring 2020 students, it looks as if ASE has real reason for measured optimism.

Following an extended post-Christmas lockdown, the infection rate in the UK has been dropping steadily for some weeks, and over one third of the adult population has now received their first dose of a vaccine. As of this Saturday, Nunes House is occupied by five more F&M international first year students – this time from China, Nepal and Bangladesh. Their classes, which began entirely online, should become partly in-person by the end of April. It looks probable that a further cohort of 12 to 24 students from Wellesley College will join us in Bath on April 7. According to the UK government's recently published 'Roadmap Out of Lockdown', it should be possible to sit *outside* The Boater with friends and a pint soon after April 12, and for the ASE staff to have dinner *inside* The Huntsman in May. In June, we anticipate welcoming up to 30 students, along with various US faculty and their families, and hope that the projected lifting of all legal limits on social contact will follow within a few weeks of their arrival. The outlook for Autumn looks brighter, still. All being well.

If these things do indeed come to pass, by the start of the new academic year, we will be in a position to set our sights firmly on the more-than-immediate future, and on what we wish ASE to become in the post-Covid period.

I foresee a future for ASE that builds on all that has been best about the Programme in its first 30+ years, but with our core values more clearly defined, our aspirations more focused. Above all, I intend to see that ASE emerges from this pandemic more actively committed than ever to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in the breadth and content of its curriculum, its key institutional partnerships, in the recruitment of students and the profile of its staff and faculty. We have made some progress here, even in the jaws of the pandemic, but there is plenty to do. I'd also like ASE to take stock of how we operate in the light of the climate crisis, and want us to take swift positive action where our impact on the environment and biodiversity are concerned.

With continued support from you, our increasingly international alumni community, the commitment and energy of our fantastic UK-based staff and faculty, and the ongoing help of our US-based colleagues and friends, I think we will be better placed than ever to play our modest but important part in bringing about sustainable and authentic change for the better.

I also hope, for sure, that by the time I next come to write a Director's Welcome for the Alumni News, the preceding year has been sufficiently lacking in trauma and incident for me to return to the pithy, upbeat tradition of former editions.

Thank you for reading (if you've made it this far!), and for your continuing loyalty to the ASE Programme.

I hope to welcome you back to a tourist-thronged Bath very soon!

Jonathan

Advanced Studies... Everywhere!

Dr Rob Jones, ASE's Alumni Co-ordinator, reflects on the Covid-inspired genesis and evolution, so far, of ASE's Continuing Education Programme.



When the Spring '20 cohort headed for home halfway through their semester, the first thing we had to do was to provide a means of continuing their classes, so that the students could get the credit they needed for the courses they were taking.

Led by Lucy, our Director of Studies, the ASE faculty and team made the switch to G-Suite and the Google classroom, to ensure that classes could continue via video-calls and cloud-based classrooms.

Jonathan and I had been kicking around the idea of some sort of academic experience for alums for a year or so. One option we had considered was a summer residential for the Alumni community, with a mix of lectures from ASE faculty, study trips and cultural activities, aimed at giving folks a taste of the ASE that they had known as students. I had also started to look at online courses but, being frank, this was not something that we as a study abroad programme had ever had to do (I mean, who would seek to study abroad from the comfort of their own home?!), and it all looked quite an investment – and a stretch – to get everything set up.

ASE alumni courses are the brightest spot during a very dark year. Thank you, ASE! – Esther Goldschlager (Sp99, Skidmore)

Covid changed that. Suddenly organisations like Google and Zoom and Microsoft were rushing to offer free access to their platforms, especially to aid educational institutions. This made the possibility of running courses for alumni a real possibility. We spoke to you folks via a survey and the resounding response was 'hell yeah!'

And so it was we rolled out our very first ASE Online Summer School. Nearly a hundred alums signed up for eleven different courses drawn from our regular stable - Roman Britain, Jane Austen, British Detective Fiction, the Vikings etc. I taught my own course on knighthood and chivalry. It was great fun. There was something fresh and exciting, and the vibe in the weekly 90-minute virtual seminar was both relaxed and intellectually stimulating. It was still very much an ASE experience – a conversational approach on the part of the tutors, challenging yet relaxed. We even provided people with their own Virtual Nelson House to gather socially for a virtual coffee (we were going to create a Virtual Huntsman, but couldn't work out how to get the authentic stickiness on the virtual carpets!)

Learning and teaching online has been quite a challenge, but it has connected people across the world in unexpected ways and I've thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many passionate and talented alums. - Sally Gander (Creative Writing Tutor)

The alums who took part loved it too. For some, it was the first time they had stepped back in a classroom for over a decade. For others, it was an escape from... (waves hands generally at the universe) *everything* that was going on around them. People made connections and new friendships, got into new subjects, and generally had a good time.

This summer, I loved having the ability to explore a topic untethered to grades, which allowed me to enjoy learning in a whole new way. There is something about building an instant connection with strangers because you share a happy thing in common, and that would be our ASE experiences. We could all relate to the experience of Nelson House and walking the streets of Bath, which made the courses the most unique, invaluable experience because of this deeper connection with one another. The course I took allowed for flexibility while still providing a rich learning experience, with a tutor that was just as passionate about the material as the students. – Christa Rodriguez (Su17, F&M)

Ahead of the Autumn, we decided that whilst we wanted to keep our offerings distinctively ASE, we should offer the courses a little more widely – and so it was agreed that friends and family of the alumni community could also apply to join. We have seen this widen and enhance the alumni community, and bring families together as well; something incredibly important in a time of isolation and distance.

What a great way to escape back to Bath without leaving home! I fully enjoyed my creative nonfiction writing course, not only because it was a pleasant diversion away from the world of pandemics and constant news feeds, it also connected me to new friends who share a love of ASE and Bath, England. The five-week course was just the right length, and I appreciated having 90 full minutes with the class over the weekend, as it did not interrupt my work-related gazillion zoom meetings. – Helene Schneider (Sp91, Skidmore)

So successful was the initiative that we decided it should continue through the year, with our tutors offering a linked series of standalone courses, two in each semester. Having covered chivalry in general, my classes – for instance - focused on the castle and then the tournament over the Autumn. Mike Witcombe, our detective fiction tutor, went from a general study of short stories in the genre, to considering Sherlock Holmes, then Agatha Christie. We have run courses on powerful women in the middle ages, magical animals in the myths and legends of Britain and Ireland, the writing of non-fiction and young adult literature, the cultural phenomenon of Harry Potter, and the political history of Europe since the French Revolution.

We have also offered an opportunity to study a tutorial – one-to-one, on a subject of your own devising. As with our regular Programme, this is a great opportunity to get the undivided attention of your tutor on a subject close to your heart, or to hone your creative writing or language skills.

I had a wonderful time in my online course with ASE this summer. It was a great way to ease back into the classroom after a break before graduate school. The content of my course was well-curated for an online setting, the discussions were lively, and the topics were interesting and rigorous without being too intimidating. I loved that the course offerings included traditional ASE classes, as it gave me the opportunity to take a course I missed out on while in Bath.

I especially enjoyed getting to meet other ASE alums from across the years. Seeing the vastly different places they've ended up was both exciting and comforting for a young alum. – Samantha English (Sp18, Wellesley)

As I type this, we are closing the enrolments for the first session of Spring '21, but we would be only too happy for you to join us for the second session in April/May.

[You can find full details here.](#)

ASE's Continuing Education: Further Testimonials

A number of you who took courses on the ASE Continuing Ed Programme wrote very full, appreciative reflections of your experiences, some of which also seem to us eloquent glancing testimonies to life in 2020, as well as your feelings about being 'back at ASE'... Here are a few.



Joanna, with Aunt Barbara and Uncle George

When I enrolled in ASE Alumnae courses at the start of the pandemic, I anticipated that the classes would provide a much-needed outlet and connection to the outside world. I never expected, however, that they would bring me closer (metaphorically) to multiple family members.

It was a few months into quarantine in Queens, New York, when ASE announced they would be offering Alumnae Seminars. I was in lockdown in a small apartment, anxious and scared as my city became an epicenter not of culture and theater, but of critical illness. By the time the first session began, I had already spent months in lockdown, barely leaving my fourth-floor walkup. When I enrolled in Mike Witcombe's British Detective Fiction course, I

imagined it as an intellectual escape and connection to the outer world—and, of course, it was just that, as alumnae living across the US and the UK joined each week to discuss the likes of Christie, Chesterton, and Conan Doyle.

By the time the course started, however, I had quarantined for two weeks and been retrieved by my twin sister to spend the summer in the less stressful surroundings of suburban Virginia, where I would have access to family and outdoor space. The course that I expected to serve as my only connection to the greater world instead became an unexpected means of connection with my brother-in-law. As class began, I discovered Conan Doyle and Dashiell Hammett on his bookshelves, and as I read my coursework, I would tell my brother-in-law about the assignments and inevitably discuss the mysteries he enjoyed.

When I returned home to New York in the fall, my brother-in-law included a book of Hammett short stories in a care package, so that I could expand my reading into an author he enjoyed, and when I enrolled in my next course, Debby Thacker's *Inspirations and Analogues to Harry Potter*, I knew it, too, would bring me closer to my brother-in-law, because he adores the Harry Potter books even more than I do. I later discovered that one of the assigned readings was a book he adored as a child. We delighted in the coincidence and discussed the plot; I'm now holding onto my copy to give to him as a Christmas present.

The greatest unexpected pleasure, however, has been the joy of sharing the ASE experience with my Aunt Barbara. My aunt lives in New Jersey, and I've often travelled by train to visit her for weekends of mystery movies and reading books on her patio. The loss of these visits, due to the pandemic, has been naturally felt. When she recently celebrated a milestone birthday I sent her an assortment of mystery novels—some of them first introduced to me in the Detective Fiction course; as she's read them we've chatted about them on FaceTime. And when the Agatha Christie class was announced and courses were opened to ASE friends and family, I was delighted that my aunt agreed to enroll.

It has been a special addition to my week; we texted each other about our assignments, and I think our dynamic entertained our classmates. During class one week, an observation about Miss Marple and her annoying nephew, Raymond, led to a hysterical moment wherein my peers discussed whether or not my niece status made me the Raymond of the class. By the end of the session, an impossible question I asked led to Professor Witcombe joking that I was, in fact, “the Raymond.” When I later emerged from our class my mother, with whom I am now staying, had received a text from my Aunt Barbara: my mother looked at me quizzically and asked, “Apparently I am supposed to call you Raymond now?”

My status as ‘Troublesome Niece’ aside, I know that my aunt and I are both enjoying this special weekly time together. It is a means of sharing something we love and creating shared history at a time when we otherwise would not be sharing experiences. It is a gift that ASE has given us, and one my aunt has already told me she hopes to continue in the spring, with another course. It means more to me than I can convey that ASE—one of the best experiences of my life in my early twenties—has now become a source of joy for myself and a family member at a time when joy feels so much harder to come by.

It’s certainly no mystery why I love ASE.

- **Joanna Chlebus, (Sp04, Mount Holyoke College)**

What I enjoyed most was the opportunity to make new friends and experience the robust ASE Alumni community in a new and fulfilling way. I would describe the experience as invaluable - not only was I able to engage in academia (which I haven't done in several years), but I was amongst friends with shared interests and a shared love of ASE. I can't speak to all the courses in detail, but there were many options across several fields of interest, which made it difficult to choose what course(s) I wanted to pursue.

- **Emily Cranfill (Sp14, Gettysburg College)** *Savage Splendour: Knighthood and Chivalry*

When I selected Black Writing and Britain: After Empire, I did not expect that it would be a literature course. I love the course, as it was very fun and engaging. I enjoyed reading the assigned readings from authors that I never heard before and learning about the UK society through the lens of the non-white authors. I would hope and love that ASE would continue to offer Black Writing and Britain.

- **Logan Tapscott (Au12, Gettysburg College)** *Black Writing and Britain: After Empire – The Master’s Decline*

The course was something to look forward to each weekend during this time when the public health crisis makes it difficult to participate other activities. I enjoyed the chance to discuss a genre I enjoy with other people and the chance to reminisce on my time in Bath.

I think the most valuable part of the experience was the chance to “escape” for a few hours each weekend. Whether it was through reading the course materials, participating in the class, or spending a little time each week reminiscing about Bath, I enjoyed the chance to take my mind off work, the public health crisis, and other stressors. It was nice to build community and hopefully continue to read and engage with other alums as many of my classmates expressed interest in setting up future conversations.

The diversity of course offerings was great! I had a hard time choosing one.

Mike was great. I appreciated that he offered different levels of homework so that I could read two short stories a week and still fully participate or could choose to read additional stories and critical materials. I thought the course structure made for engaging conversations in which everyone could participate.

- **Jennifer Dickey, (Su12, Franklin and Marshal College)** *British Detective Fiction: Short Stories*

I most enjoyed being back in an academic setting with other students just as enthused about the course topic as I was. Instead of just subjecting friends and family, unprompted, to my interpretations and opinions on Harry Potter, I was able to discuss with other scholars and read articles and essays that strengthened and challenged my views.

While I didn't come out with any sort of grade or transferable credit, I found the experience to be incredibly valuable because it gave me the opportunity to connect with other ASE alums as well as participate in the academic sphere with no pressure to ace a course. It's been nice to reminisce with other ASE alums, all of whom had different experiences abroad than I did and see how the program has helped to shape their futures. The lack of pressure within the course took away the underlying stress often present in academics and gave me a bit more peace of mind when engaging with the course.

The course offerings were excellent, and I had a hard time narrowing my choices down to just one. In fact, my plans for the fall, if scheduling works, is to take at least two, possibly three, because I'm interested in so many topics being offered. They ranged from courses focused purely on English or history, as well as others that fit into multiple areas of study, allowing students to stay in a comfort zone or explore topics a bit foreign. While all were courses I could see offered in a regular ASE semester, I think these courses in particular also had the advantage of being able to be less strict in their organization since no degree requirements were needing to be fulfilled.

My tutor, Debby Thacker, was engaging and knowledgeable, and very interested in our own ideas and interpretations. She offered many informative and thought-provoking readings and gave important context for all our discussions, while also letting us take the conversation in whatever direction we found most compelling. Our class was large, with 16 students, and she did a great job at making sure we all felt included and able to participate. If all goes according to plan, I will be taking another class with Debby in the fall and look forward to more sessions with her!

- **Alyssa Tomkowicz (Sp14, Williams College)** *Exploring the Harry Potter Phenomenon*

The opportunity to get to actually learn a lot about a subject I was somewhat familiar with, but wouldn't know where to start in terms of actual academic readings. We were able to cover several different topics, getting a taster of each, which then also provided us with additional avenues to pursue if we wanted to dive deeper on our own.

I found this experience incredibly valuable, as it gave me an opportunity to connect with fellow alums (none of whom I knew before) and forge connections with an expert in the field. The discussions were fascinating, and everyone was just as eager to learn and participate as I was. All of us students were there because we wanted to be - we wanted to learn, and it was great to have all that energy in the classroom (albeit a virtual one).

The selection was quite varied, and I found myself vacillating between a couple different ones. If I had a bit more time & money, I might have taken a second class, but I think the one kept me busy enough!

Lucy was AMAZING. She went above and beyond to make sure we were all able to attend class, essentially running two 90-minute tutorials a week to make sure we all were able to discuss the readings on each topic. She also was very engaging in her style, asking us challenging questions and encouraging us to make connections from topic to topic, week to week. She also provided two sets of reading- one core & one extension- for each week, which allowed us to delve even further into the topic for that week if we were able to and so inclined. I would absolutely recommend everyone take a class with her!

- **Megan Minogue (Au05/Sp06, Boston College)** *The Vikings: Myth and Reality*

I took *The Vikings: Myths and Reality*. I really enjoyed the interactive aspect of the class. It allowed our discussions to feel very natural, and I had the opportunity to get to know other ASE alumni from different years. I've taken online courses in the past with recorded lectures and discussion boards, and they're not nearly as interesting. This entire experience has been very valuable, as a way to begin learning about a topic I'm interested in, and now I can continue on my own with this base of knowledge. The courses on offer cover a variety of subjects and serve as solid

introductions to specific topics. My tutor was Lucy and she was really enthusiastic about both the material and the class.

- **Caitlin Connelly (Sp16, Gettysburg College)** *The Vikings: Myth and Reality*

The Alumni Summer School program gave me the opportunity to continue my curiosity and interest in subjects I thought I could only find through going back to school. It gave me the exact amount of interesting conversations, curated reading, and guidance by incredible tutors that I have been searching for since I graduated from school back in 2014.

I am so, SO glad that ASE decided to start this program, and I'm looking forward to taking as many classes as possible. The courses were exactly the type of class I wanted to take and missed about still being in academia, and they were the right amount of reading and discussion and interesting new topics. These courses have been invaluable to me, and I look forward to taking as many more as I can. And of course, the tutors were PHENOMENAL.

- **Dabney Rice (Sp13, Franklin and Marshall College)** *The Vikings: Myth and Reality* and *Gender Identities in Medieval Literature*

Our tutor, Sally Gander, provided us with a diverse set of readings and videos to complement our course work and creative pieces. Her approach was inviting and engaging, with a nice mix of pure lecture, class conversation, and small-group discussions. I've dabbled in creative writing over the years, both fiction and memoir, and this course has sparked a new interest to create more. Thank you for the opportunity.

- **Helene Schneider (Sp91, Skidmore College)** *Writing Non-fiction: Tools for Navigation*

Black Indian

Shonda Buchanan, former professor of Creative Writing at Hampton University, and ASE US summer faculty in Summer 2008, has kindly allowed us to reprint the following abridgment of an original article by Sun Cooper, “Black Indian,” Her Journey’, *The Sunlit Project*, UNUM Magazine, Nov. 2020
<https://www.unummagazine.com/her-journey/shonda-buchanan>



Shonda Buchanan, author, poet, educator, photo provided by Shonda Buchanan

The Sunlit Project and UNUM Magazine present HER JOURNEY, a narratology mapping the unique and universally-shared experiences of women’s extraordinary journeys.

“This Sunlit Project developed during the worldwide pandemic over my kitchen table, but the idea of mapping women’s journeys began with my own, as a migratory mother, driving a thousand miles westward. I encountered commonalities and differences within the Hero’s Journey, a mythologically-informed template that identifies the classic elements of a “journey” - a call to something more, obstacles, a supreme ordeal, transformation and more - but it overwhelmingly centers a male archetype. Thus, HER JOURNEY seeks to lift the “her” in the Hero’s Journey and identify what makes it uniquely and universally female.”

-Sun Cooper

“Growing up, my mother never used the term Black Indian. She always said, ‘You’ve got some Indian in you, some French and German, and a little bit of Black.’ So I lived my life according to what she said, but I also lived in the role society prescribed to me by my race and gender.”

As a descendant of African Americans, American Indians, and Europeans, Shonda Buchanan's journey is one of reckoning with multiple inheritances. Many of us identify with a predominant identity and the familial stories we were told growing up; but Shonda’s story begs the question: if we point to various places on the map to locate all of our ancestors, how many of us would find conflicting histories of loss, removal, immigration, slavery, indentured servitude, settlers, and conquest coursing through our blood?



IMAGE Wrapping sage, California, IG photo provided by Shonda Buchanan and @feisty_feminista

In a conversation with UNUM, Shonda provokes answers that are both medicine and a knife, the kind Langston Hughes describes: *Let us take a knife and cut the world in two – and see what worms are eating at the rind.*

Having grown up on a rural farm in Michigan with the kind of childhood that recalls a “weeping willow” with the same metaphorical memory as the tangible one, Shonda is now an award-winning author, educator, mother and grandmother who

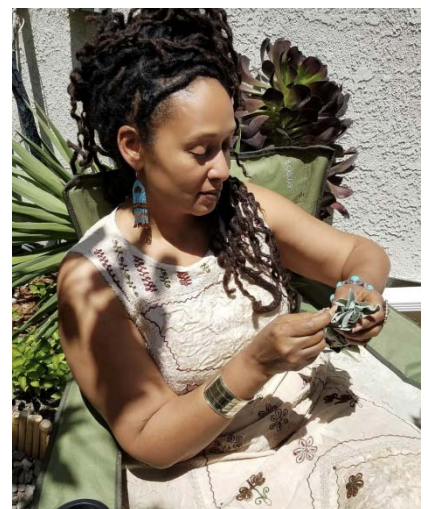


IMAGE Preparing for ceremonies, California, IG photo provided by Shonda Buchanan and @feisty_feminista

resides in California and has traveled to over 12 countries. Like many, COVID has slowed her adventuring; but she’s been on the road since she was 18. It’s not the farm girl traveling the world that makes her journey remarkable; but her courage to cross the deep racial divides rutted throughout the topography of

her own ancestry and America's, unflinchingly detailed in her book, *Black Indian*. Having navigated it and lived to tell, she has emerged with a vision to help us get well.

SC: When did you first sense a "call to something more"? Describe that moment for us.

SB: There are several, but I'll isolate one moment. When I was 9-years-old, I bought myself a pair of chopsticks from the Kalamazoo Public Library where they had all kinds of interesting artifacts in this glass display box. From that moment, besides reading everything I could get my hands on, I felt that my calling was cultural: researching and sharing my culture and also learning other people's cultures.

SC: In your memoir, you share an unusual journey as a woman exploring her legacy of multiple inheritances: Black, Native, and White. Can you talk about the crux of this inheritance with us?

SB: My feeling of inheritance is connected to and centers around absence. As a Black person in America with the legacy of enslavement, I know I have inherited the precepts of the times that permitted such egregious acts against Black bodies, particularly Black women. My pride in being an African American, and also in the strength of Black people is fierce. Simultaneously, I celebrate my American Indianness because of all that we have lost in the colonization of our lands. This country was strategically pulled apart and relabeled without consent of the Indigenous population; I feel that loss and absence of traditions every day. As a writer, I try to turn that around and look at the rich legacies I have inherited and that fuel me ... as a writer, as a woman, as someone who continues to practice the traditions of my people on all sides. I use the feeling and knowledge of absence and loss as a place of empowerment.

SC: In your book, you bring up powerful talking points about racial formation in the U.S. under the Racial Integrity Act of 1924, something you've described as "a racial invention on a sheet of paper." In your own experience, aligning with one identity was sometimes seen as a betrayal of another. You and your family "never fit neatly" in a census box. How has this box been a significant obstacle in your journey?

SB: Being bi- and tri-racial feels (to some) as if you are watered down. The obstacles I have faced – in declaring and celebrating my ancestries and heritage – sometimes come from the very people who look like me, whom I love and adore; but who want me to choose a side. It's always been difficult to think that I would be forced to choose which culture to celebrate. This ideology is intrinsically divisive to people of color; it's also a direct result of colonization. If we don't look at the origin of the illness we can never treat it. We will never heal from it if we can't name it.

We have fallen apart and away from each other so that we are divided, splintered, and forgetful. We ourselves have forgotten that our blood carries the truth.



IMAGE A walk with sage and memory, from the Black Indian book trailer by Protius James



IMAGE Drum, from the Black Indian book trailer by Protius James

SC: Did you find yourself forging your own path outside of that census box or did you find help along the way?

SB: I found a lot of kinship and mentors along the way as I got older – people who were also in search of the secrets of the past and their ancestry. As a younger person those ideas were just things that I knew existed, but I never interrogated them. When I started asking questions, I discovered some people didn't want to remember the past, so they put up roadblocks that I've had to dismantle over the course of my own research and writing.

I was a cartography lesson. I was the geography of the intersection of enslaved Africans, Eastern Shore American Indians, indentured white servants; their journey was on my face. I was the seed of a memory that my grandparents wanted to forget.

SC: It seems like such a small personal moment, when music inspires you; but you've shared how a particular song symbolized a portal, which led you from Michigan to California, and eventually 12 different countries.

SB: The day I first heard "Dust in the Wind," I was young, on a farm, and just waiting for life to happen, or waiting for something good to happen. The song made me feel something else was out there in the world, that I could form a different kind of identity, and not just be the child who came from a family that happened to be violent. When I left, I felt as if I was a flower petal in the wind; I really had no plans of what I was going to do. Los Angeles became a safe haven for me and still is.

I close my eyes

Only for a moment and the moment's gone

All my dreams

Pass before my eyes with curiosity. – Kerry Livgren, Kansas, "Dust in the Wind"

SC: Have you encountered a supreme ordeal? If so, does it mirror a supreme ordeal that your ancestors have encountered?

SB: Nothing that I have encountered mirrors the supreme ordeal that my ancestors had to face. I have not been stolen by a bushwhacker looking to sell any person of color into chattel slavery. I have not been a slave who had to have sex with a white slave master, to produce a child that could also be raped by a white slave master and then sold away from me. I have not walked the Trail of Tears nor suffered at Wounded Knee. But I write about them because the memory is something that I dream about. Writing about my ancestors gives me a way to give them back their voice, their dignity, their solace, their privacy and, ultimately, their lives. I do feel that growing up in a violent home is a result of the things that happened to my ancestors – the things my mother and sister experienced, and the molestation that I experienced – I do think these are direct results of the past.

SC: A unique element seems to surface again and again for women, that intuition is a deeply significant part of Her Journey. You've written about "a collective, inherited gift of sight." Can you talk about this inherited gift?

SB: For the women in my family, we have always had a unique gift of sight. Some people call it second sense. Some people call it visions. Knowing this is probably something I inherited from my great-aunts and grandmothers made me feel special. It also made me pay attention to my intuition in dealing with people. That's not to say that I always made the best choices ... but my intuition has served me, and my dreams have helped me manifest a life I couldn't see yet but knew I could have.

SC: In every classic journey, there is a return home. You "once had a vision in a dream of a line of ancestors in the sky, leading [you] back ... home." What does returning home mean for you?

SB: The ultimate returning home means all my women are safe in one house on the same land, eating the same good food, laughing and telling good stories about our lives. Knowing that the land I'm standing on is ancestral land and no one can remove me from it. Coming home means I have built a space, a homestead of some sort where all my people can come for a refuge and never be harmed.



Travelling to Africa. IG photo provided by Shonda Buchanan



My Nations. I'm eleventh generation Coharie

Instead of staying sick, we'd help ourselves get well.

SC: Do you have medicine for those who find themselves at unique amalgamations of their own ancestries? Do you find hope in these multiple inheritances for understanding and shared progress? How do we “help ourselves get well?”

SB: I find medicine and hope in both my African American and American Indian ancestries because I've realized this is the kind of work, like writing, that feeds me and keeps me sane. When I do writing workshops or lectures across the country or internationally, I always mention how writing and researching my heritage has given me a sense of power. I believe that a part of my getting well deals with empowering myself with my ancestors' stories. And that is my recommendation for anyone who feels unbalanced ... to start writing about the people who kept you alive, the people who dreamt about you before you were born. That sense of connectivity and sustainability of

your family name and your blood is priceless. No one can take that from you, even if you experience prejudice or are subjugated or discriminated against. No one can take your blood inheritance. Walking with that kind of knowledge makes me both humble and strong in this world. Makes me know and understand that I am not just speaking for myself. I'm speaking for the cacophony of RedBlacks who fought, suffered, and died; but also survived, so that I could be here to tell their stories. Aho.

My lifeline was the rock that would not break under the hammer of time. I had returned. I was still here.

******All quotes and the following blessing are excerpted and shared with permission from Shonda Buchanan's memoir, *Black Indian*:**

This is life or death, sister, Turtlehawk, one of my elders, told me on the first day of my Vision Quest ...It is at once a reflection of your relationship with the Creator, God, Yahweh, and the relationship you have with yourself. What you are made of. What you must overcome ...

Even the rock breaks in the fire. In life, you have to decide what to let leave before you break ... It is hard ... It is life.

I am a rock in the fire.

It's a good sweat. Mitakuye Oyasin.

All my relations.

This feature is dedicated to Shonda's daughter, grandson and all her relations.

And to those “in search of the secrets of the past and their ancestry.”

Find more info on Shonda at <https://shondabuchanan.com>. You can watch the book trailer [here](#) and buy her award-winning book *Black Indian* [here](#).

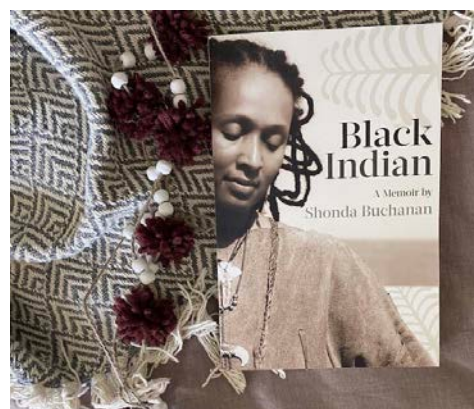


IMAGE *Black Indian* tablescape, IG photo provided by Shonda Buchanan

About the author: Sun Cooper is a migratory mother, published author, and multicultural literary consultant. Her work and collaborations have appeared in *People Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, *National Geographic*, *Hill Lily*, *American Cowboy*, *Southern Writers*, and *Severine*. With her amalgamation of Cherokee, French, Basque and American West ancestry, she identifies as a storyteller, mother, and sojourner who asks for the wisdom of ancient paths while migrating her own. You can find her at www.sunliterary.com/thesunlitproject.com

Well, Hello Henry!

Emma Hurry, ASE's Admissions and Student Affairs Manager, shares news of the arrival of her first-born.

We welcomed Henry to the world in the early hours of 27th January 2020 following two long days and nights in hospital. Keeping me up all night turned out to be a trick Henry very much intended to continue throughout his first year! Hopefully he'll allow me to sleep a little bit more by the time my maternity leave ends, otherwise ASE's coffee expenditure will increase significantly and I might even begin to rival Rob in terms of gallons of coffee consumed!



What a year to start out life! Henry was four days old when the UK left the EU, and seven weeks old when the UK went into our first lockdown. I'm grateful that he was briefly an EU citizen, and even more so that he was able to be held by close friends and family before the words 'social distancing' became common parlance.



Although the pandemic has meant that baby groups have been cancelled and there have been far fewer opportunities for Henry to spend time with the people we love, my partner and I, like everyone, have been trying to focus on the positives to come out of this most bizarre of situations. Without wanting to sound flippant about this horrible disease and its effect on the economy, this was always going to be an unusual year for us, so in some ways that has softened the blow of the huge societal changes that have taken place. We knew that, as new parents, we weren't going to be spending much time going out to pubs and concerts this year. The fact that none of our friends could do that either meant that, at least, we weren't missing out! And with my partner having been working from home since

March, Henry has been able to spend much more time with him during these first few formative months than he otherwise would have done.

Spending these past few months getting to know our giggling, bubbly little boy has been wonderful, and it will be difficult dropping him off at nursery when I come back to work, but I'm looking forward to catching up with the ASE team and being able to focus my mind on something other than nap timings.

Having been forced by the pandemic to spend much of the year outside, Henry has very much become an all-weather baby. Hopefully this means he'll be resilient and outdoorsy when he's older.

Maybe I'll even bring him along on the infamously wet and windy ASE Wales Hike!



INTRODUCING ‘THE RALPH’

Andrew Butterworth (Education and Internship Placement Co-ordinator / Bath History Guru) and Kara Chambers-Grant (Accommodation Manager) tell us about the history and present condition of the wonderful property ASE acquired in March 2020, just before the world turned upside-down.

2020 has proved to be... something of a challenge, an ‘annus horribilis’ as the Queen might describe it; but for ASE, it has undoubtedly had some redeeming moments. One such was unquestionably the acquisition of ‘The Ralph’, a fine Georgian house purchased in March. It is situated a stone’s throw from Nelson House, down the alleyway at the end of North Parade, to the left of The Huntsman. This pedestrian thoroughfare is known officially and somewhat prosaically as North Parade Passage, but Bathonians call it *Lilliput Alley*, presumably because of its diminutive nature. It’s one of the few places in Bath, just within the old city walls, which has a medieval rather than an C18th feel, even though none of the buildings are, strictly speaking, medieval. Tourists are drawn to it because of its quaint appearance, but also by the magnetic presence of Sally Lunn’s tea shop. (I always think of the popularity of the Sally Lunn bun as a triumph of marketing over reality - it’s just a plain old bun, nothing like as appetising as a Bath bun, with its delicious topping of currants and sugar crystals).

The terrace of houses along the right-hand side as you enter the passage from North Parade was built as a piece of Jacobean town planning in the 1620s by John Hall, a wool merchant from the nearby town of Bradford-on-Avon - and not, as it says on the plaque of Sally Lunn’s, 1482. So ‘The Ralph’, when first built, would have looked exactly like Sally Lunn’s, before its C18th makeover.



Why ‘The Ralph’? The house’s most famous resident was undoubtedly Ralph Allen, a highly significant figure in the development of C18th Bath. Born in Cornwall, the son of an innkeeper, Allen arrived in Bath in 1710 at the age of 17 to work in the post office. Bright and industrious, two years later, he was put in charge. The postal service at that time was both inefficient and riddled with corruption. It was ‘farmed out’ by the government to various individuals, who would pay an annual fee and then hopefully make a profit. In 1719, Allen was awarded the contract for a large part of the West Country. Through efficiency, attention to detail and the elimination of fraud, Allen was eventually making £12,000 a year profit – nearly £1million in today’s money.



In 1712, Allen had moved the post office to new premises at the corner of Abbey Green (now 1 and 2, North Parade Passage). He lived above the shop. In 1727, he acquired a long lease on the property, which enabled him to make improvements. He engaged the young and ambitious architect John Wood the Elder, who was just about to embark on the building of Queen Square, to add Georgian facades to the front and back of the house, and add an extra storey on top. The extension built at right angles to what is now the back of the property is known to everyone as Ralph Allen's Town House, but it was almost certainly built as his office. It looks magnificent, like a miniature Roman temple, richly decorated, which is unusual for Bath.



With his burgeoning profits from running the postal service, Allen started buying up the stone quarries on Combe Down, giving him a near monopoly on the supply of stone needed for the expansion of the city. In 1731, he constructed a tramway down what is now Ralph Allen Drive to the river at Widcombe, where his stone could be transported to Bristol and beyond. ASE alums who lived in Prior Park Road may remember a terrace of workmen's cottages at the bottom of the road, built in 1737 for the masons working on the wharf. This is probably the oldest surviving example of industrial housing in the country, again designed by John Wood the Elder, whose next project for Allen was on a somewhat grander scale - Prior Park, a magnificent Palladian mansion with breath-taking views over the city of Bath.



Allen became a generous and hospitable host at Prior Park, surrounding himself with cultural, arty types, particularly writers. He wasn't interested in hob-nobbing with the aristocracy and the upper reaches of society who frequented C18th Bath. Regular guests included the Fielding siblings, Sarah and Henry. It is generally accepted that Squire Allworthy in *Tom Jones* is largely based on Allen. The writer whose name appeared in the Prior Park guest book most frequently was the poet Alexander Pope. One year, Pope came for Christmas and stayed for three months. Pope was quite small of stature, so Allen provided him with a special little green chair to fit his tiny frame! Pope earned his keep not only with his sparkling conversation but also with advice on the design for the glorious grounds of Prior Park. Pope captured Allen's self-effacing character in the couplet:-

“Let humble Allen, with an awkward shame,
Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame.”

After Allen left Lilliput Alley for the grander surroundings of Prior Park, the house above the post office was initially taken over by Allen's brother Philip, who helped to run the postal service. Later, it was rented out to the sculptor Prince Hoare, brother of William Hoare, the most celebrated portrait painter in Bath until the arrival of Thomas Gainsborough in 1759.



In this next chapter of its history, The Ralph will house up to eight ASE students in four double bedrooms. Each bedroom boasts a unique feature, including one room panelled in C17th oak and pine and one room with a view directly to the top of Bath Abbey. The formal sitting room provides a beautiful place to gather, along with the large kitchen and dining room (which features a decorative fireplace with C18th cast iron range by J. A. Bladwell & Co from Bath). No doubt, the ASE students who come to occupy this grand home will continue to add to its storied legacy.



For a more detailed portrait of Ralph Allen, see [Butterworth's Bath, Episode 8 - "Ralph Allen - Too Good to be True?"](#)

ASE Alums Reflect on 2020

There was a rather muted response to our call for your personal reflections on 2020 – perhaps because many of you wanted simply to put the year behind you as soon as possible? Here are the observations, thoughts and feelings, unedited by us, of the few who chose to share...

The email came on March 11. Starting on March 12, all University of Mary Washington classes were cancelled until Monday, March 16, when they would resume online.

When I came to campus the next day, it was as if I turned around and everyone was gone. All the ebb and flow of a school year, the rituals, disappeared: no graduation, no end-of-the-year ceremonies, the energy of the campus, all gone. No final classes to wind up the semester. Teaching online is harder than in-person and, for me, less satisfying. The last faculty meeting was on Zoom.

Now everything is on Zoom.

I moved in the middle of all of this. I had been planning to move in the summer, sell my townhouse, pack up leisurely. But as my husband pointed out, I no longer needed to be in Fredericksburg.

Then the US election, which would take another 200 words.

Everything is just different.

- **Warren Rochelle (Su07 and Su13 faculty, University of Mary Washington)**

2020 has felt like an exploration of the human spirit presented on a world stage.

In New York, we quarantined and cheered every night at 7 pm for essential workers. Meanwhile, some of our neighbors refused to wear masks. We resorted to the entertainments of our childhoods—dance parties in our living rooms, long walks, and board games. We became desperate for hugs.

We have had to be vulnerable in ways we never expected to experience in such a collective manner while we deal with a nation that seems bent on the rejection of unification and solidarity. The human spirit, in all its contradictions, has never felt more noticeable to this elder millennial, the moments of connection that much more important and buoying to the soul.

- **Joanna Chlebus (Sp04, Mount Holyoke)**

Living in Washington, DC, I felt like I had been living election day for the past year and a half. From going to a politically centered university to having an internship on Capitol Hill, I lived and breathed politics. But for that year and a half, instead of breathing politics, I felt like I was drowning in it.

At Georgetown University, there is a tradition that, on election night, students will run down to the White House to celebrate another successful democratic election. Needless to say, this year was different. Instead of planning to run to the White House with friends, we had to think about sheltering. Even though COVID-19 was on our minds, we were more afraid of the potential for violence. As I was walking along Wisconsin Avenue before sunset on November 3rd, coffee shops, pharmacies, clothing outlets, antique shops, and more were boarding up. Everyone was terrified of what would happen next. If Trump won, people worried about widespread protests that could devolve into rioting. If Biden won, they feared right-wing militias would take to the streets to contest the legitimacy of the election.

That evening, I walked through the apocalypse. Through my mask, I could breathe in the atmosphere of distrust for our nation's democratic process. I made sure I was inside my apartment with my door locked before sunset. My roommate and I ordered Chipotle on Uber Eats so we wouldn't have to dip into our two weeks' supply of food (the university recommended that we have two weeks' worth of food and medication in case of uncontrollable violence).

I honestly thought the election would be a blowout. I was sure that Biden would clinch the Electoral College early in the night. How could anyone vote for Trump when he was responsible for over 200,000 American deaths? Or vote for him after he had been impeached? Or after he had called war heroes like John McCain "losers?" Apparently, many people still could.

Time trickled by as I sat in shock watching CNN. Every vote counted was like a grain of sand dropping through an hourglass. Around 11.00pm I couldn't take it anymore. I felt like I had no place in my country anymore, a country that could reelect a person who was, in my eyes, a traitor. I tried my hardest to serve politicians who I believed in, who fought against Trump and other far-right demagogues. I campaigned for Joe Biden and other Democratic candidates, but seemingly to no avail. I was defeated and alone.

I did not fall asleep that night. Scenarios raced through my mind. What if Trump wins the Electoral College but not the popular vote, again? What if Biden wins and Trump refuses to concede? What if Trump bars the Electoral College from meeting? What if Trump delegitimizes the election and calls for far-right militias to take action? Yes, some of these questions are ridiculous, but I felt like I was living in an alternative reality where the democratic process no longer existed.

Over the next few days, as votes were counted, contested, and confirmed, my anxiety started to ebb. Each day, Biden won another city, county, or state that paved his way well past 270.

On the Saturday morning after the election, I was half paying attention to a club board meeting I was presiding over. In between agenda items, I would refresh the Associated Press' electoral count. I was mid-sentence on the Zoom call when one of the board members told us she got a notification saying Biden had won. I looked down at my phone and saw the same. Quickly, I ended the board meeting and woke up my roommate to tell her the good news.

Ten minutes later we were fed, dressed, and out the door to go down to the White House, as Georgetown students do, to celebrate perhaps the greatest feat of democracy this country has ever seen. When we got down to M Street, cars were stopped at intersections honking, cheering, waving Biden Harris signs, and shouting things like "Yay Joe! Go Joe!" My roommate and I walked all the way to the Black Lives Matter Plaza in front of the White House. Gathered there were hundreds, maybe thousands of people dancing to music and cheering. The scene looked like V-J Day in 1945, but this time it was a victory over Trump. (cont.)

The world I saw in front of the White House was in stark contrast to the apocalyptic scene I witnessed in Georgetown on election night. In the victory over Trump, the city was coming together in a safe and happy way. Instead of violence, all I could see were people wearing masks, popping champagne, passing around free cupcakes, playing Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the USA”, and rejoicing in a better future. For the first time in four years, I felt part of a community again, and I was proud to be an American among them.

After celebrating with the crowds, my roommate and I were on the way back home when we came across a barricaded road. We asked why it was blocked off, and we were told that the Secret Service was preparing for the President’s arrival. That morning, President Trump had been golfing in Virginia (Trump had promised on his campaign in 2016 that he would not golf while president, so it was sweet justice that he officially lost reelection while on a golf course). A few minutes later, a motorcade flew by while people around us taunted Trump. Watching him go past, I screamed at the top of my lungs: “Thousands of Americans dead!” That was perhaps the most cathartic experience of my life. Finally, I was able to literally have my voice heard – assuming he could hear me over the others. Perhaps that statement in a time of reckoning resonated with him more than it ever had before... but I don’t count on it.

Looking back at this elongated election period, I have renewed faith in my country and its people. I still rejoice in the hope of a better future that embraces our country’s best values of equality, compassion, and moral leadership. I look forward to fighting the good fight and making this country better in any way I can. I finally feel like that’s possible.

- Lily McGrail (Au19/Su20, Georgetown)



Pre-pandemic, I was already working remotely. Rural Pennsylvania doesn't offer much in terms of nightlife, so my non-working hours were mostly spent at home, too. This paid off in 2020—I was well-prepared for life in quarantine.

I was lucky to be around family and lucky to enjoy a Valentine's Day weekend away—just weeks before COVID hit. I was lucky enough to have three books published in 2020. But, like so many others, I faced struggles. My freelance work dwindled. I worried about myself and my equally at-risk loved ones. My family went through a series of crises of our own as the country at large grew more and more divided. I struggled to keep up with the news cycle, expert guidelines, work, and other projects. It was hard not to feel like a failure as things inevitably slipped through the cracks. Through it all, my already poor mental health worsened.

Going into 2021, though, I'm hopeful. As I write this, Inauguration Day is fast approaching and I feel a sort of optimism, looking at the States going forward. I'm reorganizing more personal facets of my life, starting new projects and prioritizing what matters most. Even working with ASE on this newsletter offers a particularly bright spot! But, most importantly, one piece is true: like the struggles that came before and will appear again, I've made it through.

- **Juliette Sebock (Sp17, Gettysburg)**

There were times during 2020 that I felt it very possible I was living in a Truman-Show-like simulation. A pandemic tore through cities and hospitals, marches and protests raged through the night, and political ads showed rallies across the country. Yet, in my rural home with my husband and son, it was quiet.

From the spring into summer, we were home and – as countless others have discussed – it was hard. Having an active 18-month-old run around the house was difficult. We hit a rhythm as a family, my husband and I passing the baby back and forth as we took turns in meetings, sharing our calendars to avoid conflict. As fall approached, my husband returned to work as a principal of an elementary school and my son returned to daycare.

Through it all, our world was quiet. My street was silent on election day. We've stayed healthy. The hospital down the road was never overwhelmed, the only sign of the pandemic being the tent erected outside the ER and the 'Heroes Work Here' signs posted outside the entrance. If I just stayed home, worked, and turned off the news, it was easy to pretend nothing was going on at all.

For me, the knowledge that I can stay home safely and 'turn off' when I want to highlights my privilege. This realization energized me to do more and not allow myself to close my eyes to what's going on around me. I have turned to social justice work in my spheres of influence – at home, in my job, in my community. I know that so far we've been lucky, and as we leave 2020, I want to continue to use my privilege to fight racism, inequality, and injustice.

- **Maddie Anthes (Su09, Denison)**

Pursuing the Ideal at ASE in 2014

Dr Jeffrey Allen Tucker (Associate Professor of English, University of Rochester) looks back on a course on visionary writing and ideas that resonates in the present.

I was fortunate to serve as a tutor for Advanced Studies in England's 2014 Summer Session. I taught a course on *Utopia & Dystopia in Anglo-American Literature*, which focused on a selection of British and American novels, starting with Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), the work that gave a paradoxical name—both 'the good place' and 'no place'—to a literary genre and to the interdisciplinary academic field of Utopian Studies. That text was followed by Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards* (1888), one of the most popular books of its century in America; it inspired numerous socialist-utopian 'Bellamy Societies' across the country as well as our subsequent text, British socialist William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890). In truth, Morris despised Bellamy's novel, which he found insufficiently radical in its politics and oblivious to the role of the arts in human life, so he wrote his own. Modern British history provided a meaningful context in which to read George Orwell's *1984* (1949), a well-known literary representation of a dystopia, 'the bad place,' in which the topic of a surveillance society signified in a particular way given the omnipresence of CCTV cameras in England. Our last text was Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974), a classic work of science fiction born out of its author's background in languages and the social sciences, as well as the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. This sophisticated novel sustains an effective motif about time throughout while demonstrating a self-reflexivity regarding its alternatives to the status quo. We also read, as a sort of accompanying guidebook, *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction* (2010) by Lyman Tower Sargent, the founder of Utopian Studies, who identified 'the three faces of utopianism': literature, philosophy, and the history of intentional communities.

These texts were the very heart of the course, so I was somewhat alarmed when, shortly after my arrival in Bath, I discovered that a number of my students had not received an email I had sent weeks before departure asking them to acquire these books ahead of time in the US and bring them to England. (Zealous spam filters at students' home institutions may have been to blame.) It suddenly seemed as if teaching a course about dystopias was akin to tempting fate. However, Lucy Marten, ASE's Director of Studies, sorted it all out. She went online and found an electronic version of More's *Utopia*, which was in the public domain; it wasn't the edition that I had suggested, but for the students who didn't have our first primary text of the course, it would do in a pinch. The Sargent text was published by Oxford UP, so extra copies arrived a couple of days after Lucy ordered them. And Mr. B's Emporium of Reading Delights eventually got us the other needed texts in a timely fashion. Dystopia averted.

Surprises that were more supportive of the course followed. Our Study Trip to London included a visit to Westminster Hall, where we saw the plaque marking the location at which Thomas More was sentenced to death in 1535. We also



went on a walking tour of George Orwell's London, which included stops at the building where Orwell proposed to his wife, the hospital where he died, and the University of London's Senate House, the exterior of which is the basis for the description of the Ministry of Truth in *1984*. We also walked by, though not into, the pubs that Orwell frequented, which were many. The Study Trip included a visit to the British Film Institute National Archive to view documentaries on Orwell's life and adaptations of his novel. And just before our bus ride back to Bath, some of us made an impromptu trip over to the British Library to view a small but insightful exhibit on British comic books, including Alan Moore and David Lloyd's dystopian masterpiece *V for Vendetta* (1989).

Two weeks earlier, on the way back to Bath from our weekend trip to Cornwall, we had stopped for lunch in Devon at Knightshayes Court, an elaborately designed Victorian mansion in an 'eminently picturesque' setting. At first, I was not especially excited about this stop on our itinerary, but then I remembered that in addition to being a novelist and political activist, William Morris was a designer with hundreds of patents in his name for textile, wallpaper, and stained-glass patterns. Might Morris have played a part in the famous interior design of Knightshayes? Alas, no; however, I learned that the house's actual designers were Morris's contemporaries and most likely knew him professionally. The following weekend in Glastonbury, where the Summer of Love lives on in some ways, several students ran into representatives of a commune, an encounter that was the topic of a lively conversation during the class session that followed back at Nelson House.

My students' engagement with the course materials and their general diligence contributed to making this course a pleasant and productive teaching experience. My time in Bath was made even more special by the events celebrating ASE's 25th anniversary and by a visit from my mother, wife, and daughter who were able to participate in some of the program's activities. My daughter, who was eight years old at the time, got her very first library card in Bath, so that beautiful city will always be a special place for her. My sincerest thanks to ASE's staff for creating and maintaining the conditions that made it possible for a community of scholars to assemble and do their best work.

I'll close this reflection by noting that it was occasioned in part by our challenging times. For some our world appears to be descending into dystopia, and with increased speed in recent months. Crises of many kinds—health, racial, environmental, economic, political, and their intersections—are enough to make one throw up one's hands and ask, "What is to be done?" The topic of dystopias may seem all-too relevant at present. However, part of the appeal of Utopian Studies is its consistent orientation toward a better future; moreover, it teaches us that ordinary people have the ability to make history, to change the structures under which we live and advance toward a more just world. Respecting that agency is the first step in response to our present calamities. Second is articulating the kind of world in which we want to live, in the form of art and/or protest, categories naming transformative vision given eloquent expression. And third is taking action to make that vision a reality; whether advocating for social justice or simply following medical experts' health and safety guidelines, we all can make a positive difference to our local, national, and international communities.

If we ever abandon that hopeful principle, our descent into dystopia will reach a truly terminal velocity.

ASE WRITERS IN PRINT!

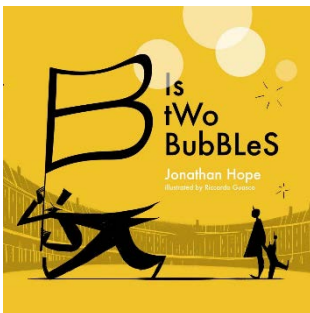
Maddie Anthes (Su09, Denison) has been busy. Her chapbook, *Now We Haunt This Home Together*, is available in e-book [here](#). Her story 'The ghost that haunts my house' was nominated for the prestigious Pushcart Prize. She also had a story win the [Barren flash fiction contest](#), an editor's choice pick at [CRAFT literary](#), and was a finalist for the [Smokelong flash fiction award](#). Her publications can be found on her website - <https://madelineanthes.com/>

Abby Bethke (Au19, Su20, Drake) has had her book, the *HowExpert Guide to Medieval Reenactment*, published. [It's available here](#).

Maryam Esmat (Su18, Lycoming) edited an undergraduate physics textbook, [Classical Mechanics: A Computational Approach with Examples Using Mathematica and Python](#), which has just been published. She was able to use her combination of majors in Astrophysics and English with Creative Writing, as the textbook integrates the coding languages *Mathematica* and *Python* with the field of Classical Mechanics.

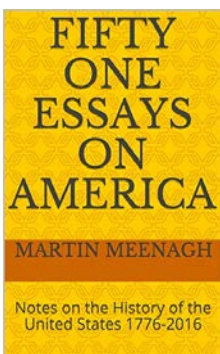


Emily Hessney Lynch (Sp11, UofR) had a short story published recently, called *Portrait of an Internet Mean Girl*. You can find it [here](#).



Jonathan Hope (Dean and Director) recently published *B is Two Bubbles*, a second collaboration with Italian illustrator, Riccardo Guasco – and a follow-up to their quirky-stylish *A is for Donkeys*. Both premiered at ASE's Write Night. If you can't make it to Mr B's Emporium of Reading Delights, Toppings or Bath Abbey (where they're also on sale), you can buy your copies [here](#).

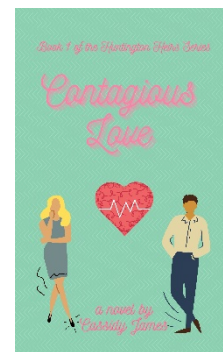
Kyra Lisse (Su20, F&M) had her personal essay "How to Write About Your Dead Latin Teacher (in 6 Easy Steps)" published in the 2020 issue of [Collision Literary Magazine](#). Her literary criticism, "*The House on Mango Street: Reading Sally*," was also chosen by Franklin & Marshall College as the [winner of the 2020 William Uhler Hensel Junior Prize](#).



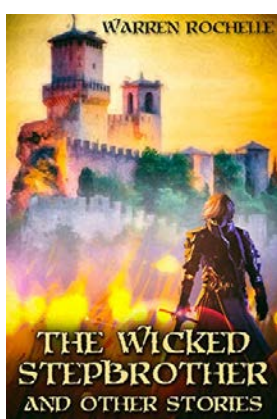
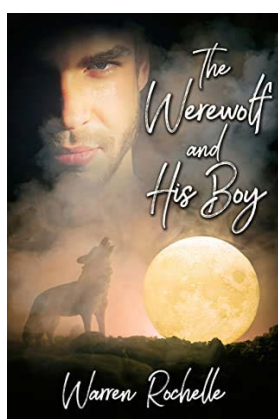
Martin Meenagh (long-time tutor of 'Liberty, Rights and Rebellion', and currently teaching courses on modern political history as part of ASE's [Continuing Education programme](#)) has just published [Fifty-One Essays on America: Notes on the History of the United States, 1776-2016](#). It is currently available for Kindle, but a paperback version will follow.

Megan Minogue (Au05/Sp06, BC) and some friends spent the pandemic writing a romance novel (of the somewhat trashy, bodice-ripper variety), under the *nom-de-plume* of Cassidy James. It started almost as a joke, but they all became seriously invested as the process continued! Writing together also allowed them the opportunity to meet on a weekly basis (via Zoom of course) to discuss ideas, suggest edits, and generally connect and support each other during this crazy year.

It's called *Contagious Love* and centers around two teenage sweethearts turned enemies who reconnect 15 years later, only to find themselves trapped together during COVID lockdown. You can [buy it on Amazon](#).



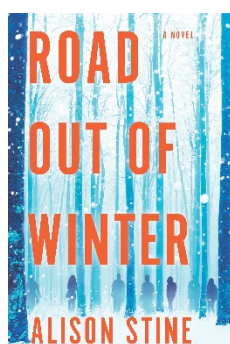
Phoebe Pan (Su19, Oberlin) and **Rebecca Young (Su19, Mary Wash)**, both members of the humanities collective [Soupbone](#), published their first e-zine in April this year.



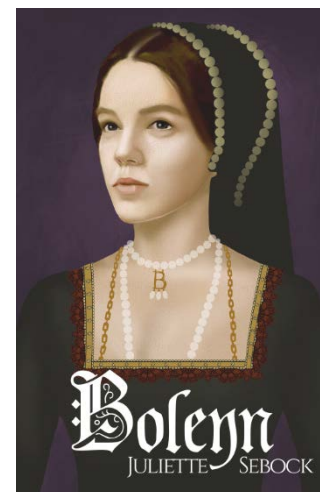
Warren Rochelle (Summer Tutor Su07, Su13, Mary Wash') had his latest novel [The Werewolf and His Boy](#) and his collection of gay-themed retellings of traditional fairy tales [The Wicked Stepbrother and Other Stories](#), published by JMS books.

For centuries, Anne Boleyn has been disparaged despite the strength she displayed in a patriarchal society. **Juliette Sebock (Sp17, Gettysburg)** weaves primary sources into her manuscript to follow the relationship between Henry VIII and Anne – their courtship, turbulent marriage, and her heartbreaking execution.

The chapbook *Boleyn* is available [here](#).



Alison Stine (Au98, Denison) had her first novel [Road out of Winter](#) published by MIRA Books, an imprint of HarperCollins, in Fall 2020. The novel, about a young woman farmer in southeastern Ohio who must protect her found family, received starred reviews from *Booklist* and *Library Journal*, which described it as "profoundly moving, as distressing as Daniel Woodrell's *Winter's Bone* but liable to inspire real-world action ... Readers searching for a novel fueled by fierce intelligence and empathy will find here a celebration of humanity, and a warning against its loss."



Road out of Winter will be followed by a new novel in 2021, also published by HarperCollins.

Afterimage

Maddie Anthes (Su09, Denison)

When my daughter was young she thought the sky was made of construction paper stretched tight. We would take thick paper and use scissors to stab tiny holes through random spots and hold it to the light. If I squinted, it looked like a starry sky.

My love, I said. I think you've discovered what the sky is made of. It's as good an explanation as any.

In the backyard we'd find constellations. She knew their Latin names. *Orion. Circinus. Cepheus.*

When we found *Ursa Major* she'd reach her arms above her head like a bear, stretching high. Her roars would bounce off the trees and up towards the sky. I imagined them reaching *Ursa* herself.

#

My daughter learned that we shouldn't use regular flashlights at night because it ruined our night vision. Red light was better; it doesn't create afterimages, the ghostly flashes of what had just been there. Silhouettes living in bursts behind your eyelids.

She wrapped the tip of her flashlight in red cellophane. The afterimages were gone.

You're so smart, I told her. I don't see spots when I blink anymore.

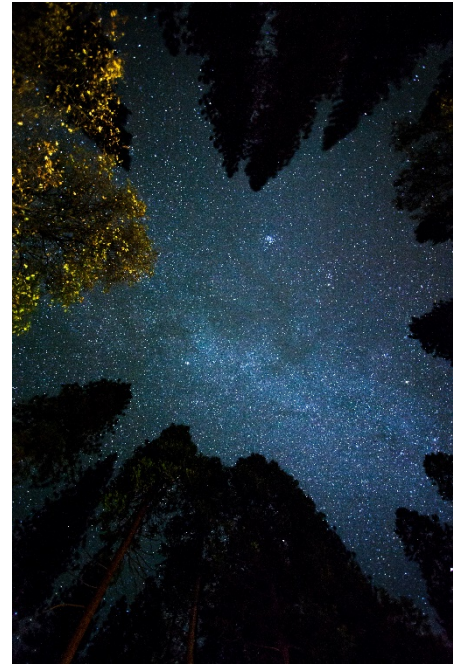
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Now I take those old pieces of construction paper and run my fingers along the raised bumps. The page is worn and soft with time.

I know I'll leave her too early. One day I'll be plucked from her life. We won't be ready.

When I'm gone, I hope she learns to blink away the pieces of life that she can't control. I hope she keeps looking up and naming things, making sense of something too wide to conquer.

When I'm gone, I hope I'm more than an afterimage. I want to last.



Five Years of Legends

Dr Bex Lyons, regarded by many of her own students as something of a legend, brings her own particular ASE chapter to a fitting close.

I first taught 'Myths and Legends of Britain and Ireland' at ASE Bath in the 2015 autumn semester when I was a few years into my PhD at the University of Bristol. I remember feeling rather smug at being paid to teach my dream subject in one of the most beautiful cities in the UK. I've always been very geeky about myth and legend: my PhD was on Arthurian literature, but long, long before that I had been enchanted as a child by bedtime stories of Arthur and Guenevere, Robin Hood, fairies

and spirits, gods and goddesses, heroes and monsters, and strange mysteries embedded in our British and Irish landscapes. The course covers these topics and more in literature spanning from the Old English *Beowulf*, to the fifteenth-century *Morte Darthur* by Sir Thomas Malory, right through to contemporary fiction, film, and television.

The 'Myths and Legends of Britain and Ireland' course existed long before I was on the scene. The teaching history of this course is a story of myth-making in itself. It was conceived and designed by Professor Carolyne Larrington – an eminent authority on Arthurian and Norse-Icelandic literature, medievalism, and folklore. Carolyne and I knew each other (we are Facebook friends!), but it was actually through one of her PhD students, and another friend of mine, Dr Gabriel Schenk, that I inherited the course. Gabriel had been teaching it after Carolyne, and when the time came for him to hand it over, he very kindly recommended me to the ASE team. Furthermore, when I wasn't able to teach the course due to time pressures and constraints, I handed it over to another Arthurian scholar friend, Dr Kit Kappahn, who took over for a semester before I returned. Each of us has adapted the course according to our own expertise and interests, updating it to keep it current in shifting global contexts and conversations around #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, LGBTQIA+, and so on. Like all the best stories and myths, it has evolved with every retelling, but the wonderful sense of collegiality and academic friendship remains – Carolyne's legacy has been passed down across early career academics who benefitted not only from the teaching experience (as well as the extra cash, of course!), but also from being nurtured and supported by the wonderful team at ASE.

I don't want to embarrass them all terribly by waxing lyrical, but it wouldn't be an understatement to say that being part of the ASE team feels like being part of a supportive family, some of whom just happen to own full suits of armour or have expert knowledge of the Vikings... (so, the coolest family ever). During my time teaching for ASE I have transitioned from being a PhD student to Lecturer, and I have also gone through a great deal in my personal life, including the top three stressors: getting married, the death of a parent, and buying a house – as well as this global pandemic, of course. But through all of these changes ASE Bath has been a constant. The team there genuinely cares about all of its students and tutors, and unlike the set-up at a bigger university, they are able to get to know everyone really well, and to make sure that everyone feels held, supported, and valued (even when they have faced challenges in their own lives). They are the most hard-working, dedicated, caring, quirky, and fun team, and deserve a huge pat on the back (and/or a large G&T!) for everything they have done. They really go above and beyond the call of duty, every day.

Rob asked me to write about what teaching this course has meant to me, but it's a tall order to try to encapsulate five years of teaching at ASE Bath. It has been, without a doubt, the most rewarding and fulfilling teaching experience of my academic career to date. I had never taught students from the US before, and whilst there were often surprising (and sometimes hilarious) cultural differences (your 'peace' hand gesture means something very different to us Brits, as does the word 'fanny', for instance..!), I was consistently delighted by the thoughtfulness, sensitivity, and deep engagement with the literature by my students, even when we were sometimes discussing very



difficult or uncomfortable topics. The small-group seminar format at ASE Bath meant that we all felt safe to explore new ideas, and I know that I absolutely learned as much from my students as they learned from me. ASE also promotes a wonderful sense of fellowship with its excursions and social programme; being able to take students on a daytrip to Cadbury Castle and Glastonbury to follow in the legendary footsteps of King Arthur each semester was such a gift.

Over the years many of my students have become friends – I was even fortunate enough to meet up with some when I was in New York, back in the pre-covid times (remember those?). When teaching transitioned to online delivery this year due to covid-19, and I also taught ASE alumni for the first time, I was relieved and heartened to find that the ASE magic was still alive and kicking – the students were warm, enthusiastic in their discussions, and very kind. Online teaching can never replicate the experience of being face-to-face in a seminar room, but the students, tutors, and ASE team are all so marvellous that it's a very close thing indeed, and I enjoyed the experience a great deal.

And now, the time has come for me to hand over the 'Myths and Legends of Britain and Ireland' baton as I leave academia for the next adventure, but I can promise that ASE Bath certainly hasn't seen the last of me!

To the ASE team, the students, the alumni, and my fellow tutors – thank you for an amazing five years, and keep being your kind, inspirational, and supportive selves, because the world needs that now more than ever.

Stay well and safe,

Dr Bex Lyons – The Once (and maybe Future) ASE Tutor



Mother Tongues, Borderlands and Beyond

Dr Margaret Lee, former professor of English and Linguistics at Hampton University, traces the roots of The Dr. Margaret Giles Lee Advanced Studies in England Endowed Scholarship, which she established in 2010 to enable more Hampton students to attend the ASE Programme.



The Dr. Margaret Giles Lee Advanced Studies in England Endowed Scholarship was inspired by my first visit to Bath as an ASE tutor in the summer of 2003.



I taught a course entitled 'The Mother Tongue and Its Dialectal Offspring in the United States', which examined five American speech communities whose language characteristics evolved from British English. It was the first linguistics course offered in the history of ASE. Due to the beginning of the war in Iraq, however, the final enrollment in the class consisted of only three students: Crystal Ebert and Emily Potts (both from Gettysburg College) and Karen Bullock (Hampton University).

Despite being a small class, we had a wonderful five-week experience, thanks to Jonathan and the ASE staff who helped us adjust to our new living and learning environments. The class took

study trips to Bristol to walk the 18th-century African Slavery Trail, and to London to the Modern Art Museum and the Globe Theatre. We were all in awe as we visited other historic sites, including the Roman Baths, Cornwall, Oxford University, Stonehenge, and Shakespeare's birthplace, among many others, not to mention free weekend trips to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

I returned to Bath in the summer of 2011 to co-teach with my then colleague, Dr. Mabel Khawaja, an ASE course entitled 'Borderland Settings: Graham Greene Meets Toni Morrison'. The course explored the various literary and linguistic similarities and differences between two novels of each of the authors. In addition to Stonehenge, Cornwall, and viewing films and plays, the class took study trips to Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, Greene's birthplace; to Bletchley Park (a national code-breaking center during World War II), and London. There were seven students in the class: Matthew Girolami (Franklin and Marshall College), Elibet Jimenez (Yale University), Kyle Lundin (University of Illinois-Champaign); and Tommie Collins, Shakena Davis, Janee Williams, and Ayana Worthey (all from Hampton University).





During both summers, the students and tutors thoroughly enjoyed all of the academic, social, and cultural opportunities that ASE and the beautiful and historic city of Bath had to offer. I still have great memories of Victoria Park, Nelson House, Roskilly's ice cream, pasties, steak and kidney pie, and afternoon teas. As one student stated, 'I never wanted to leave.'

Many Hampton students were interested in the ASE program, but needed help with related expenses. The Scholarship was established in 2010 to offset the application fees associated with ASE, in order to offer a unique global educational opportunity for Hampton English majors and minors. It was managed independently from then until 2019, when it became endowed.



Hampton students are currently awarded \$2000 and can apply for either the ASE summer or semester program. The scholarship is advertised through the Hampton University Department of English and Foreign languages, the International Office, and the Office of Development, and will be available for years to come. After teaching in the Department of English at Hampton University for 29 years, I am now retired, but busily involved in community service, editing documents and reading a backlog of books. Since I am a graduate of Hampton, the Scholarship is one of the ways that I give back to the University.

Hampton University Student Scholarship Recipients: 2011-2018

Summer 2011	Janee Williams	Summer 2016	Shatika Rembert
Summer 2012	Cindy Jean-Louis	Summer 2018	Ciera Russell
Spring 2014	Ashley Payne		

ASE is pleased to announce that, as of Summer 2021, the Programme will be supplementing Dr Lee's Scholarship with a discount in fees of up to \$1,000.

You can make a donation to this, or any of the existing ASE Scholarships, on the [alumni website giving page](#).

If you are interested in setting up a scholarship of your own, email either Rob r.jones@asebath.org or Jonathan j.hope@asebath.org directly.

River Waltz

Jules Sebok (Sp17, Gettysburg)

The river stayed happy
When the others were
Splattered with the blood
Of a face splayed out on an Oxford street.

The river heard the words
that would later make readers gasp,
But didn't let on that it knew
Or that it wouldn't warn us.

The river brought confidants and confidence,
Rum and coke from a mile away
And the man whose accent matched his smile;
"The bats want me to join them."

The river was a warning but
Couldn't foreshadow *la morte*.
It anticipated caution, hated its place as a symbol
Like crows in the fog at Stonehenge.

The river held the gothicism of Usher
With Catherine and Ann,
Patiently awaiting its day.

The river stayed happy
Despite all the pain.



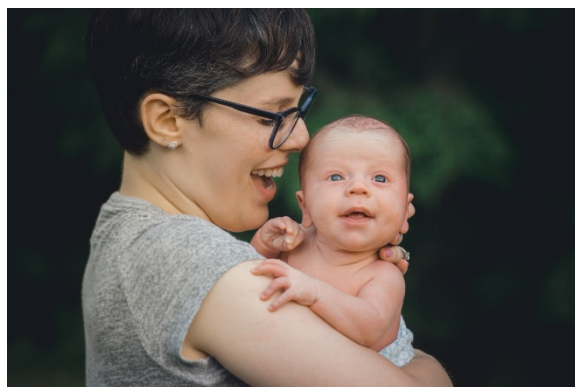
Alumni News Updates 2020

Beth Widmaier Capo (Sp94, Denison) was named Edward Capps Professor of Humanities at Illinois College, where she's been teaching since 2003.



Steph Mullervy (Sp99, BC) and her husband John welcomed a second son, Declan, into the world on December 10th 2019.

Emily Fogel Conway (Au09, UofR) and her husband welcomed their first child, Simon Levi Conway, in June 2020. They live near Penn State University, where Emily works as a communicator. Emily also completed her second Master's degree this year, gaining an M.Ed in Higher Education.



Warren Rochelle (Summer Tutor Su07, Su13, Mary Wash') having married his long-time partner, Gary Nelson, on November 2, 2018, retired from Mary Washington College at the end of the '19/20 academic year, and moved to Charlottesville, VA.

Ali Lanier (Au13, Wellesley) wrapped up an MFA in fiction at University of Massachusetts Boston and is now in the Masters program in Comparative Media Studies at MIT.



Anne Rinko (Sp18, Mary Wash'), Maddie Morris (Sp18, Maty Wash'), Elizabeth Ainger (Sp18, Elon), Becca Campo (Sp18, Gettysburg), and Katie Stone (Sp18, Bates) met up at the National Air and Space Museum for Martin Luther King Jr weekend.

PHOTO – Rinko et al, Sp20