**Featured Writer: David Nandi Odhiambo**

*Nandi was the department’s Visiting Writer in Spring 2020; the following is a short interview with Susan Schultz.*

SS: *Tell me about your most recent book.*

DNO: My fourth novel, *Smells Like Stars* takes place on a fictional island in the middle of the Pacific. It looks at a two-week span in the lives of four characters. P.J. Banner, a photographer, and Kerstin Ostheim, a journalist, meet at an online dating site. Six months later they’re weeks away from getting hitched. P.J. struggles with acute anxiety, and this has ramifications for Kerstin who is concerned she’s making a wrong-headed choice. The situation is complicated by her relationship with her transgender daughter, Schuld Ostheim, an artist recovering from a brutal beating in front of a nightclub. While Schuld prepares for an art exhibit, she has a relationship with Woloff Nampazo, a middle-distance running prodigy coming back from a knee injury.

SS: *You've lived in Hawai‘i for many years now, first as a grad student and now as a prof at UHWO. How has HI affected the writing of a Kenyan-Canadian novelist?*
Featured Faculty Member: Joseph O’Mealy

In a follow up to my 2001 book, I’ve continued my writing about Alan Bennett. In 2013 I published “Rewriting History: Alan Bennett’s Collaboration with Nicholas Hytner on the adaptations of The Madness of George III and The History Boys” in Modern British Drama on Screen (Cambridge). Another essay, “Late Style in Alan Bennett’s Novellas and Stories,” appeared in the Spring 2014 edition of The Review of Contemporary Fiction. In 2016 I was invited to contribute the Alan Bennett entry to the Wiley-Blackwell Companion to British and Irish Contemporary Literature. I submitted the 9,000 word essay in 2018, and two years later (September, 2020) the Companion was finally published. As a change of pace, in 2019 I published an essay in Narrating Death: The Limits of Literature (Routledge) on the influence of Calvinist theology on Muriel Spark: “She is the God of Calvin, she sees the beginning and the end”: Narrating Life and Death in the Fiction of Muriel Spark.

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DNO: Over the years, I've lived for long stretches of time in Kenya, Canada, and the U.S. In 2006, I moved to Hawai’i as a grad student at UH Manoa and rented a room in a Buddhist dormitory in Mo‘ili‘ili. I didn’t have my own computer, so I spent hours writing in notebooks at different places on the island. How has that experience affected my writing? Since all of my novels deals with the impact of colonialism, I think my time in Hawai’i has broadened the scope of how I do so in my recent ones.

SS: Who are your audiences?

DNO: The stories I create have diverse characters who tend to deal with precarity and displacement brought about by powerful internal and external forces. If anything, I think of my audiences as those who can relate to this experience of the world.

SS: What is your favorite book to teach and why?

DNO: James Baldwin’s third novel, Another Country. It’s a story set in New York during the late 1950s, and it anticipates changes on their way with the civil rights movement in the 60s. It’s ground breaking in the ways it explores the interconnections between race, religion, sexuality, art, and politics. The language is gorgeous, the dialogue is smart, and there’s so much that’s still relevant in making sense of how these issues continue to affect us today.

SS: What do you most want students to take from your classes?

DNO: I want students to see writing is a craft that can be learned. Parts of it are heavy slogging. There’s the grind of reading, study, and practice. However, there are also the parts that connect a person to feeling all of life’s ups and downs in ways that are transformative.

SS: What is your advice to young writers?

DNO: There are no guarantees as to what kind of career one will have, nor are there any definitive guidelines about how to succeed. Therefore, write without expectation of a particular outcome, don’t cut corners doing the work, and pay attention to feedback.

Odiambo teaches at the University of Hawai‘i West O‘ahu. In 2017, he published “James Baldwin’s Another Country as an Abstract Machine,” in Pacific Coast Philology.
Recent Research continued…


Dax Garcia was selected for a GSO merit-based award for mentoring; the honor comes with $5,000. In the fall, he gave a colloquium in the department entitled “Supporting Students in Crisis.”

Amanda Huynh merits a newsletter to herself. In the last two months of 2020 alone, she had two poems in “Of Color Review,” an interview on “Poetry Hour, Radio WCA 107.3” and had a collection of poems accepted for publication by Sundress. See here for more: https://sundressblog.com/2020/

Kristiana Kahakauwila served as a consulting editor for a special folio in Issue 80 of Bellingham Review. “Scribes, Griots, Poets: New Writing from West Africa” features historical and Contemporary writing and from the greater Sahel.


Josh Lazarus’s poem an anti-creation myth was recently published by Foothill Journal; he ended up a finalist for their 2020 Editors’ Prize (https://arts.cgu.edu/) and had the poem nominated for a 2020 Pushcart Prize (…all under his Hebrew name/pen name Chaim ben Avram).


RECENTLY RETIRED FACULTY

Mark Heberle: After retiring in December 2019, Mark Heberle was granted emeritus status recently, and would like to thank any colleagues who wrote in support of that honor. During this year of viral and political pandemics, his chapter on “The Vietnam War” was published in the Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma. He also evaluated a book manuscript on just war theory and modern/contemporary American literature for Palgrave/Macmillan and had a piece titled “The Diaspora that Marches on its Stomach: Vietnamese American Literature of the American War” accepted for an MLA volume on Food and Literature. He is currently working on a book review of Gordon Teskey’s Spenserian Moments for Claremont Review of Books.

Jonathan Morse: Since retiring in June 2019, Jonathan Morse has been working full-time on his long-term project about language and photography. One small incidental consequence should be forthcoming one of these months on the cover of the James Joyce Quarterly: a digitally restored photograph of the book dealer A. S. W. Rosenbach. And a large hope is a book proposal which Jonathan is now shopping around. Furthermore, in the November 27, 2020 TLS an item on the NB page begins, “Advertising Authors, contd. Jonathan Morse writes from Honolulu with word of a fine quartet of authorial advertisements.” His blog can be found at https://jonathanmorse.blog/.
about dementia.

Craig Perez is part of a team that received a MLA Humanities Innovation Grant this year.

Susan M. Schultz completed an essay on “Trans-Pacific Poetics” for the Wiley-Blackwell Companion to American Literature. She has had prose poems in Court Green, Golden Handcuffs Review, Chant de la Sirene, and other journals.


S. Shankar has been appointed an “external expert” by the Committee for the Nobel Prize in Literature of the Swedish Academy for three years. To advise them in their deliberations.

Since retirement I’ve also done some very satisfying teaching for Osher Lifelong Learning (OLLI) on campus. Over the last seven years I’ve taught nine classes on writers and topics of particular interest to me: Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Chekhov, Philip Roth, Alice Munro, Alan Bennett (of course), and various American and Russian short story writers. The classes, populated mostly by retirees, are full of enthusiastic, engaged, and knowledgeable readers. In the fall of 2019 I finally discovered (after more than forty years of teaching literature) a format that seems to express best my own “late style”—close and extended readings over eight or so weeks of long Victorian novels. I began with Middlemarch and have continued with Vanity Fair, just concluded, and Bleak House, coming up next semester. Since we now meet via Zoom I call them “Close Readings with Social Distancing.”

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Mahalo! to Kalilinoe Detwiler for sending in the winning newsletter title—Ka Lama (meaning torch or lamp).
Aloha colleagues--

The newsletter was not intended to be comprehensive, and it is not. But there were a couple of omissions by its editor, so I'm pasting them in here with apologies. If you missed the call for work, be advised that there's a department biography coming up. If you have a new book or book-like project ("new" encompassing a couple of years or three) you'd like to present at the Celebration of Research in April, please let me know. Susan

Candace Fujikane’s book, *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future: Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawai‘i*, will be released in February 2021. She received the 2020 Engaged Scholar Award from the Association for Asian American Studies for her community activism in Wai‘anae and in the struggle to protect Mauna Kea.