What first drew you to Irish literature?

**Dr. Bixby:** The writing of Nobel laureate Samuel Beckett first got me interested in Irish literature. In graduate school I worked to better understand his enigmatic novels and plays by immersing myself in the political and cultural history of Ireland. Along the way, I came to appreciate the outsized contribution that Irish writers made to "English" literature in the 20th Century: think of names such as Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, Elizabeth Bowen, Kate O’Brien, Seamus Heaney, Eavan Boland, and Anne Enright. That is quite a line-up!
Dr. Mara: Despite my Irish background, I fell into Irish literature quite by accident. During my MA program I took an Irish literature course where we read Colum McCann’s short stories, and they stayed with me. Then I started my PhD with the intention of studying Romantic poetry, and another Modern Irish literature course made me realize that I wanted to learn more. It was important for me to be ok with changing direction and following those texts and historical circumstances that interested me. Eventually I even started learning the Irish language.

How did this interest in Irish literature lead to your recent book publications?

Dr. Mara: My book Globalism and Gendering Cancer (Routledge, 2019) initially built out from my medical humanities approaches to Irish literature. After investigating anorexia in Irish fiction, I saw how cancer was gendered in Irish novels, and then I realized it was a larger phenomenon. When my personal life led me to Eastern Africa (Kenya and South Sudan), I realized I could ask the same questions about cancer attitudes in a different postcolonial space, and the book grew out of those questions and my research to answer them.

Dr. Bixby: My forthcoming book, Unaccompanied Traveler: The Writings of Kathleen M. Murphy (Syracuse University Press, 2021), attempts to find a place for an extraordinary, but long-forgotten, writer within the canon of Irish literature and Irish travel literature, in particular. I discovered her writing while researching another project and quickly became fascinated with her life and work: traveling alone to the four corners of the earth, pursuing an abiding interest in sacred sites and ancient civilizations, and writing about her experiences with great wit and wisdom. To date, however, her extraordinary life has received virtually no scholarly attention and her dazzling body of writing has remained sequestered in the archive.
What excites you about teaching in the BA and MA English programs at ASU New College? Why do you find this teaching important?

Dr. Mara: I enjoy hearing what students bring to a text. It’s often very different from my approach and quite thoughtful, so that keeps class stimulating. And I believe my classes prepare students for a world where individual jobs and whole careers change so quickly that analysis of language and the ability to communicate becomes increasingly important.

Dr. Bixby: I really enjoy sharing ideas with my students – ideas that connect our lives with the literature we read and that connect our experience with other cultures and communities. I’m excited about how my teaching prepares students to do impactful work in the wide range of fields: I hope my teaching helps make my students flexible, nimble enough, to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving job market and helps our graduates approach their careers with a social conscience, with respect for their fellow human beings. I also maintain the intrinsic value of studying literature, because this kind of inquiry enriches our lives, expands our understanding, broadens our humanity.

Alumni Spotlight

Chelsie Schlesinger is a recent graduate of the MA in English program at ASU’s New College. Originally from Arizona, Chelsie also graduated with a BA in English from New College. During her MA, Chelsie deployed an ecofeminist lens to explore the treatment of women in Geoffrey Chaucer’s The Canterbury Tales, interrogating Chaucer’s portrayal of women and their association with bits, bridles, and reins. Chelsie has loved her time at ASU’s West campus, which she notes has always felt like home. As a student, Chelsie enjoyed smaller classes and making meaningful connections with faculty, particularly her adviser, Dr. Francine McGregor, and Dr. Louis Mendoza, Director of SHARCs, for whom she served as a research assistant and assistant editor on his most recent book project, Memoir of Un Ser Humano: The Life and Times of raulrsalin.

Upon completing her English MA, Chelsie has been teaching on the West campus, largely in first-year composition classes. Recently Chelsie has had the opportunity to work closely with Dr. Karla Murphy, Associate Director of the First-Year Writing Program, on developing a curriculum that incorporates multimodal composition and anti-racist pedagogy.

Outside of the classroom, Chelsie’s time is spent with her husband and two busy boys—hockey, fencing, piano, and ninja warrior are all in the regular rotation of activities. Chelsie enjoys reading poetry, attempting to complete crossword puzzles (this a developing skill), and watching the sky. Chelsie’s favorite place to be is in the butterscotch scented ponderosa pines looking at the stars.
**Student Highlights**

**Shaylee Williams** is a current graduate student in the English MA program at ASU’s New College, and a recent recipient of a Graduate College Fellowship from ASU. Originally from Arizona, Shaylee has a BA in English from ASU on the West campus. Shaylee's graduate research focuses on critical race theory, pedagogy, and young adult literature, particularly that written by women of color. Shaylee is passionate about amplifying the work of marginalized writers, and hopes her capstone illustrates how discussions of race can happen in classrooms given the right tools. These are passions she brings to her position as a Course Assistant for Dr. Duku Anokye’s African-American literature class at ASU this Spring 2021. In the future, Shaylee hopes to pursue a PhD in English, and to continue to amplify the work of marginalized writers and their stories in academia and beyond.

**Michelle Tran** is a current BA student in Secondary Education at ASU on the West campus, and was born and raised in Glendale, AZ. Both of Michelle’s parents are from Vietnam, and they came to the US about thirty years ago. Michelle was recently awarded the Honors Delph Scholarship from Barrett, the Honors College at ASU. Currently, Michelle is working on an honors thesis with Dr. Rosemarie Dombrowski and Dr. Sharon Kirsch that explores how ethnic literature can act as a representational version of history, one in which an author illustrates their cultural narratives from an insider’s perspective. Michelle is passionate about including ethnic writers that are often excluded from the literary canon and the curriculum of our schools, so as to promote inclusivity and diversity in our k-12 classrooms. Michelle plans to begin teaching high school English right after she graduates from ASU!
Upcoming Events!

**ASU Mini Zine Festival**: a free virtual festival with local and national zinesters presenting on such topics as: how to make a zine, indigenous zines, zines in the ASU libraries, and feminist zine. The Mini Zine Festival is sponsored by the ASU Zines Research Cluster, including ASU library Rachel Leket-Mor. **When**: Friday evening April 2nd, and Saturday afternoon, April 3rd from 12-5pm. **For details, please email Professor Barbara Guzzetti (guzzetti@asu.edu).**

**Graduate Coffee Hour: CV or Resumé?** Join the MA programs in English and Interdisciplinary Studies at New College for a coffee hour focused on what to include in a Curriculum Vitae and what to include on a Resumé, how the two are different, and how to know which one to use for your applications. Expert guest speakers will be in attendance! **When**: Thursday, April 4th, 3-4pm on Zoom. **For details, please email Professor Claudia Villegas-Silva (Claudia.Villegas-Silva@asu.edu).**

**Canyon Voices Showcase**: Save the date. Canyon Voices Virtual Release Party. **Friday, April 16, from 6 to 7:30.** Come celebrate issue 23, the Best of Issue V. 1 and V.2, and the student editors who produce the magazine. Live readings with the writers and artists featured in the magazine. Open mic. Artwork giveaway. Zoom Room TBA.

**On the Horizon**

**A new club named Literary Explorations**: A Club for Readers and Writers is in formation. For the details contact Dasha Svitenko (ssvitenk@asu.edu), Cody Potts (cmpotts1@asu.edu), or Samra Hausey (shausey@asu.edu).

**Recent Publications of New College English Grads!**

Sarah Chavera Edwards (2017 graduate), "They Help Put Food on Your Table. Undocumented Farmworkers Should be Legal" (Newsweek, 2021).