BYU Humanities Center

2023-2024 Newsletter





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Statement from the Director

Rex Nielson



In response to diverse and acute forms of political tension, social unrest, technological disruption, the recent global pandemic, and ongoing changes to our planet's climate, researchers have increasingly turned their attention to the vulnerable conditions that define the human experience. Scientists, for example, especially those working in the social sciences, have devoted considerable effort to understanding the circumstances that define adversity and that produce stress and anxiety in all its forms. Given this interest in better understanding the causes and solutions to anxiety, it is perhaps unsurprising that the last fifteen years have witnessed a dramatic increase in research on the topic of resilience.

Mental health professionals typically define resilience as the ability to maintain or regain mental health. They speak of resilience as the capacity to cope with or resist the negative effects of stress or adversity, the ability to withstand environmental risks of all kinds. Yet there exists disagreement concerning what conditions are most likely to produce resilience. Some psychologists point to resilience as a personality trait defined by "cognitive flexibility, social attachment, positive self-concepts, emotional regulation, positive emotions, spirituality, active coping, hardiness, optimism, hope, resourcefulness, and adaptability" (see Hermann et al.). Others note that our understanding of resilience must expand to include multiple levels of influence originating in social systems like families, social and educational groups, communities, and government services. Still others observe that resilience is impacted by a variety of broad cultural factors, including value systems that govern inter-personal relationships, determine gender roles, and condition forms of individual self-identification. Resilience is now the object of multidisciplinary approaches, ranging from psychology, psychiatry, sociology, and biological fields, including genetics, endocrinology, and neuroscience.

Despite the differences found in these fields, recent findings emerging out of these disparate disciplines do reveal some interesting patterns in the ways scholars define resilience. Biologists, for example, discuss resilience as the "return rate to equilibrium," and psychologists likewise speak of resilience in terms of "bouncing-back" and recovery. In this sense, researchers frequently identify resilience both as (1) flexibility, adaptability, and the capacity to transform, and (2) a kind of recovery, a form of healing. In other words, resilient individuals—and resilient communities—manifest the ability to respond to complexity, uncertainty, trauma, and ever-changing environments in ways that promote healing and wholeness.

This year, the BYU Humanities Center will focus some of its attention on the relationship between resilience and creativity. How does the work of creativity contribute to developing resiliency in individuals and communities? What role does creativity play in enabling individuals to develop within ever-changing environments? How can creativity foster our capacity to adapt and transform? How might fostering understanding and appreciation for creative works enhance our ability to respond to complexity, uncertainty, ambiguity, and change? What role does creativity play in the processes of recovery and healing? Please join us as we look forward to learning more about how the creative and critical work of the Humanities can help us develop healthy resiliency while navigating the journey of life.

Humanities Center Assistant Directors



Brooke Browne

The Humanities Center is thrilled to announce the return of Brooke Brown as our Assistant Director! Brooke originally joined the BYU Humanities Center in 2015, and she is excited to be back after a 2-year hiatus. She loved growing up at the base of the mountain in Mapleton, Utah where she now lives next door to her childhood home. She graduated from BYU with a BS in Home and Family Life and a minor in Music in 2003. She and her husband Jeremy (an Associate Research Professor in the Office of Digital Humanities) are the parents of 4 boys, with only 15-year-old twins at home. When she's not dreaming of her favorite place (Paris), Brooke enjoys playing piano, baking, watching K-Drama, and cheering on the Cougars.

Trent Leinenbach

The Humanities Center is also excited to introduce Trent Leinenbach as our Assistant Academic Director for this year! Trent received his BA and MA in English from BYU and a PhD in English from Stanford. He studies the emergence of affective-aesthetic categories like mood, attitude, and atmosphere in the cultural productions of Britain and other parts of Europe between the late-seventeenth and early-nineteenth centuries, culminating in Romantic-era explorations of the extra-semantic properties of language. Trent enjoys writing and teaching others how to write, whether critically or creatively. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah with his wife and one-year-old son.



Humanities Center Faculty Fellows



Brian Price

Brian Price (Ph.D. University of Texas at Austin) is Professor of Spanish American Literature and Culture at Brigham Young University. His areas of scholarly interest include 20th and 21st-century Mexican literary, film, and cultural studies; Latin America's historical novel; comparative literature; and rock and roll. He is the author of *Cult of Defeat in Mexico's Historical Fiction: Failure, Trauma, and Loss* (Palgrave, 2012), editor of *Asaltos a la historia: Reimaginando la ficción histórica hispanoamericana* (Ediciones Eón, 2014), and coeditor of *TransLatin Joyce: Global Transmissions in Ibero-American Literature* (Palgrave, 2014) and *The Lost Cinema of Mexico: From Lucha Libre to Cine Familiar and Other Churros* (U Florida P, 2022). He is currently completing two book projects about the influence of rock music on Mexican literature and film.

Paul Westover

Paul Westover joined the BYU English Department in 2008. He specializes in British Romantic literature, literary geography, and the history of literary tourism. Paul is the author of *Necromanticism: Traveling to Meet the Dead, 1750–1860* (2012) and co-editor, with Ann Wierda Roland, of *Transatlantic Literature and Author Love in the Nineteenth Century* (2016). He is also one of the lead editors for two large digital projects: *William Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes: a Romantic Circles Electronic Edition* (2012, revised 2020) and *Dorothy Wordsworth's Lake District* (2023).



Humanities Center Faculty Fellows

Cherice Montgomery



Cherise Montgomery (Associate Professor of Spanish Pedagogy) coordinates the Spanish Teaching Major at BYU. Her work explores the creative potential of design-based pedagogies and 21st century literacies for inspiring change in world language education. Cherice's current research investigates the nature and design of compelling learning experiences in immersive contexts such as Dual Language Immersion (DLI), Playable Case Study simulations (PCS), and Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL). She has published in journals such as *Foreign Language Annals, Die Unterrichtspraxis, Journal of Critical Inquiry into Curriculum and Instruction, and The Language Educator.* She serves on the NFLRC Advisory Board and frequently facilitates workshops and webinars. Cherice has been honored with several awards for excellence in teaching, including the UFLA Higher Education Teacher of the Year, the Douglas K. Christensen Teaching & Learning Faculty Fellowship, the ACTFL-NYSAFLT Anthony Papalia Award for Excellence in Teacher Education, and the BYU Faculty Women's Association Teaching Award.



Sara Phenix

Sara Phenix is Associate Professor of French. She earned her PhD in 2013 at the University of Pennsylvania. Her work has appeared in *Nineteenth-Century French Studies, Dix-Neuf, and Romance Notes*. Her current book project on the corset focuses on fashion, fertility, and fiction in nineteenth-century France.

Humanities Center Faculty Fellows



Chris Rogers

Chris Rogers (Associate Professor, Linguistics) earned a B.A. in Spanish, an M.A. in Linguistics, and a Ph.D. in Linguistics (University of Utah) focusing on language documentation, description, typology, and the historical implications of each. In his research, he concentrates on the value of linguistic diversity both globally and individually focusing primarily on the indigenous languages of Central and South America (though, he has worked with other language groups and hopes to collaborate with more communities around the world). In his teaching, Chris insists that his students "get dirty with data" instead of keeping it at arm's length by immersing themselves in the practice of doing linguistic analysis. Currently, his favorite things to talk about are gamification, information packaging, precategoriality, semantic alignment, and objective characterizations of linguistic diversity within a community's linguistic ecosystem. If he isn't in his office, Chris is probably in the backcountry or dancing with his wife, Sarah.

Stephen Tuttle

Stephen Tuttle is an associate professor of English. He teaches courses in creative writing and American literature, with scholarly interests in the short story, microfiction, and prose poetry. Among other assignments, he has served on the Faculty Advisory Committee and as associate chair of English.



Humanities Center One-Year Appointments

Anna-Lisa Halling



Anna-Lisa Halling received her PhD from Vanderbilt University and joined the Spanish and Portuguese Department in 2016. She teaches courses on Portuguese literature and culture, including Camões, Gil Vicente, Women Writers, and Luso-Brazilian Theatre Production. Her research centers on early modern Iberian literature, particularly texts by secular and religious women, and encompasses theatre criticism, spatial theory, and feminist theory. Anna-Lisa has published on the works of Soror Maria do Céu, Soror Violante do Céu, and Dona Joanna Theodora de Souza, among others. She also co-founded the *More than Muses* online database (morethanmuses.byu.edu) with Valerie Hegstrom and Jeremy Browne. Her current research projects are an edited volume on Iberian convent dramatists and a co-authored book-length study on early modern convent drama in Spain and Portgaul, both with Valerie Hegstrom.



Jamie Horrocks

Jamie Horrocks is Associate Professor of English. Her undergraduate BYU degree in Interdisciplinary Humanities/English still inspires her love of nineteenth-century British literary and visual culture. Jamie's teaching and scholarship focus on Victorian literature and cultural studies. Her Humanities Center Fellowship project grew out of her interest in nineteenth century book history and examines the evolution of letterpress design practices during the design reform movement in Victorian Britain. Research for this has allowed her to study British carpets, wallpaper, textiles, pottery, tilework, and the steam-powered machines that made them, alongside literature debating the aesthetics of industrial manufactures—all of which she loves. Jamie also enjoys Utah's beautiful outdoors, and tries to end most days working in her garden.

Eliza R. Snow Undergraduate Fellows

Luke Beckstrand

Linguistics Major



Luke Beckstrand is a Senior at BYU majoring in Linguistics and minoring in Cultural Dance. Though he was born in California, he's lived in Utah most of his life. Living close to the mountains has given him many favorite memories, including hiking, backpacking, and camping up Little Cottonwood Canyon or at the summit of Mount Timpanogos. Throughout his life he's always enjoyed reading, especially such epics as *The Lord of the Rings* and Brandon Sanderson's *Stormlight Archive*. He's also a passionate writer and has completed over a dozen novels and self-published several of them. Outside of the world of books, Luke can be found performing with BYU's Cultural Dance teams or having fun sword fighting with the Knights of the Y—the BYU sword fighting club that he helped found in 2021. At BYU, he has enjoyed working as the Student Administrator of multilingual activities and research at the Research and Writing Center, as well as being a TA for several multilingual courses. He hopes to improve multilingual students' experiences in university settings and is excited to explore careers in that field.



Emma Belnap

Art History Major

Emma Belnap is a senior at Brigham Young University. Though she was born and raised in Dallas, Texas, she has come to consider Phoenix, Arizona home since her family moved there twelve years ago. Growing up, she was obsessed with art and history, a sentiment which led her to major in Art History. After graduating with her undergraduate degree, Emma plans to continue her art history studies by pursuing her PhD. Her research interests include eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European art, gender studies, and post-colonial studies. In her free time, Emma enjoys reading, running, attending museums, traveling, and learning about new people and cultures.

Eliza R. Snow Undergraduate Fellows



Ivy Griffiths

Art History and Curatorial Studies Major

Ivy Griffiths is the oldest of five children, with three younger brothers and one sister. She grew up moving around the United States, but when asked says she's from Colorado. She enjoys playing the piano, painting, collaging, hiking, playing board and card games, and spending time with her friends. She is currently studying Art History and Curatorial Studies at BYU with a minor in art. Ivy hopes to attend a graduate school in England after she completes her Bachelor's Degree and either become an art museum curator or a university professor. She loves learning about culture and the human experience through art, and she looks forward to sharing what she knows with others.

Ansley Morris

English Major



Ansley Morris is a senior majoring in English with a minor in Interdisciplinary Humanities. She was born and raised in Gilbert, Arizona, which she visits often. In high school, Ansley enjoyed reading and writing, but it wasn't until her time at BYU that she discovered her love for the Humanities. Her studies in English often overlap with her minor and have led her to present at Humanities Symposiums, discussing topics like Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, the role of music in Jane Austen film adaptations, and Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* as feminist visual rhetoric. She's spent the last two years working as a TA for IHUM 202 and just finished her first semester as a tutor at the Research and Writing Center. After she graduates, Ansley hopes to pursue a master's in English, continuing her studies in composition and rhetoric. During her time off, she loves to go to the beach, spend time at Sundance, read, cook, and go on walks. The first book she ever fell in love with was *Junie B. Jones Is a Party Animal* and her all-time favorite read is *The Little Prince*.

Eliza R. Snow Undergraduate Fellows

Luka Romney

Interdisciplinary Humanities Major



Luka Romney grew up in the mountains outside of Salt Lake Valley, right along the pioneer emigration route. At BYU, they study Interdisciplinary Humanities and plan to graduate from the Honors Program. They are deeply invested in undergraduate research and have worked on projects for the Maxwell Institute and the Research and Writing Center's multilingual writing tutorial. Their intellectual interests lie at the convergences between folk narratives in the Western US, environmental humanities, theories of memory and memorialization, and questions of haunting and paranormal pop culture. Luka is deeply invested in student writing development between their time as a tutor at the Research and Writing Center and as an editor and writer for *Prodigal Press*—an independent, student-run media collective based in Provo. Outside of academic pursuits, they love to ride their bike anywhere and everywhere, especially along the Provo River Parkway. In the future, they have plans to study abroad for language study in Berlin, attend divinity school, and eventually become a published writer and academic.



Zach Stevenson

American Studies and French Double Major

Zach Stevenson is a senior at BYU pursuing a double major in American studies and French. He grew up in Northern Virginia as the fourth of seven children and served a mission in the south of France and Switzerland between 2019 and 2021. After completing his undergraduate degree at BYU, he hopes to pursue a PhD in English with an emphasis in American literature, with the goal of becoming a university professor and a contributing writer at *The New Yorker* or *The New York Review of Books*. In his free time, Zach enjoys reading (primarily contemporary American fiction and journalistic nonfiction), writing essays, watching movies at BYU's International Cinema, and spending time outside with friends and family.

Eliza R. Snow Undergraduate Fellows

Drew Swasey

Comparative Literature Major



Drew Swasey is a senior at BYU majoring in Comparative Literature along with a minor in Scandinavian Studies. Her affinity for literature has been a lifelong passion, evident even from her earliest days—she took her first steps to retrieve her favorite book from across the room. Following her mission in Sweden, her academic interests shifted towards translation theory, environmentalism, hospitality, and the history of the book within premodern and early modern Scandinavian literature. She has since enjoyed the many opportunities BYU has offered her, such as earning the distinction of Best Paper at the 2023 Humanities Symposium for her work on Shakespearean conversation, presenting research on tutor-led assessment at the 2022 International Writing Center Association conference, and collaborating with student writers at the Research and Writing Center. When she isn't busy tugging on the threads of a new research idea, Drew can be found writing historical fiction, playing with her very orange cat, or crafting weapons for comic conventions. In the future, she hopes to publish a novel and further advance her literary pursuits at graduate school.



Gabbie Schwartz

English and Philosophy Double Major

Gabbie Schwartz was the 2023-2024 BYU Humanities Center Intern. While at BYU, she has worked with student writers as a consultant and administrator at the Research and Writing Center, interned at the literary heritage site Wordsworth Grasmere in the north of England, and supported humanities scholarship as an undergraduate fellow and intern at the BYU Humanities Center. After graduation, she plans to pursue an MA in English at BYU. Her current research interests center around British Romanticism, especially the poetry of William Wordsworth, and questions of subjectivity and intersubjectivity such as the self-other distinction. Outside of classes, you can typically find her reading, writing, walking, and filling the parts of her brain that aren't occupied by literature with niche facts about Pokémon.

The Humanities Center Blog

"Creativity and Resilience" by Rex P. Nielson

"'What does that do exactly?': On Granular Humanities" by Gabbie Schwartz

"The Dark Moment of the Soul: Storytelling and How it Helps Us Persevere" by Luke Beckstrand

"Where Do the Humanities Belong?" by Ansley Morris

"In Defense of the (Digital) Humanities" by Emma Belnap

"Transversing the Linguistic Bridge" by Chris Rogers

"What Arnold Bennett Taught Me About Being a Literary Fraud" by Gabbie Schwartz

"Discovering Self and Others: Navigating the Baltics of Change" by Drew Swasey

"Language is Not a Small Victory" by Zach Stevenson

"Inventing the Truth" by Sara Phenix

"I Want to Know My Own Will" by Luka Romney

"For the Holidays, When My Beloved Relatives Demand a Defense of the Humanities" by Ivy Griffiths

"Seasons of Creativity" by Cherise Montgomery

"Words Not Untrue" by Jamie Horrocks

"Thresholds" by Rex P. Nielson

"Encountering the Sublime" by Gabbie Schwartz

"In Praise of Small Things" by Stephen Tuttle

"Acting Otherwise" by Zach Stevenson

"Finding Love in the Shadow Lines" by Luka Romney

"Navigating the Body and the Soul" by Drew Swasey

"Dedication to the Humanities: Revisiting Laura Huerta Migus's Colloquium Address" by Abigail Beus

"Whatever You Think, Think the Opposite" by Ivy Griffiths

"Meditation in 4149 JFSB" by Paul Westover

"The Fire in the Forge: How Trials Help Us Grow" by Luke Beckstrand

"Changes, Transitions, Decisions" by Anna-Lisa Halling

"Indecisiveness: How Reading about Monsters Helped Me Recognize My Own" by Emma Belnap

"Crossing the Threshold" by Ansley Morris

The *Faith and Imagination* Podcast: Season Four Episodes

"Reimagining Job," with Diane Glancy, American poet and author

"Why I am a Churchgoer," with Mischa Willett, Seattle Pacific University

"Making Spirit Tangible: On Poetry and Divine Presence," with Jill Peláez Baumgaertner, Wheaton College

"Some Favorite Books of 2023," with guest George Handley, Brigham Young University

"Layers of the Christian Creative Vision," with poet, novelist, and editor Sally Thomas

"Christ in the 'Torn Places,'" with Christopher Morris, Catholic Theological College, Melbourne

"Finding the Sacred in the Everyday," with Darlene Young, poet

"Highlighted Episode: This Sacred Life: Hope in an Era of Climate Crisis," with guest Norman Wirzba, Duke Divinity School

"John of the Cross's 'Dark Night' and Our Quest for Justice and Transcendence," with Benedict Shoup, University of Notre Dame

"Poetry as Attention, as Awakening—as Prayer," with Abigail Carrolpoet and pastor

"The Apostle Peter's Mystical Vision and How it Bears on Modern Life," with Robert Flanagan, Virginia Theological Seminary

"Metaphor, Memoir, and Christian Longing and Vision—All from a Midwest Farm," with Tiffany Eberle Kriner, Wheaton College

"The Beauty—the Poetry—of Christian Experience," with Benjamin Myers, Oklahoma Baptist University

"Highlighted Episode: Storytelling as Theology," with guest Christian Bieber Lake, Wheaton College

"On Suffering, Heaven, and Experiencing a Life Renewed," with Jeffrey Vogel, Hampden-Sydney College

"Healing in a Time of Division," with Vanessa White, Catholic Theological Union

"I was in Prison and You Visited Me," with Andrew Skotnicki, Manhattan College



Faith & Imagination

A BYU Humanities Center Podcast





Education Week Courses

"Rafael Monroy y los santos de San Marcos, México: Guiados por el Señor en tiempos de guerra" by Tomás Hidalgo Nava

"Buscar la guía del Señor durante la adversidad" by Elsa Perez

"'Yo soy el camino': principios de la vida Jesucristo para seguir cada día" by Nieves Knapp

"Explring the Doctrinal Roots of Environmental Stewardship in the Restored Gospel" by George Handley

"Stewardship in the Restored Gospel in a Contemporary Context." by George Handley

"Stewardship in Contemporary Literature and Film" by George Handley

"Applying Stewardship to Your Life" by George Handley

"Something Old, Two Things New, Something Fantastical, Something True: 5 Books for Teen Readers that Inspire Hope" by Dawan Coombs

"Five Modern Novels that Change How I Understand My Neighbor" by Robert Colson III

"Five Books That Changed My Life" by Dennis Cutchins

"Five Best Insights from Tolkien and Lewis about Words, Worlds, and the Power of Stories" by Aaron Eastley

"Easter and Poetry" by Sharon Harris

"The Lovingkindness of Christ in Russian Culture" by Michael Kelly

"'Dear the wood and dear the nails': An Artistic Meditation on the Crucifixion" by Elliot Wise

"Understanding Empathy through Understanding Christ," by Katharina Paxman

"Approaching Diversity by Humbly Living the Two Great Commandments," by Rob Martinsen

"Learning Foreign Languages: a Window Into Humanity and Discipleship," by Laura Catharine Smith

"Converts and Covenants: the Sacred Relationship Between Grace, Judgement, and Belonging," by Josh Perkey

"How Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Can be Lovely, of Good Report, and Praiseworthy," by Bruce Haraguchi

Colloquia



September 14: **Cecilia Peek, Ed Cutler, and Erin Holmes**
"Covid Halos and Hangovers: Catalysts for Regaining Scholarly Momentum"



September 21: **Dawan Coombs, Sara Phenix, and Jacob Rawlins**
"'Roundtable Report on National Humanities Center Experience"



September 29: **Jennifer Redmann**
"Rethinking the Language Curriculum in a Time of Crisis"



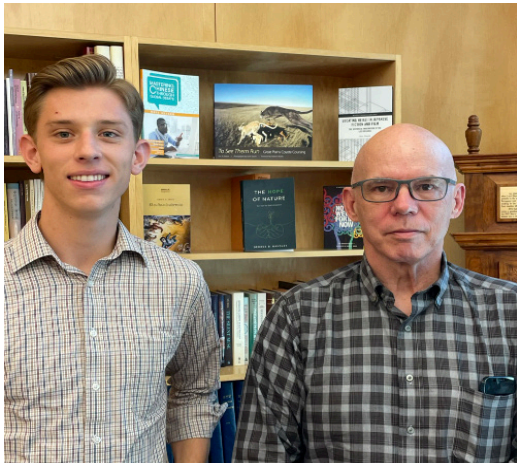
February 8: **Brian Price**
"In Search of the Lost Cinema of Mexico"



March 7: **Seth Jeppesen, Natalie Nielson, and Kerry Soper**
"Innovative Pedagogy: Creative, Experiential Learning Methods at Ground Level"



March 14**: Jamie Horrocks**
"Manufacturing the Victorian Page: Graphic Design Before Graphic Design"



October 5: **Dana Bourgeri**
"Update on Cambodia Oral History Project"



January 18: **Stephen Ramsay**
"Resilience, Romanticism, and the 'Techno' in Techno-Capitalism"



February 1**: Laura Huerta Migus**
"The Role of the Humanities in Civic Engagement and Democracy"



March 21: **Eva Witesman**
"Solving Social Problems Through the Skills of the Humanities: A Framework and an Innovation"



March 28: **Public Interview**
"Translation, Creativity, and Resilience"



April 4: **Anna-Lisa Halling**
"'Your sisters' neceessary recreation': Theatrical Performance in Early Modern Iberian Convents"

Imagination and Creation: Brains, Minds, and Intelligences

Imagination and Creation Symposium

This year's Humanities Center annual symposium featured the work of three scholars whose research lies at the intersections of neuroscience, psychology, and creativity.

Co-hosting with the Faith and Imagination Institute, the Humanities Center invited to campus specialists Anna Abraham, E. Paul Torrance Professor and Director of the Center for Creativity and Talent Development at the University of Georgia, Sowon Park, specialist in neurocognitive literary criticism at UC Santa Barbara, and Stephen Rachman, former director of the Digital Humanities program and the Literary Cognition Laboratory at Michigan State University.

These guests were key speakers at the Humanities Center Annual Symposium. The symposium this yearsought to join perspectives from the humanities and neurosciences to consider human imagination and creativity. Consequently, the presentations from our distinguished guests ranged from neurology in the poetic work of Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, and Herman Melville to contemporary scientific revelations on memory and its connections with creativity to insights into the neurological origins of creativity.

Over the span of two enriching days, October 13-14, symposium participants were able to share their research and discuss ways to unlock and expand imaginative creative capacities.



Following the presentations, which occured on campus on Friday, October 13th, our guests traveled to Moab, Utah. There, symposium participants and some of the Humanities Center Fellows enjoyed a roundtable discussion the following morning and an afternoon hike in order to continue the collaborative energies of the symposium.

That day also featured a rare treat for all in attendance to cap off the Symposium experience—the annular solar eclipse's direct path fell over nearly all of southern Utah, making it a particularly excellent viewing spot. The partial eclipse lasted from about 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., with the height of the eclipse lasting from about 10:24 a.m. to 10:35 a.m.

Those interested in the presentations and roundtable discussion will be able to read the symposium issue of *Literature and Belief*, which will appear in Fall of 2024.

Literature and Belief, a peer-reviewed scholarly journal produced by the Center for the Study of Christian Values in Literature, explores connections between literature, theory, culture, and faith. The articles produced by the symposium are sure to make for an excellent contribution to the upcoming issue.

After the success of this year's annual symposium, We look forward to hosting next year's symposium, entitled, "The God Who Laughs: Examining Intersections of Faith and Humor."

Article by Ed Cutler and Gabbie Schwartz





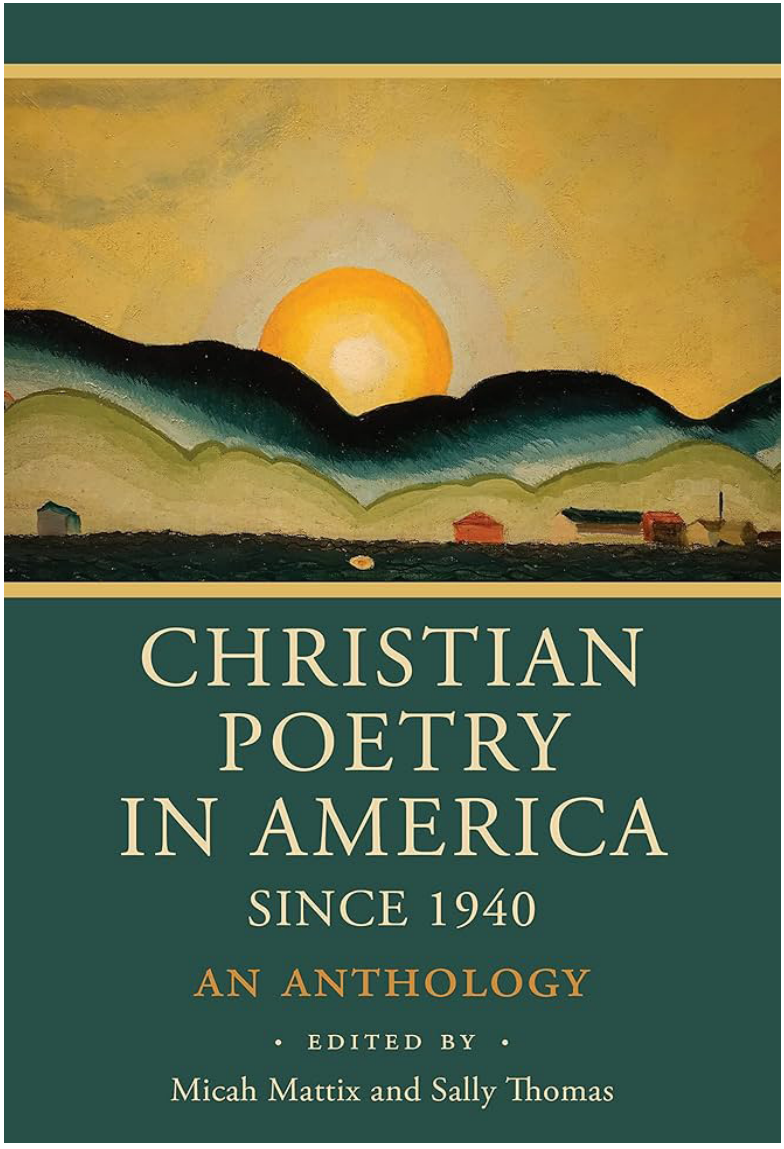
Placing Christian Poetry in our Contemporary Age

Christian poetry and religiously oriented criticism have the capacity to recenter and reinvigorate literary study to this very day.

In an increasingly secular world—and further, a world that pays little mind to poetry—we may wonder at what role, if any, Christian poetry and religiously oriented criticism might play in the field of literary studies today. Micah Mattix, Professor of English at Regent University, tackled this question while discussing the introduction to *Christian Poetry in American Since 1940,* an anthology Mattix co-edited with Sally Thomas.

Contrary to what we may think, Mattix argued, Christian poetry is seeing a vibrant resurgance in the U.S., especially in the wake of postermodern literature. Postmodern poets such as John Ashbery or Frank O'Hara favored highly ideological subjects and hyper-experimental forms in the 1960s. But such forms proved greatly inaccessible to the general reader, who was seemingly abandoned during this literary turn. Mattix theorized that contemporary Christian poetry, on the other hand, can invite the general reader back into the literary sphere. Further still, the U.S. is one of the few places left where Christian poetry can flourish due to openly Christian institutions and universities which practice the study of such poetry.

Indeed, contemporary Christian poetry can play an especially enriching role in classroom study. Mattix stated that this is in part due to the shortness of poetry, as the condensed form allows for



more meticulous study even in a brief period of time. Christian poetry also has the capacity to lead students to an encounter with the other. The sentiments expressed in such poetry can surely be somewhat familiar to students, especially to those having grown up with Christian influence, but at the same time, such encounters can also prove surprisingly unfamiliar. As Mattix described, Christian poetry possesses an existential focus to it, even if ephemeral, which might intrigue students, religious or not.

But with an ever-widening definition of what it means to be religious, or even what it means to be Christian, BYU Humanities faculty and students were curious as to the anthology's principles of selection: How did Mattix and Thomas define the term "Christian"? What exactly is Christian about the Christian poets they chose to include?

Mattix highlighted several criteria he and Thomas considered for the poetry in their anthology, such as 1) accessibility for the average reader, 2) poetry that was explicitly religious rather than merely spiritual, 3) faith experiences as represented in diverse cultural, racial, or social backgrounds, and 4) poetry written by living poets.

Although the anthology did not include poets belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, several faculty were quick to highlight LDS poets such as Kim Johnson, Lance Larsen, and Darlene Young who fit within such criteria and could have been included in the volume. Perhaps, if Mattix is right about the state of Christian Poetry in America, we may someday be treated to a second anthology with some familiar names found within.



Article by Gabbie Schwartz

Navigating our Interior Castles

St.Teresa of Ávila died 500 years ago, but she still helps authors overcome writer's block today.

In a time where speaking out could mean persecution, St. Teresa of Ávila, challenged the limits of what a lowly nun could say. She lived 500 years ago during a time of religious strife in Spain. Despite her limited role as a woman in the Catholic Church where she didn't have the same access to education or power that men had, she worked to inspire and assist nuns and religious figures both in her time and for centuries beyond. In the February 16th Faith & Imagination lecture titled "Writing to the Center: Following Teresa of Ávila," Stephanie Paulsell of Harvard Divinity School shared her thoughts about St. Teresa's writings and the impact of her example on writers for centuries after.

St. Teresa wrote her last book, *Interior Castles*, five years before her death. It served as a treatise on prayer and faith journey for the nuns of the Carmelite reforms. In it, St. Teresa introduced the idea of an interior castle, which she used as a metaphor to describe the spiritual journey everyone must go through. In this metaphor, each room in the castle represents a spiritual dwelling. As we grow spiritually, our souls move further into this figurative castle, bringing us closer to dwelling with God. St. Teresa argued that "everyone has an interior castle with them... even if we're not aware of it, even if it's obscured by our sins and our mistakes."





St. Teresa's experience writing *Interior Castles* was almost more significant than the book itself. At the time of writing, the Spanish Inquisition had banned many of the religious texts St. Teresa had used to learn about prayer, making knowledge on true, reverent prayer limited for newer nuns. She had previously written her teachings on prayer in a book about her life, but the Inquisition took the book to inspect it for heresy. In this society ruled by censorship, St. Teresa fought writer's block as she wrote something that, as Paulsell said, "pushed at the boundaries of what the church considered acceptable."

As she wrote *Interior Castle*, St. Teresa described her head being "so full of noise, that [she could] hardly compose a letter about the most ordinary business." Paulsell explained that St. Teresa overcame her writer's block through her obedience to God. Putting her focus singularly on God allowed her to write with more clarity.

St. Teresa's writing journey and metaphorical interior castles helped Paulsell overcome the writer's block she experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. She said, "The great adventure of life, Teresa believed, was to explore that [interior castle], discovering one hidden room after another. During the COVID shut down when my thoughts felt so scattered and it was difficult to write, I tried to follow Teresa through these rooms, using them as a path to follow with my writing as if it were in the margins of [St. Teresa's] book."

St. Teresa's legacy not only helped Paulsell, but it inspired countless other writers to express themselves as well. Famous authors such as Virginia Woolf, Kate O'Brien, Julia Kristeva, and Vita Sackville-West found inspiration in St. Teresa's life and works. Additionally, Bernini based his famous sculpture *St. Teresa in Ecstasy* on a spiritual experience St. Teresa had. Her perseverance in writing despite difficult circumstances continues to inspire artists to push past their challenges and keep creating.

Article by Rylin Green



The Future is Now: Intersections of Humanities and Tech

The humanities create leaders who are ready to face the political difficulties of equitably regulating advancements in tech.

To what degree must a person be combined with a machine before we begin to exclude their participation in the political community, "human"? And who will get access to the future that tech brings?

Such questions were the focus of Sylvester Johnson, associate vice provost for Public Interest Technology at Virginia Tech, during his visit to BYU on May 9th. Following a lunch discussion on his upcoming book, *Do Robots Have Souls?*, Johnson revisited questions of humans, AI, and political regulation in his afternoon lecture. There, he traced the historical beginnings of contemporary tech's dominance to the 1957 Space Race, which largely cemented the importance of STEM but not necessarily at the cost of the Humanities. In fact, the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act was established in 1965, providing significant funds for Americans to advance knowledge in the arts and humanities alongside STEM.

Our journey with tech has only accelerated. Though the emergence of generative AI may seem a recent advancement in our technological history, generative AI was already well in place with devices such as GPS and advancements in biotechnology. But of course, we continue to push the boundaries of what tech can do. Johnson hypothesized that future tech, specifically bio-



technology, would "rival or exceed the challenges raised by AI," given its capacity for precision medicine—that is, the generation of medical theories based on the genetic features of an individual. In essence, this tech can provide medical cures that are tailored to the specific genetic profile of an individual.

The hyper-specificity of such tech might make us squeamish. Should we have the power to alter our DNA? What would happen if our genetic codes fell into the wrong hands? Even still, Johnson posed an evocative counter-question: "What if you could give your children the freedom from having to live with a harmful disease?" Cures for cancer, sickle cell anemia, and diabetes have already been developed, but only through precision medicine and the modification of DNA.

Even in our haste to implement such tech, Johnson was clear that we must be cautious, especially when determining the governig methods of handling this tech. We must consider how to regulate who gets access and who does not get access, especially in such high

that humanities students are more than equipped to face these challenges. They are, as Johnson put it, the "future talent for ethical governance of technology." The new ecosystem of governance must be based around and advance human-centered expertise, which is precisely how the humanites' skillset can be mobilized.

To provide an example of this, Johnson highlighted data trust initiatives. These initiatives act as guardians of individual consumer's data, ensuring that individuals can participate in the value growth of their data (i.e., the buying and selling of their data). These initiatives are societal innovations geared toward creating a more equitable system, one that takes into consideration the various human interactions at play in addition to the way that capital flows. They demonstrate the need for a public interest technology where, as Johnson stated, "social justice, humanities, and tech intersect." To some extent, the humanities have already equipped students with this precise skillset. They are prepared for this moment. What remains is their commitment to finding ways to use those skills in public sectors.

Article by Gabbie Schwartz





Walter Whipple: The Carpenter

Working With Wood

Woodworking makes for an inspiring connection between Joseph of Nazareth and Polish Folk Artists.

The Humanities Center is pleased to be displaying an exhibition of Polish Folk Art generously lended by retired Professor of Polish, Walter Whipple. The exhibition—titled, "The Carpenter: Representations of Joseph in the Polish Folk Art Tradition"—has been curated by Professor of Art History James Swensen and student Natalie Parker.

As suggested by the title, this exhibition focuses on portrayals of Joseph. who is rendered in wood and often cast alongside a young Jesus Christ. Such a medium celebrates and echoes Joseph's life as a humble wordworker and father.

The artists of this folk art, coming from all over the Polish countryside, are woodworkers themselves. Just as Joseph passed his skills onto Jesus, so too do these artists pass on the tradition of woodworking to their children. Whipple was fortunate enough to get to know each of these artists and their stories individually during his time as a mission president in Poland for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The sculptures can be seen by the public during the Humanities Center's open hours on Mondays - Fridays at 12-1 PM and 4-5 PM (4101 JFSB). We hope you will have the time to stop by the Center and take in these subtle, yet breathaking sculptures!

Article by Gabbie Schwartz







About the Collector

Walter Whipple began piano lessons at age 8 in Idaho Falls, Idaho, under the tutelage of Dollie Clayton McKenzie. During his high school years, he made weekly bus trips to Salt Lake City to have Saturday morning organ lessons with Tabernacle Organist Alexander Schreiner. After serving as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Zurich, Switzerland, he continued his studies at Ricks College, Brigham Young University (Provo), and University of Southern California, culminating in a DMA degree in organ performance. In 1972 he received a postdoctoral fellowship to study in Vienna, where he took organ lessons from Michael Radulescu, He joined the music faculty of Rockford College, Illinois, in 1974. During the years 1990-1993, while serving as president of the Poland Warsaw Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he became acquainted with a number of Polish folk artists and collected some of their works. After his missionary service in Poland, he taught Polish at BYU until his retirement in 2009. Portions of his folk-art collection have been displayed at numerous museums and temple visitor centers throughout the USA. Most of the pieces represent stories from the Bible, as well as a few from the Book of Mormon.





A Rapid Recap: Spain and the Hispanic World in the MOA

BYU's Musem of Art hosts the "Spain and the Hispanic World" Symposium, co-sponsored by The Humanities Center and Medieval and Renaissance Studies Research Group.

The morning session of Friday's "Spain and the Hispanic World Symposium" opened with keynote speaker, Dr. James Clifton. Clifton gave a presentation on the subject matter of the sculptures in the exhibit entitled *The Four Last Things* (alternatively, *The Fates of Man*), showing how the successive stages of death, hell, purgatory, and heaven have been represented in Catholic art through various mediums, including engraving, framed relief, and painting.

Understanding the "four last things" (death, hell, purgatory, and heaven) is key to understanding what imagery and dogma have come to shape the Catholic belief in the afterlife. Clifton taught that these sculptures were meant to be interacted with in a personal, devotional setting. They were to remind the viewer of what awaited them after this life.

Following Clifton's remarks, presentations were given by BYU students Kendall da Silva, Chase Tippetts, and Emily Wells. Da Silva presented on José Gutiérrez Solana's *Masked Street Musicians*, Tippetts on the art of Juan de Valdés Leal, and Wells on the depiction of Mary as Stella Maris (or star of the sea) in Fray Alonso López de Herrera's *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception.*



The afternoon session opened with discussion on textiles and symbolsim in Spanish art. Dr. Elliot Wise, an associate professor in Art History and Curatorial studies for Brigham Young University, spoke on the role of textiles in *Spain and the Hispanic World.* In



the past, clothing was considered precious and a status symbol. A few pieces, such as the exhibition's portrayal of *Gaspar de Guzmán* by Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Veláquez, depicted Spanish court members as clothed in black, a color that symbolized both royalty and the clergy at the time. Some artworks also used gold in clothing to represent the light of Christ.

Following Elliot, three student scholars discussed the meanings of symbols in various Spanish art pieces in the exhibition. Paige Barney spoke on the symbolism used across Islamic and Christian cultures in Spanish art, such as holy thistles and hands. Addison Sepulveda drew connections between *Christ Carrying the Cross* by Juan de Valdés Leal and Holy Week processional Spanish sculptures. Zerin Likes discussed the hidden symbolism of the Virgin Mary in El Greco's *The Penitent Saint Jerome.*

After a short break, Ivy Griffiths continued the afternoon session with her insights on Ignacio Zuloaga y Zabaleta's *The Penitents.* Hanna Mosher followed by comparing the burdens of the body and the burdens of the heart in the painting *Christ Carrying the Cross* by Juan de Valdés Leal.

Finally, Abby Jafek spoke about *The Four Fates of Man* by Manuel Chili, known as Caspicara. She concluded with a powerful statement, saying, "Just as these figures were shaped, morphed and detailed to perfection, we can also be molded into new creatures of museum attendance, conscious of the intermingling of varying cultures, narrative, and creative processes present in Colonial Latin American pieces." May we all remember to be more curious about the pieces we see in the future.

Article by MOA Student Marketing Assistants Ellie Snow, Ashley Miller, and McKenna Evans





Humanities Center Faculty Writing Retreat

Inspired by the productive example of the National Humanities Center and our faculty's own positive response to their experiences there, the BYU Humanities Center sponsored a new Summer Writing Retreat at the Zermatt hotel in Midway, UT. A location both conveniently close and distant, this retreat aimed to provide faculty with the space and time to work on a research project of their choice all while nestled in the stunning Wasatch Montains.

Following the NHC model, the Humanities Center required that faculty participate in a group meal every day. to encourace collaboration amongst colleagues.

Pictured below are the members of our first cohort. We look forward to repeating this writing retreat in the future for many more of our Humanities faculty!



Highlighting Student Research in the College of Humanities

From Shaker architecture to Humean philosophy, undergraduate students in the humanities shared their research findings in this years Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Each year, undergraduate students at BYU can apply for faculty-mentored research grants from the College of Humanities, called the Humanities Undergraduate Mentoring Grant (HUM Grant). Using the mentorship and money provided by these grants, students can focus their time and energy on paid research, using these funds to provide for daily needs in place of a job, or directing these funds toward traveling or research fees. Ivy Griffiths, for example, traveled to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to observe the subject of her art history research.

The Humanities Center spotlights the very best of these HUM Grant recipients in the annual Undergraduate Research Symposium, where students are invited to present and share their research findings with faculty, friends, family, and peers.

This years' presentations resulted in a diverse array of subjects from six student presenters who were organized into two panels.

The first panel featured students whose research engaged with questions of identity borders—how such borders are created, and later, reinterpreted in language, in people, and in architecture. The presenters in this panel included **Megan Hamilton**, "The Pronounless Se Sentir," **Joshua Cook-Wright**, "Mara Firmina dos Reis: A Voice From the Past that Echoes in the Present," and **Caroline Johnson**, "The Reinterpretation of the Shaker Round Stone Barn: How Patriarchal Values Changed the Doctrine, History, and Architecture of a Religion."

The second panel spotlighted research that offered revisionary interpretations which change the way we are to view, understand, or engage particular subjects in art history, philosophy, and rhetorical composition. The presenters in this panel included **Ivy Griffiths**, "*Icon with the Crucifixion*: Painted with Light and Shadow," **Brandon Ascione**, "A Passion for Regression: The Psychology of Hume's Skepticism at T 1.4.1," and **Coleman Numbers**, "The Bicameral Chatbot: Generative AI in the Writing Process."

It was truly a delight to learn from each of these outstanding students and their wide-ranging research. No doubt, next year will bring another round of fantastic and informative undergraduate research that we will look forward to hearing about.

Article by Gabbie Schwartz



Left to right: Joshua Cook-Wright, Caroline Johnson, Ivy Griffiths, Brandon Ascione, Coleman Numbers

All Shades of Purple

This essay, by Rebekah James, won first place in the 2024 BYU Humanities Center Student Essay Contest. This year, we asked students to consider how creative reflection in the humanities has helped them become more resilient.

The British poet William Wordsworth saw the death of his father in the rain. He wrote,

> I do not doubt
> That in this later time when storm and rain
> Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day
> When I am in the woods, unknown to me
> The workings of my spirit thence are brought.

Even when he himself was unaware of it, the workings of his spirit were brought back to his father with the sound of the rain. Of this he was certain.

I sit across from my professor as he explains these lines to me, Wordsworth's personal history, how this young boy at school sat on a hill thinking of Christmas while, unbeknownst to him, his father died at home of shock after a storm. The schoolboy expected the warm cheer of home, oblivious that the carriage coming to bring him there would open its doors and bare teeth with news of insurmountable loss. There are tears in my professor's eyes. There are tears in mine as I leave his classroom, and my chest is in my stomach.

This Christmas, my fiancé cut his hand open. He gashed it on a large piece of glass, slicing a fleshy chunk out of the side of his palm. The doctors pulled it together, stitched it tight, and my father—an old surgeon—removed those stitches several days later, sitting at our kitchen table.

"Be careful," my father said. "The deeper layers could rip open still, if you strain it too soon. The scar will turn purple over the next several months; you'll see the color change. That's normal."

I wonder if we all are still shades of purple. I wonder if that's normal. I can hear my dad in the background as I think it over. The removal process has made my fiancé feel queasy, and my dad apologizes to him with a saccharine quality that has persisted throughout all the pain I've watched be placed on his shoulders—his brother's death, his sister's cancer, the loss of his own parents. The pillars of the house we

stand in are also on his shoulders. I can hear it when he talks, his voice filling up the corners. I wonder if home was still real for Wordsworth after his father was gone.

The only loss of home I've ever known was through scholarly displacement, and I can't decide if that really is a loss of home. Novalis says "Philosophy is really homesickness; it is the urge to be at home everywhere." I've flexed, adapted, molded myself into the little jar that is my college room; I've sat here waiting for it to feel familiar. Rosemary Marangoly George says she "reads all fiction in terms of homesickness." I look down at my hands and wonder if people can see they're purple when I pick up a pencil. William Wordsworth says "Imagination [is] our being's heart and home." Monica Ali says home is "not a different place but a different time," that "such things cannot be held, and must be lost." I say, "Fingers, be less purple." It starts to rain.

It rained on the worst day of my life. At that time, I was red—too raw to be purple. If "home" can't be held and is constantly lost, then mine was lost forever, buried in the hard January ground next to a seventeen-year-old boy with self-inflicted wounds. The six foot downward plunge from equilibrium was sheer and impossible to climb out of. I have seen that boy in the rain ever since.

I can't put aside the fact that my love of literature blossomed in that emptiness, that homelessness, and in the years of red and then purple that followed. I can't understand why reading that William Wordsworth's spirit goes home to his father in the rain lifted a weight off my shoulders for a shining moment before bitter-cold homesick fog came creeping back to me. I listen in a big-windowed classroom as my professor tells us, "Intimacy makes things universal." I look at the rain and ask it, "Give me more poems."

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Rebekah James is a Humanities College student majoring in English. She spends her time working in Special Projects—writing copy, designing brand identity, and implementing creative marketing strategy for startup companies across the Salt Lake Valley. She would like to extend her gratitude to her professors, whose kind mentorship and profound influence have shaped her experience at BYU.

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In our efforts to help others feel like they belong, we must be sure to help students learn how to humanize others. Many of the popular cultures in which students are currently immersed, with their polemics and dismissals, teach them a great deal about how to dehumanize others. The humanities, on the other hand, recenter the human individual and should thus be at the heart of all our belonging efforts. In the humanities we strive to teach what is valuable about being human—we strive to teach an admiration and love for what humans are, what they create, and what they can ultimately become.

—Scott Miller, Dean of the BYU College of Humanities

BYU College of Humanities