

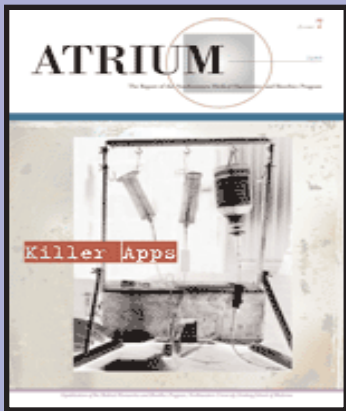
# WRITING MATTERS

VOL. 10 NO. 3

Spring 2010

## ATRIUM: The Report of the Northwestern Medical Humanities & Bioethics Program

*Katie Watson JD, Assistant Professor of Medical Humanities & Bioethics, Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University*



As editor of an academic publication, I am secretly delighted when people refer to ATRIUM as a magazine.

ATRIUM is written primarily by and for academics in medicine, bioethics, and the medical humanities, so it's not really a magazine. It's also not a journal because it's not peer-reviewed;

formally speaking, it's a "report." But I like it when people call it a "magazine" because that word suggests something you want to read, versus something you should read, like the unread journals that linger on our desks like a pile of turnips—we know they're good for us, but they're always the last thing on the plate.

ATRIUM was launched in 2005 with the simple goal of creating something intellectually enriching that people like me and my Northwestern MH&B collaborators would be excited to consume—articles you email to colleagues; art that propels you out of your office to show it to someone down the hall. So I intentionally embraced magazine conventions like shorter articles (400-4,000 words) and a short overall page count (rarely over 30 pages). I solicit and edit toward a writing style you might find in magazines like *The New Yorker* to keep it inviting, and I ban non-essential academic jargon to keep it accessible. And

because layout is a visual invitation, collaborating with an outstanding graphic designer who could support our content is indispensable, and I'm very lucky to work with Kathleen Evans of Anonymous Designs.

ATRIUM was also a response to an intellectual opening in our field. Most medical humanities publications are primarily literary journals publishing fiction, memoir and poems, and a few medical humanities publications publish traditional academic pieces. There are also several bioethics journals, which focus on either clinical dilemmas or academic analysis of larger issues. But it's uncommon to combine bioethics and the medical humanities content and approaches and we didn't feel any one publication reflected the unusual way we think and teach in the Northwestern Medical Humanities & Bioethics Program.

A few weeks ago I was wearily schlepping through the grocery store when a woman from another

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**NU CENTER FOR THE  
WRITING ARTS  
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**2009/2010**

**Center for the Writing Arts Mission Statement:**

*The purpose of all CWA activities is to create, support and further undergraduate and graduate opportunities for the study of writing at Northwestern, both within CWA itself and across the university; to facilitate a continuing discussion in the university community about how best to foster and situate writing as a crucial part of a university education; to help coordinate the university's multifarious courses and programs in writing across departments, programs and schools; and also to welcome audiences from the metropolitan area to the rich array of public events on campus that are focused on writing.*

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*Director of the Center for the Writing Arts  
Professor of English, Classics, and Spanish and Portuguese  
Co-Director of the MA/MFA in Creative Writing (SCS)*

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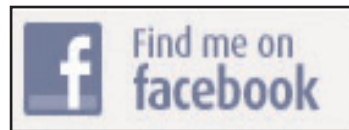
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**Find out about our events on FACEBOOK.**

**Read our latest BLOG entries: Writing,  
Reading, Learning and Teaching**

<http://writing-arts-blog.northwestern.edu/>

**PLANNING WRITING EVENTS THIS QUARTER?  
LET US KNOW!**

Just a reminder that the Center's biweekly e-mail announcement, *NU Writing Event Digest*, highlights NU writing events and reaches students, faculty, and staff via the Center's growing email list. If you know of an upcoming event related to writing, whether it be an author's visit, departmental program, or even an off-campus event involving NU students or faculty, please let us know! We will do our best to publicize all writing-related programming. If you would like to receive the electronic *NU Writing Events Digest*, please send an email to: [words@northwestern.edu](mailto:words@northwestern.edu) or call us at 847-467-4099.

**WRITING MATTERS**

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University, please contact the Editor.

The Center for the Writing Arts presents a variety of distinguished writers from both on and off campus. For future events and an archival listing visit: [www.northwestern.edu/writing-arts/](http://www.northwestern.edu/writing-arts/)

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medical school stopped me. She recognized me from a talk I gave there a few years ago, and wanted to tell me she'd read every article in every issue of ATRIUM, she had them out on her coffee table at home because they were so beautiful, and she was in awe of "the way you all think about things at Northwestern."

Suddenly I was thrilled to be in the grocery store! It was the nicest frozen-foods moment I've ever had, but it's not the first time a stranger has stopped me to chat—I've stopped counting the number of times someone has recognized my name on a conference badge in the elevator and said something like, "ATRIUM! I actually read that thing cover-to-cover!" Comments like that make me think this approach is working.

Each issue begins with a theme, which can make the sum larger than the parts (a good thing for a short publication) and create a feeling that authors are engaged in something of a shared conversation. Themes are intended to be specific enough to inspire, broad enough to interpret—such as "Haunting," "Liminal States," "Unmentionables," or "Heroes & Villains." When ATRIUM announces each issue's theme it solicits proposals, not full-length pieces. I then select a range of proposals that apply the theme across multiple contexts and disciplinary perspectives using different lengths and styles. Inviting proposals rather than pieces allows me to steer promising writers away from accidental overlap, and essentially "assign" pieces. Then I

will solicit the occasional piece to fill in gaps. Assembling each issue's puzzle is both a challenge and a joy—one of my favorite things about editing is how authors constantly surprise me in their interpretation of a theme or the content they bring to it.

Art is part of the discourse in ATRIUM. I'm interested in art as argument, art as text, not window-dressing. The only negative feedback I've ever gotten was from a few people who found cover art disturbing. I haven't set out to use confrontational images, but I'm not opposed to them either. The common portrayal of the medical humanities as sentimental and comforting is incomplete; as a whole, our field is at its most vital when it's challenging, insightful, and revelatory.

"Aesthetic" doesn't mean beautiful, it's just the opposite of "anesthetic"; and "hotel art" (pleasant watercolors that don't make me feel anything) and the graphic design equivalent of bad Power Point ("The article is about dialysis, and this is a picture of a kidney!") are anesthetics.

Our desire for ATRIUM to be read across disciplines is driven by its firm grounding in a particular disciplinary home: medical humanities and bioethics. Ours is a multi-disciplinary endeavor that includes fields like philosophy, history, law, narrative and literature, religious studies, cultural studies, performance studies, anthropology, sociology, and medical practitioners like physicians, nurses, and social workers. Such a

field requires sophisticated yet comprehensible conversation across disciplines before people can collaborate and create a truly interdisciplinary product. As a lawyer on the faculty of a medical school, my professional goal is translation -- not "dumbing down" the law, but making it accessible to thoughtful professionals outside my field. So the kind of curating and editing that ATRIUM requires comes naturally to me. I understand first-hand how making every article accessible to readers across disciplines maximizes its potential for interdisciplinary impact. This approach also makes ATRIUM accessible to educated laypeople, a good thing in a field that engages with topics of public concern.

ATRIUM is currently a free publication that's sent to approximately 3,000 people. It goes out to anyone who signs up for our mailing list, to faculty and physicians at Feinberg and NMH, and to members of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities, a multi-disciplinary group of practitioners and academics in fields like medicine, philosophy, law, literature, anthropology, sociology, religion, cultural studies, performance studies and history.

ATRIUM doesn't have a "staff," it has an editor who is a faculty member with plenty of other responsibilities. Final decisions are mine, but they almost always begin by brainstorming with my MH&B colleagues, who give me tremendous guidance and support. For us this approach captures the best of the collaborative environment that fosters

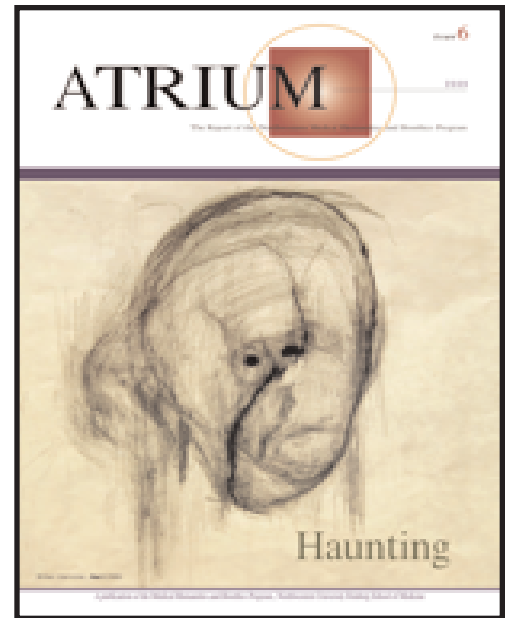
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creativity, and the leadership that gets things done. ATRIUM comes from joy in intellectual engagement. We created it because we thought the whole project would be fun. "Fun" is an under-appreciated criterion for academic pursuits, but it drives some of our best work. And it also could be a good ATRIUM theme someday. The theme of the Summer 2010 issue of ATRIUM is "Happy." Article proposals for future themes are invited from experts in any field. See <http://bioethics.northwestern.edu/atrium>

for submission guidelines, announcements of future themes, deadlines, and calls for proposals. PDFs of back issues are available on this site too.

**For a free subscription to ATRIUM, register at <http://bioethics.northwestern.edu/atrium/mailling>.**



## WHAT ARE YOU READING?

We asked these questions: 1) What scholarly/professional book or article are you currently reading? 2) What book are you reading at the moment largely for pleasure? 3) What is the next book you hope to read (for work or pleasure)? 4) What do you wish all your students would read? 5) Has any book you've recently read changed your thinking about your own work? How?



### Huey Gene Copeland II Assistant Professor of Art History

1. Steven Nelson, *From Cameroon to Paris: Mousgoum Architecture In and Out of Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

In this fascinating book, Nelson provides a sophisticated yet accessible account of how the teleuk--the dome-shaped earthen domicile developed by the Mousgoum peoples of present-day Cameroon--became a charged symbol of both African and European notions of gender, progress, and colonial exchange in the modern world.

2. Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*, trans. Ronald W. Sousa (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988 [1964]).

This text offers little in the way of plot--simply put, a woman enters a recently vacated room of her house--yet Lispector more than makes up for this slightness of incident by allowing her narrator to give voice to existential questions of embodiment, space, desire, and the nature of the human that are as urgent as they are challenging.

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3. George S. Schuyler, *Black Empire* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991).

Although I have long been familiar with Schuyler's work as a journalist and social critic, I only recently read his *Black No More* of 1931, a hilarious satire of American race relations that has whetted my appetite for his *Black Empire*, which was originally published in serial form in the *Pittsburgh Courier* between 1936 and 1938.

4. William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 4th Edition (Needham Heights: Alvin and Bacon, 1979).

Great writing is difficult to come by and even harder to produce. Strunk and White's little book, which fits easily into a back pocket, is a both a fine read and an invaluable primer addressing the basics of grammar, syntax, and composition. Every writer ought to own and frequently consult *The Elements of Style*, if not just carry it around with her!



### Isaac M. Daniel

Walter P. Murphy Professor of Civil and Mechanical Engineering  
Director, Center for Intelligent Processing of Composites

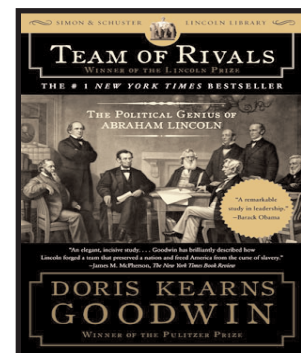
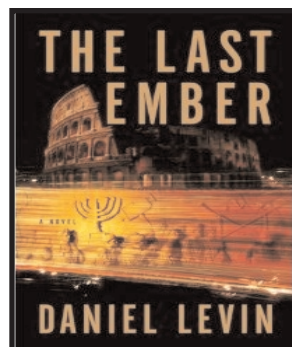
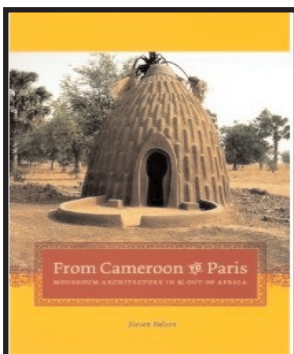
1. *The Miracles of Exodus: A Scientist's Discovery of the Extraordinary Natural Causes of the Biblical Stories* by Colin Humphreys.
2. *The Lost Symbol* by Dan Brown.
3. *The Last Ember* by Daniel Levin.
4. My textbook on Composites or anything else.



### David E. VanZandt

Dean, Northwestern University School of Law

1. Many articles on legal education.
2. *Team of Rivals* by Doris Kearns Goodwin.
3. *Too Big to Fall* by Andrew Sorkin.



## WRITING NEWS FROM AROUND CAMPUS

### CLASSICIZING CHICAGO

by Dr Amanda Wrigley, Mellon-Sawyer Postdoctoral



The Classicizing Chicago project, directed by the Classics Department and the Classical Traditions Initiative at Northwestern, will document and interpret the city's history of engagements with Greek and Roman antiquity across a variety of spheres. These include literature, theatre history, current theatrical activity, art history, architecture and public spaces, politics and politicians, and the history of education. The rationale behind the project is that studying one metropolitan area's engagements with literary and material artefacts from, and ideas about, Greek and Roman antiquity provides a valuable case-study within Classical Reception

Studies, and also a rich focal point for other (e.g. cultural historical) studies. The project does not promote any particular viewpoint on the interpretation of these modern engagements with antiquity; rather, it hopes to encourage not only interdisciplinary perspectives but also a rich diversity of opinion on this topic.

This project was developed together with the two-year Mellon-Sawyer seminar series on the theme of "Theatre after Athens: Reception and Revision of Ancient Greek Drama", 2008-2010. The first year's seminar series focused on Greek drama in its ancient contexts, especially beyond Athens. The current year's series examined the histories of Greek drama in America. The final event in the series took Classicizing Chicago as its theme. It was held at the John Evans Alumni Center on 21-22 May 2010 and the program included talks on architecture, urban planning, classical, politics, art, opera, drama, and poetry and is accessible at [www.sawyerseminar.northwestern.edu](http://www.sawyerseminar.northwestern.edu).

At this seminar, the pilot of the Classicizing Chicago website was launched. This website will eventually hold substantial datasets of

information on, for example, Greek drama in the Chicago area, plus interpretative essays, encyclopaedic articles, images, podcasts and more. Collection of content, which has been ongoing for several years, is set to continue.

We would welcome hearing from anyone willing to contribute data on Chicago's engagements with antiquity (including photographs, archival material, or references). We would also welcome hearing from people interested in writing short essays for the site--whether a 1,500-word interpretative essay, or a brief encyclopaedic entry. If you would like to be part of this project, or have colleagues in academia or other professional spheres (archivists, architects, etc) or graduate students who may be interested in the opportunity of contributing to this resource, the contact email for project staff is [classicizingchicago@northwestern.edu](mailto:classicizingchicago@northwestern.edu). The website is being developed and will be hosted by Digital Collections at Northwestern's Library, and so its longevity as a site of scholarship is guaranteed.

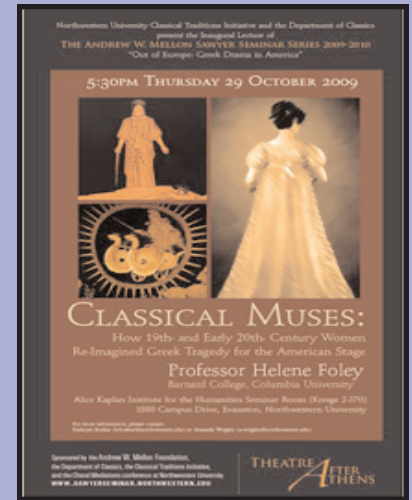
The directors of the project are Kathryn Boshier, Assistant Professor of Classics, Sara Monoson, Associate

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Professor of Political Science and Classics at Northwestern, and Dale Winling, Assistant Professor of History at Temple University. The project has benefited from the advisory support of Professor Dan Garrison of the Department of Classics. Amanda Wrigley, Mellon-Sawyer Postdoctoral Fellow in Classics, has been working with the Library to develop the website and database. Graduate students who have worked on the project in vari-

ous capacities include LaDonna Forsgren (IPTD), Louise Edwards (IPTD), Dawn Tracey (IPTD), Justine McConnell (Royal Holloway, London), and Daniel Tovar (Philosophy). Currently, Jesse Njus (IPTD) and Jordana Cox (IPTD) are conducting research.



## GRAPHIC NOVEL EVENT MAY 5, 2010



Sitting from left to right: Anders Nilsen, Jeffrey Brown, Ivan Brunetti, and Chris Ware. Photo credit: David Henry

A short video of the event can be seen on our website under the **AUDIO/VIDEO** section!

[www.northwestern.edu/writing-arts/](http://www.northwestern.edu/writing-arts/)

Four graphic novelists -- all of whom call Chicago home -- recently spoke about the place of the graphic novel in literature and, more specifically, about their own craft. Titled "Partnership of the Picture and Word" and sponsored by Northwestern's Center for the Writing Arts and the Block Museum of Art, the event featured these artist/writers:

Jeffrey Brown, perhaps best known for his bittersweet autobiographical graphic novels. The author of "Bighead," "Clumsy," and "Every Girl is the End of the World for Me," Brown received an Ignatz Award in 2003, and, in 2006, created a short animated music video for the band Death Cab for Cutie. His work has been published in *McSweeney's* and in *Drawn & Quarterly Showcase*. He has been a guest on public radio's "This American Life" program with Ira Glass.

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Ivan Brunetti, editor of *An Anthology of Graphic Fiction, Cartoons, and True Stories* and a second volume of the same name, both published by Yale University Press. The graphic novelist is author of *Misery Loves Comedy, Haw and Ho! The Morally Questionable Cartoons of Ivan Brunetti*. Perhaps best known for his largely autobiographical series *Schizo*, Brunetti has illustrated magazine covers of *The New Yorker* and an album cover for American stand-up comedian Patton Oswalt.

Anders Nilsen, author and artist of *Big Questions, Dogs and Water* and *Monologues for the Coming Plague*. Nilsen's work has been translated into numerous languages and featured in *Interview, The Chicago Reader, Mome, Utne Reader* and other publications. A *Los Angeles Times* reviewer called *Don't Go Where I Can't Follow*, his graphic memoir, "a tribute by a good artist to the life and death of a woman he loved and to the redemptive power of art." Nilsen has won two Ignatz Awards for his work in the graphic novel genre.

Chris Ware, author of *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*, arguably the biggest graphic novel success since Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. Ware's works -- which explore themes of social isolation, emotional torment and depression -- have been published in *The New York Times, The New Yorker, Esquire, nest* and other publications. He is the winner of numerous awards, including the 2000 Eisner Award for Best New Graphic Album. He earned the 2001 Guardian First Book Award for *Jimmy Corrigan*, which marked the first time a graphic novel won a major British book prize.

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#### WRITING MATTERS

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER FOR THE  
WRITING ARTS

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