

ARF NOTES

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California State University, Northridge



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Editor's Message: Ann Perkins

The new **ARF** President, Diane Schwartz, is traveling, so rather than trying to persuade someone else to write the president's message for her, I decided to write a message myself. To begin with, I'd like to say what a pleasure it's been to get to know and work with all of you in producing the **ARF** newsletter for around 20 years. (Has it really been that long?) I like to think that my years as an English major have helped with the writing and editing part of the process. However, some of the technical difficulties that keep cropping up have been less than a pleasure. But I've continued to learn about the vagaries of Word and Publisher, not ahead of the curve, just keeping up with the curve. Things keep changing. But I think we do need these challenges as we grow older!

Looking back on the last year of **ARF**, what strikes me is the dedication of the Board Members and Interest Group organizers who work to keep **ARF** a vibrant group, relevant to the interests of retired faculty. I've realized what a key role the Program Chair and Program Committee have in this effort, especially with the loss of the University Club as a meeting and dining place. Coming up with monthly speakers, selecting destinations for field trips, and planning events at the Soraya is quite a time-consuming job. You can see from the Program Calendar on page 2 of this newsletter that **ARF** has a full and exciting year of events in 2024/2025!

And thanks to Cynthia Rawitch, our president in

2023-2024, who has agreed to be president elect, serving as president again in 2025-2026. Now that's dedication!

ARF also continues to support the students of CSUN with its scholarship programs. The four students who received the **ARF** Memorial Graduate Student Scholarship awards are highlighted on pages 3-5 of this newsletter, with brief bios, abstracts of their work, and answers to relevant questions. Another scholarship program supported by **ARF** is the Hansen Scholarship Awards for students in the School of Education. These students will be featured in the September issue of the newsletter. Board member and Membership Chair Tim Fox has been instrumental in gathering all the relevant information for these programs to publish in the newsletter.

Looking ahead to 2024-2025, the Program Calendar promises an exciting year, but there are also challenges. As mentioned, meeting places for **ARF** events are difficult to arrange, and sometimes technology glitches make Zoom meetings hard to hear clearly. The number of interest groups has declined over the past 10 years or so—we encourage you to suggest new interest groups and be willing to be an organizer.

Also welcome are general suggestions, and news you would like to share in the newsletter such as trips, publications, presentations, etc. Members enjoy hearing about what their former colleagues are up to. And please join us for our programs and events during the coming year!

Ann Perkins
ARF Newsletter Editor

CSUN Association of Retired Faculty - ARF Program Calendar 2024-2025

***Please note: all meetings and speakers are tentatively scheduled at the Orchard Conference Center (OCC) and will include Zoom access for members who cannot attend in person but do want to participate.**

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| SEPTMBER Friday 9/13/2024 | Speaker: Dr. Jolene Koester - Confirmed Tentative topic: "Observations/reflections on being a Chancellor in the CSU" | 1:00 PM, Orchard Conference Center (OCC) Program Committee – 9:30 ARF Exec Board meets – 10:30 - Noon |
| OCTOBER Friday 10/11/2024 | Speaker: Dr. Pam Nagami - Confirmed Topic: "Science is Important, but It Isn't Everything." Dr. Nagami is a Yale University of Medicine Graduate, expert on infectious diseases, and Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine at UCLA. | 1:00 PM (OCC) Orchard Conference Center ARF Program Committee – 9:30 ARF Exec Board meets – 10:30 - Noon |
| NOVEMBER Friday 11/8/2024 | Speaker: Art Shulman – Confirmed Topic: 'BEING 80: TOO OLD TO CHANGE?' | 1:00 PM (OCC) ARF Program Committee – 9:30 ARF Exec Board meets – 10:30 - Noon |
| DECEMBER 2024 | THE VERY BEST to everyone during the December Holiday Season; we wish you all a 2025 filled with good health and great joy in the company of family and friends | No programming in December |
| JANUARY 1/18/2025 1/10/2025 ARF Exec. Board | The Soraya – January 18, 2025, matinee "Stomp, the Musical" Tentative reception after the matinee performance. | The Soraya @CSUN ARF Program Committee – 9:30 ARF Exec Board meets – 10:30 - Noon |
| FEBRUARY 2/14/2025 2-13-25 ARF Exec. Board | Valentine's Day lunch – Caruso' Italian Restaurant (buffet lunch). https://www.carusositaliankitchenbargrill.com/ | Caruso Restaurant – North Hills ARF Program Committee – 9:30 ARF Exec Board meets – 10:30 – Noon |
| MARCH Friday 3/14/2025 | Speaker Series: Guest and topic TBA | 1:00 pm (OCC) ARF Program Committee – 9:30 ARF Exec Board meets – 10:30 - Noon |
| APRIL Wednesday 4/9/2025 ARF Exec Board 4/10 | <u>Field Trip</u> – date tentative, may need to be adjusted, we are discussing the possibility of a Friday outing. | Typically, Field Trips are on Wednesdays , please save the April 9 th date. ARF Program Committee – 9:30 ARF Exec Board meets – 10:30 - Noon |
| MAY Saturday 5/3/2025 ARF Exec Board 5/10/2025 | <u>ARF Memorial Graduate Project and Awards Brunch.</u> We encourage our membership to attend this time-honored tradition, meeting the scholarship awardees and learning of the extraordinary work CSUN grad students have undertaken. | From 10:00 am - 2:00 pm Orchard Conference Center (OCC) Alternate venues: Sierra Center Col-leagues Room |
| JUNE 6/7/2025 NO ARF Exec. Board Mtg | <u>Annual Picnic/General Meeting and Election of Officers.</u> the culminating event for AY 2024-2025. Details TBA . Dates are fluid, may be either end of May or first week of June | 11:00 am-2:00 pm Venue: CSUN Arbor Grill |

2024 ARF Memorial Graduate Awards

ARF's Memorial Awards recognize excellent scholarship and provide financial support for graduate student creative activities that are required as part of a master's degree program. This year, applications were received from 9 departments across campus. Four awards of \$2500 each were given. Funds are provided by ARF Member donations; donors are listed at the end of this article.

Awardees presented their work at a Memorial Brunch in May. Below are short biographical sketches for each student, their project abstracts, and answers to a couple of questions commonly asked by the audience at the Brunch.

CSUN ARF 2024 Awards Committee - Robert Kiddoo (Accounting and Information Systems), Sandra Jewett (Chemistry), Carrie Saetermoe (Psychology), Timothy Fox, committee chair (Mechanical Engineering).



Arthur Berberyan (Physics)

Advisor – Damian Christian

Bio - I was born and raised in CA. After completing my master's degree in physics, I plan to continue my education and obtain a Ph. D in an Astrophysics related field. Some of my goals for the future include working at observatories and searching

for exoplanets at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Eventually, I would like to have my own research group and teach physics at a university level. Outside of academia, I enjoy fashion, music, and learning about mindfulness through books and poetry. I am also a Teaching Associate where I conduct the labs in Astronomy for general education students and the Physics Mechanics lab for future programmers, scientists, and engineers.

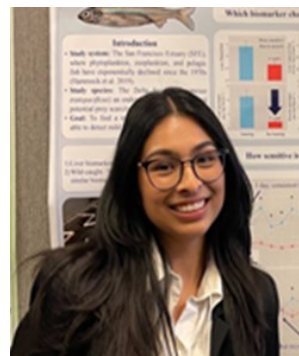
Abstract - "A Search for Mode Coupling in Magnetic Bright Points." How the Sun transports its energy to heat the Corona is the biggest mystery in all of solar physics. I have analyzed oscillations in magnetic bright points (MBP) to study wave propagation between the photosphere and chromosphere to search for possible wave heating mechanisms. The data were obtained from observations in July 2011 with the Rapid Oscillations of the Solar Atmosphere (ROSA) instrument at the Dunn Solar Telescope. Observations were made in wave bands of G-band and H α . Wavelet and Fourier analyses were used to identify traveling MHD waves and derive frequencies in different band passes. We have found oscillations in the G-band MPB with frequencies between 1.5 to 3.5 mHz. Corresponding MBP in the lower solar chromosphere observed in H α showed a frequency range of 1.5 to 4.2 mHz. In 40% of the MBPs, the ratio of H α to G-band frequencies were near 2. Thus, these oscillations show a form of mode coupling, where the longitudinal waves in the photosphere are converted into transverse waves in the chromosphere. My estimates show the energy flowing through MBP is enough to heat the chromosphere, although higher resolution data are needed to future explore their contribution. Regardless, mode coupling is an important mechanism to understand the types of MHD waves in the lower solar atmosphere and overall energy budget.

"What have you learned while doing this project that might guide you in conducting future research in your field, or about your field in general?"

I have learned how to approach problems like a scientist and have recognized that not every idea works as expected.

Some ideas seem to integrate perfectly with our goals, and some don't, and that's okay. I have also learned to network and collaborate with others conducting similar research. This has shown me that through collaboration, your ideas can expand more than simply just from your own perspective. I have also recognized that there are many practical applications of my work that may have a real-world impact. I have also given myself time to reflect on my experiences and skills learned that will help shape my identity as scientist and my future endeavors.

"Do you have any significant personal takeaways from undertaking this project that will influence your future?" Several! For example, I've faced many challenges like programing errors, not getting expected results, and many more. But with time and effort, I've been able to resolve these issues and improve my analytical skills. Time management - it's easy to get overwhelmed, especially when challenged, so I found it important to prioritize my scheduling to be as productive as possible. I've also learned to read scientific papers and extract relative, meaningful results, and found that being passionate about my field has enhanced my motivation to succeed, while having fun! I've also found that I have weaknesses, and that there's always room for improvement as a researcher, so be humble and continue to grow.



Tena Dhaylan

Advisor: Nyssa Silberger

Bio - Tena was born and raised in San Diego, CA. She then received her Animal Biology B.S. magna cum laude from UC Davis, where she studied the conservation of an endangered estuarine fish. Now, back in southern California, Tena enjoys

spending her time at the beach or on hikes with her dog Mocha. She is an officer of CSUN's Marine Biology Graduate Student Association and a climate resilience fellow with UCLA involved in K-12 outreach efforts to increase exposure to our coasts and promote environmental sustainability.

Abstract - "Effects of Acidification and Warming on Predation of Foundation Species in the California Rocky Intertidal" As ocean warming and acidification escalate, physiology and interspecies interactions shift, and how this affects communities is un-

clear. Asymmetries in response to climate change can occur between predator and prey, leading to altered top-down or bottom-up effects. I will assess the predation of rocky intertidal foundation species—rockweeds and mussels—under simulated warming and acidification in the lab and in the field. First, I will establish pH performance curves for individual metabolic rates and predation after 30 days of exposure to a range of nine pHs (7.2-8.0) at two temperature levels (16, 20°C). Then, I will assess predation over a 30-day exposure on experimentally warmed plates at sites with varying abiotic conditions in California. Differences in physiological responses between the two species may alter the strength of their interaction and mediate changes in community dynamics. This experiment could elucidate how climate change-related stressors may interact to structure rocky intertidal communities.

“What have you learned while doing this project that might guide you in conducting future research in your field, or about your field in general?”

“This project has exposed me to new, exciting aspects of marine ecology that I hadn’t experienced before. I am gaining hands-on experience in both the lab and in the field and learning more every day. While doing my mesocosm experiment, I have learned more about invertebrate physiology and seawater biogeochemistry. I consider myself an ecophysiological, who hopes to use organismal physiology to answer ecological questions, and I feel as though this project has gotten me closer to achieving that goal. While this project has been a large undertaking, it has taught me about experimental design and the perseverance needed to succeed in this field. I know I will use many of the skills I’ve learned as I progress to a Ph.D. program in the future.



Scott Jedrusiak (Geology)

Advisor – Priya Ganguli

Bio - I was born in central New Jersey and am a first-generation, non-traditional student, who came from a lower-middle class household. After working outside of academia for a few years my curiosity about natural processes inspired me to pursue a BS in Environmental Science at Temple

University. One of my professors recommended me for a water quality internship at the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC). My experience at DRBC inspired me to consider graduate school; while with DTBC, I fell in love with rock climbing and applied to graduate schools in states with exciting topography. I joined CSUN’s Water Science Program and plan to pursue a career with an environmental resource agency, such as the California Water Resources Board, with an emphasis in hydrological issues.

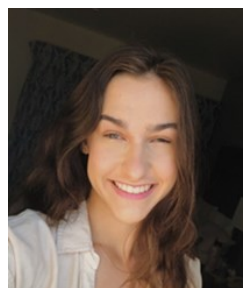
Abstract – “Water Column Geochemistry in Los Angeles County Reservoirs: Castaic Lake and Pyramid Lake Public Recreation Areas” The California Water Project brings water to Southern California through a series of aqueducts and pumping stations, with one branch passing through Pyramid Lake and ending at Castaic Lake, an emergency drinking water reservoir in Los Angeles County. Despite a posted fish consumption advisory for mercury and PCBs, only surface water data is available for

this ~90-meter-deep reservoir. This knowledge gap is a concern because in deep reservoirs, cold dense bottom water loses contact with the atmosphere, leading to oxygen depletion and water quality degradation. I am characterizing the concentration and distribution of metals (e.g., Cu, Pb, Zn, Fe) in Castaic Lake and Pyramid Lake water and sediment to assess the influence of water column stratification on these contaminants. The tendency of metals to sorb to particles decreases in low oxygen environments I hypothesize that during intense water column stratification, oxygen depletion promotes the release of sediment-bound metals to the overlying water and enhances the production of bioaccumulative monomethylmercury (MeHg), which is produced by anaerobic bacteria. Because density stratification will increase with global warming, this project will highlight potential concerns for reservoir contaminant cycling within this region.

“What have you learned while doing this project that might guide you in conducting future research in your field, or about your field in general?”

I had a sense of this before starting my current research, but when conducting any research in the Earth Sciences, you need to be good at rolling with the punches. Very rarely do days of fieldwork go exactly as planned and I have learned to make the best of a situation when faced with adversity. This idea also applies to the time I have spent doing lab work. The instruments I use to analyze my samples are extraordinarily complex and require careful calibration and maintenance to work effectively. I have also augmented my sampling expertise to include trace metal clean techniques and regularly organize multi-person field sampling events. This project has made me efficient in all aspects of research including fieldwork, lab work, and data analysis, making me a versatile geologist and environmental scientist.

“Do you have any significant personal takeaways from undertaking this project that will influence your future?” “ One notable takeaway from graduate school and this project is that I learned that I love being a student. Learning about new concepts excites me and mastering new skills has allowed me to grow as a scientist. The smaller class sizes in upper division classes have allowed me to establish personal relationships with my instructors as well as a deeper understanding of geological concepts. My research and coursework have made me feel more connected to environmental issues facing the Western United States and better prepared to establish a career in California.



Madison Schneider (Kinesiology)

Advisor – Paula Thompson

Bio - I was born and raised in West Hills, CA. I currently work as a choreographer teaching high schoolers at a local dance school. My career goals include teaching as a dance and kinesiology educator in a uni-

versity setting, as well dancing professionally for a company. When I am not in the studio, I enjoy sharing my faith, hiking, going to the beach, and photography.

Abstract - “Proprioceptive Training on Balance and Ankle Stability in Dancers with Hypermobility A Four Week Training Program”. The aim of this study is to test the effectiveness of lower extremity proprioceptive training on balance and ankle stability in dancers with and without hypermobility. A tentative group of approximately 30+ dancers will be screened from CSUN Dance Department modern dance technique class in the Fall 2024 semester. All dancers will undergo a baseline hypermobility test using the Beighton Score to determine hypermobility syndrome. Following the evaluation, dancers will be equally assigned to experimental or control groups. Each group will consist of dancers with hypermobility and without. Both groups will be tested for balance and proprioception using the Balance Tracking System portable force plate, pre and post 4-week intervention program, through Modified Clinical Test for Sensory Integration and Balance in: (1) Single-leg balance (passe turned out), (2) Single-leg balance (first Arabesque), and (3) Dynamic balance (passe to first Arabesque). Supported by findings in the literature, proprioceptive training is projected to improve dancers with hypermobility balance control and ankle stability.

“What have you learned while doing this project that might guide you in conducting future research in your field, or about your field in general ?” Upon studying the literature of current dance science research, I quickly noticed the pool of research that exists is quite small. Very few studies have been done that support the idea of motor control, balance, or injury prevention in dancers. As a working dancer and teacher, I be-

lieve it is incredibly important to provide all dancers with training that comes from an anatomically sound place. Movement or rehabilitation that supports intervention from resources that are not only creative and enjoyable but are evidence-based and will yield healthy results that both dancers and their teachers desire. Knowing dance science research is rather sparse, I would like to continue supporting the field by proposing research that addresses current problems within the wellness and injury prevention aspect of dance.

“Do you have any significant personal takeaways from undertaking this project that will influence your future?”

“Being able to develop my own training program has given me the confidence to trust the foundation of my knowledge as I continue deepening my personal teaching philosophies as a Kinesiologist and Dance Educator. I’ve come to learn that my passion deeply lies within the studio. Having the resources to immerse myself in the scientific process in developing a research proposal has widely shaped the approach I have begun to take with my students. I’ve been able to look at this project as an opportunity to apply what I’ve learned when undertaking my own personal movement practice or teaching others. I plan to continue refining my approach to teaching movement from a holistic lens that caters to the dancer’s individual whole-body needs. Undertaking this project in a very concentrated domain of dance science has also allowed me to appreciate the intricate function of human movement, however, I find it most helpful to then use my findings and look at each dancer from a larger, “big picture” perspective.

We gratefully acknowledge the **ARF** membership donors for 2024-25.
These donations sustain the Memorial Graduate Project Program Awards*

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
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| James Allen | Kristin Ecklund | James Manos | Carrie Satermoe |
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| Susan Curzon | Robert J. Kiddoo | Karen Robinette | Heidi Wolfbauer |
| Gerald Davis | Sharon Klein | Ram Roy | Joel Zeitlin |
| Linda Depew | Dorena Knepper | Delia Rudiger | Jennifer Zvi |
| Cynthia Desrochers | Louise Lewis | Richard Ruggerio | |

*Contributions to the **ARF Memorial Awards** program may be sent to ARF, PO Box 280578, Northridge, CA 91328

ARF PICNIC 2024

The annual ARF general meeting and picnic was deemed a success by those who attended—a respectable 45 members, guests and soon-to-be new members. Even Mother Nature cooperated, with the morning drizzle ending by 11 a.m. but the day remaining comfortably cool.

Highlights of the general meeting included election of the ARF Executive Board for 2024-25 (Board Members listed on page 8 of this newsletter) and a quick preview of the upcoming year's programming. Chair Tim Fox reported that our membership has remained steady over the last few years. During open comments, long-time ARF member Bob Gohstand proposed formation of an ad-hoc committee to explore possibilities for a new Faculty Club. An exploratory committee was approved by ARF members present who agreed that CSUN needs a place for faculty and staff to share ideas and food.

Out-going president Cynthia Rawitch said her thank yous and goodbyes. In-coming President Diane Schwartz said her thank yous and hellos.

The Orchard Center catered the picnic with its usual panache, a very attentive staff and, of course, the best brownies in LA.

Mark your calendars: Next year's annual general meeting and picnic will be Saturday, June 7. We would love to have a great turnout, and that means you! *Cynthia Rawitch*



IN MEMORIAM

Merry Ovnick (History), a scholar of Los Angeles and California history and the long-time editor of the prestigious *California Quarterly*, died suddenly on March 23, 2024. Born in Los Angeles,

Merry earned her BA from UCLA, an M.A. from CSUN, and her Ph.D. in history from UCLA. She began teaching at CSUN in 1985, retiring in 2009 due to health reasons. Merry continued, however, to work in her CSUN office as editor of the *California Quarterly* until leaving the editorship in early 2024.

Her 1994 book, *Los Angeles: The End of the Rainbow*, is a meticulous examination of the residential architecture of Los Angeles in the 20th century, illuminating how the quest for home ownership in the boom-and-bust years from the 1950s onward shaped the ideal of what it meant to be a Los Angeleno in the national imagination. The book's "layering" of seemingly diverse architectural styles amidst the city's distinct ecologies (hill, beach, flatlands, and urban density) reveals how and why its residents and newcomers dreamed about what the "good life" entailed. As one reviewer exclaimed, *The End of the Rainbow* brilliantly examines the city's architecture as "historical artifacts," which

manifest the city's unique cultural character and history in its built environment.

Her editorship of the *California Quarterly* (2005 to 2024) left an indelible mark on the scholarship dealing with the architectural and cultural history of Los Angeles and Southern California. In shepherding California's oldest historical journal, Merry exposed the reading public to innovative essays by newly minted Ph. Ds and well-established scholars. The *California Quarterly* also featured pathbreaking historical exhibits, scores of carefully crafted special features dealing with distinct historical neighborhoods and institutions, and hundreds of books carefully reviewed. Looking back over the almost two decades of Merry's stewardship of the *California Quarterly*, one finds an amazing array of topics, many of which Merry authored or produced, from *The Mark of Zorro: Silent Film's Impact on 1920s Architecture of Los Angeles*, to *The Artist's Eye*, focussing on the art and poetry of Los Angeles. Numerous oral histories, especially those dealing with pioneer women in the city's past, appear frequently in the *Quarterly's* pages. In her final editorial task, working up to the last minute of her life, Merry produced a special double issue of the *California Quarterly* devoted to the Mission San Gabriel Archangel, destroyed by arson in 2020.

Merry prided herself on never missing a deadline, working hard to bring out the best publication possible, painstakingly editing novice offerings, and seeing her role as a guardian and shepherd of sorts. As perhaps the leading voice in the preservation and articulation of Los Angeles history, and as past president of the Southern Chapter of Architectural History, she was determined to get it right. And she always did.

And then there was Professor Merry, who taught courses at CSUN on California and the American West, the History of Architecture, Cultural History, and the Gilded Age. Her interdisciplinary history course, *Los Angeles, Past, Present, and Future*, offered in the departments of Political Science and Urban Studies, featured Merry at her best, armed with original manuscript sources, including diaries, letters, and architectural remnants, which she once described to a colleague as the essential flotsam and jetsam of L. A. history. In the words of Jeffrey Auerbach, chairperson of the Department of History, "Merry tirelessly arranged for students in her cultural history courses to attend opera and theater productions and visit local museums."

Not to be forgotten was her labor-intensive internship program for the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. No one was better equipped to develop and supervise this program, based on her

personal and professional contacts in the urban region and seemingly boundless energy. Merry placed and personally supervised students in numerous professions, from museums and historic preservation endeavors to archives and teaching, business, law, and government. According to Chairperson Auerbach, these internships served as “gateways to successful careers” of immeasurable importance, providing CSUN students with an educational experience well beyond the classroom.

Merry taught in the Department of History just as a new crop of young historians joined the department beginning in 2000. Most of the department’s original faculty dating from the 1960s had retired or died when the new kids landed. Fortunately, Merry assumed a bridge role between the old and the new, and it was their good luck that she did.

One non-California newcomer fondly remembers how Merry took him under her wing, telling him where to go and shop, which freeways to take, and what to see and do in adjusting to Los Angeles. Other newcomers have similar tales about Merry’s generosity and concern for their wellbeing.

In a final note she wrote to her many friends, Merry closed with these words: “It’s time for me to go, but I hope that you’ll remember me by doing an unexpected, good turn for someone you know or for a stranger.” That was Merry, gracious to the end. *Ron Davis*



Wednesday Book Group

In May 2023, we discussed *My Antonia*, a novel by Willa Cather. The story focuses on a young boy, Jim

Burden, and a slightly older girl, Antonia, who grow up with their families and friends on the farming frontier of Nebraska in the late 1800s. Jimmy has been orphaned and is going to live with his grandparents. On the same train and coach is Antonia with her family, the Shimerdas, city folks from Bohemia who are going to be farmers. Jim and Antonia grow up together and become very good friends, with later romantic love a possibility.

The book is a window on rural and small town life. Cather and her family moved from Virginia to Nebraska in 1883, when Willa was nine years old. Her dad tried farming, but then moved to a nearby small town. With these experiences, Cather’s novel is much enriched by details of the outdoor setting and its seasonal changes, the great variety of personalities and qualities portrayed, and everyone’s struggles.

Jimmy’s grandparents are prosperous, kind and generous, providing him with a good life. Antonia’s family have paid too much for their land, don’t know how to farm, and struggle to make it. Antonia is the only English-speaker in her family, works as hard as any of the boys, and is a ray of continuing hope and energy. As the

children grow up, provisions are made for Jim to go to school in town and for Antonia to work as a helper/servant in a home in the town. Ultimately Jim goes off to college, Antonia hopes for marriage and a family, and key friends move away for adventure and opportunities. Life happens to everyone, and Jim and Antonia only see each other again much later in life.

Cather portrayed her many complex characters beautifully and compellingly as they changed over the course of decades. We all fell in love with Antonia and some of us remarked on how the stories of these people remind us of our own family stories of growing up as immigrants or in rural areas. *My Antonia* was a moving and highly rewarding read for us, and we sensed that it was less well known than it should be. We highly recommend this book.

In our August meeting we discussed Barbara Kingsolver’s latest book, *Demon Copperhead*, which won a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2023. There is a connection with Dickens’ *David Copperfield* in the books’ titles and difficult situations faced by the main characters, but familiarity with the Dickens book is not needed in the slightest for understanding and appreciating *Demon Copperhead*. This novel is set in modern Appalachia, a region that the author strongly identifies with. The author grew up in Kentucky and for many years has lived on a farm in the valley and hills country of the southwestern corner of Virginia.

This book is narrated entirely in the first person by Demon Copperhead, who enters into a world of woe. Demon’s mixed-race father dies before he is born, and as a young kid he is orphaned by his drug-addicted mother, which leaves him in a foster care system with its frequent upheavals and inherent insecurities. The author takes us through the years of Demon’s boyhood into manhood in the company of many neighbors, friends, relatives, teachers, foster parents, and a football coach -- some loving but many deceitful. There are informal support systems in that rural society, but we were profoundly saddened by the troubled lives of so many of its people. In particular, the opioid crisis’s devastating effect on the characters in this story is more moving than in the carefully researched and well-presented nonfiction book, *Empire of Pain*, which our group read earlier. We wonder if Demon will ever be able to have a more comfortable and secure life.

Kingsolver’s writing is superb. The plot is intricate, and characters tell stories when they talk and use vivid metaphors. In contrast to city folk, people feel connected to the land and to their neighbors’ families. They resent and feel disrespected by TV shows and much of the urban-based media while still watching the Beverly Hillbillies. Many of the characters are people we like or feel familiar with. We very much enjoyed *Demon Copperhead* and regard it as a modern classic. *Joel Zeitlin and Jim Allen*

Editor’s note: Reports from the **Science Book Group**, **SCCARF**, and the **Film Group** will appear in the September issue of the newsletter.

ARF EXECUTIVE BOARD, 2024—25

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ARF NOTES

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