

# The English Channel

The Alumni Newsletter of the Department of English

## Jane and Bob Eberwein Retire, Deliver “Last Lectures”

After nearly forty years of remarkable service to Oakland University, Distinguished Professors Jane and Bob Eberwein retired at the end of the 2006-07 school year.

To mark the occasion, friends, colleagues, and former and current students honored the Eberweins at two events. On Monday, April 9, a rapt audience at Meadowbrook Theatre gathered for the Eberweins “Last Lectures.”

The Oakland tradition of the “Last Lecture” began decades ago, as an opportunity for faculty members to imagine what they might like to lecture on if it really were their last lecture—to speak to their passions. In recent years, the “Last Lecture” tradition has been revived and adapted as a sort of rite of passage for those retiring after long careers.

With characteristic eloquence and wit, Jane and Bob each reflected on their years at OU. Those who know and admire them weren’t surprised to learn that Jane spoke on the topic of “Depravity and Grace in Academia,” while Bob titled his talk “This is NOT My Last Lecture.”

At a more intimate gathering in May, the English department hosted a farewell party at Meadowbrook Hall. The evening included tears and laughter as well as a documentary-style film in which friends and colleagues expressed thanks, appreciation and reminiscences of the Eberweins’ indelible imprint on the department and the university.

Although they are retiring, the two accomplished scholars show no  
*(story continues on page 2)*

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### LETTER FROM THE CHAIR *by Kevin Grimm*



First, I would like to thank all of you who have sent in contributions to the Alumni Corner. It has been fascinating and gratifying to read about your many accomplishments, experiences, and life journeys. In addition, I have personally enjoyed catching up with those of you who were in my classes at some point in the ever increasingly distant past. So, please keep your comments and updates coming; all of us here on the fifth floor of Wilson Hall enjoy and appreciate hearing from each of you. In fact, I would like to extend a challenge to you all—how are the skills and the knowledge you gained, or the general experience of being an OU English major, participating in your life today? While many of you are teachers and/ or writers, most of you are engaged in other professions and activities. Please send us your

reflections as OU English alums.

As you peruse this issue of the *English Channel* you will note the many transitions occurring throughout the department this year, none more significant than the retirement of Professors Jane and Robert Eberwein. Even if you never had a class from either Professor Eberwein, you have reaped the benefit of their devotion to the OU English Department. In their 38 years at Oakland University, the Professors Eberwein have led by example and set the highest standards of teaching, research, and commitment to the OU community. It has been our pleasure and our privilege to have worked with them, as students and as colleagues.

Thanks, dear alum, for reading this, and I’m looking forward to hearing from you at [grimm@oakland.edu](mailto:grimm@oakland.edu).

## The Eberweins (cont'd from page 1)

signs of slowing down. Bob is hard at work on two book projects and Jane is looking forward to more time for reading and writing. And while they will be greatly missed, Jane and Bob have also assured members of the English department, terrified at the prospect of an Eberwein-less Wilson Hall, that they will continue to be available for sure-to-be-needed consultations on a variety of matters.

For more on this momentous occasion, stay tuned for the next issue of the *Channel* which will feature a special "Eberwein Retrospective Supplement." If you would like to contribute, we invite you to write to us with your (brief) reflections and expressions of thanks and congratulations. In the meantime, the full-texts of their Last Lectures are available on the English department website (Just click on "Events").

## Department Wishes Beloved Secretary Well

**Rosemary Aiello Retires; Department Welcomes Cynthia Ferrera**

As if the Eberweins' retirement weren't enough, this year's holiday party also proved a bittersweet occasion, as members of the department gathered to convivialize and to express their gratitude to retiring administrative secretary Rosemary Aiello.

Rosemary kept the department afloat for nearly a decade with a rare combination of intelligence, good cheer, and motherly tough-love. As tokens of appreciation, the department presented Rosemary with a beautiful gold watch and a pair of tasteful diamond earrings.

Rosemary's retirement life will be spent part of the year in Tuscon, Arizona and part in Michigan, at least for a while. In addition, she has taken up golf with gusto, including having procured a set of custom-fitted clubs.



*Rosemary Aiello and her husband Tony*

## Meet the New Boss: Cynthia Ferrera

While the department will miss Rosemary, we are also pleased to welcome new Administrative Secretary Cynthia Ferrera, who began her "reign" in January. Cyndie comes to us after three years of part-time employment as an Administrative Secretary for Oakland University within the Graham Health Center, where she provided secretarial and operational office assistance.

Prior to her employment at Oakland, Cyndie's experience included over twenty years of progressive administrative and support positions, primarily in the commercial insurance industry. Cyndie holds a B.S. degree from Wayne State University in Business Administration with a Marketing Major.



This year, Cyndie and her husband will celebrate thirty years of marriage. They have two delightful daughters, a fifteen year old and a five year old.

Of joining the English department, Cyndie notes, "Everyone within the department has been so warm, welcoming, and gracious, I can't begin to express how truly elated I am to be a staff member of the team, or should I say another member of the family."

The department is fortunate to have a new secretary of such accomplishment and experience. Please join us in welcoming Cyndie to the English department community.

## SPEECH

# “Run Eagerly Into the Resounding Tumult”

*English major Rachel Banner capped off an impressive Oakland career by accepting the College of Arts & Science’s Meritorious Achievement Award last December. The award acknowledges a graduating senior with a strong academic record who exemplifies the variety and scope of work in the arts and sciences. Rachel also delivered the student comment during the commencement ceremony. The buzz that reached the English department from administrators and faculty in attendance was that Rachel’s address was one of the best they have ever heard. Graciously, Rachel agreed to let the Channel print her remarks in full:*

Fellow graduates,

I’d like you to think about the hardest course that you’ve taken at OU—think about how inadequate you felt during class discussions when you had nothing to say, how you sometimes dreaded going, how lost you felt amid unfamiliar material—how every paper, project, and presentation felt like a losing prospect. If you went to class anyway, if you worked hard anyway, if you participated in discussions even when you felt like an idiot, then you are among those who, to borrow a phrase from a dear friend, are willing to “fight for understanding.” If you were one of those who fought for understanding throughout your time here, chances are, you’re leaving the university a bit different than the way you came in—maybe not with the best grades and maybe not with fond memories of all of your classes, but nevertheless having learned something about learning. During my time as an Oakland student, I have learned that learning is an uncomfortable, frustrating, and sometimes painful process that presents endless new avenues of thought without ever offering solid conclusions.

**“The struggles and triumph of education aren’t solitary.”**

I sincerely hope that each of you has had the privilege of experiencing such pain during your time at Oakland, because the struggle of learning is itself the invaluable reward of an education. If you’ve deprived yourself of this experience, if you haven’t pushed yourself through a challenging course or assignment at least once, then please accept my condolences—you’ve cheated yourself out of a beautiful fight.

Of course, the struggles and triumphs of an education aren’t merely solitary struggles. Here at Oakland, we have had the chance to work closely with professors and with one another in an academic community—an experience that should have taught us, regardless of what we may have been told since childhood, that our lives are not merely what we make of them on our own. None of us exist independent from the webs of history, culture, nation, and world—we all connect or collide in some integral way. Though our diplomas are emblems of our own hard work, I think it is important to remember that our knowledge was not gained in a vacuum for the purpose of keeping us isolated from the

conflicts and tensions of this historical moment. Rather, our experiences at Oakland have hopefully enabled each of us to recognize our interconnection and to become active participants in local, global, personal, and political communities of which we are inextricably a part.

In his 1837 speech, “The American Scholar,” Ralph Waldo Emerson urges new scholars to “run eagerly into the resounding tumult” of the wider world. He writes of himself, “I grasp the hands of those next to me, and take my place in the ring to suffer and to work, taught by an instinct that so shall the dumb abyss be vocal with speech.” As the newest crop of American scholars, we are all of us, now potentially a part of Emerson’s ring if only we will step up to take our places—if only we are willing to suffer and to work—to grasp hands with one another and lend

our voices to the “resounding **“We have mountains of ice about us to melt.”**

tumult” of the world in which we exist. Of course, balance in all things is necessary—it is as important to listen as to lend one’s voice to the wider world—but if we do not ever gain the courage to speak, we can rest assured that someone will speak for us. Though the struggle of community existence can be tedious, tiresome and sometimes disheartening—the alternative to participation is the silent surrender to what Emerson terms the “dumb abyss.” I know that it is frightening to send your voice out into the wider world—I’m experiencing that fear right now—but I have also realized that the act of speaking into the “resounding tumult” is, like the process of learning, another beautiful struggle—fraught with resistance and also with rich rewards.

The work that I have done as an English major at OU has unearthed my voice. More, my studies in English have taught me that rigorous analytical study and passion are not incompatible elements, have taught me to derive strength from intellectual debate, have taught me to hold fast to my conviction that poetry is the stuff of life. I hope that you, my fellow graduates, are also leaving the university assured of the inestimable value of the life of the mind and its place and purpose in our contemporary communities. A particularly striking figure that I encountered in my studies, a man named William Lloyd Garrison, wrote in the inaugural edition of his newspaper that, “I have need to be all on fire, for I have mountains of ice about me to melt.” Class of 2006, we have mountains of ice about us to melt as well—we also have need to be all on fire. There is now, as there is always, much new work to be done. For those who are willing, let us turn to face our mountains of ice today, ready to continue the beautiful struggles that we have already begun.

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*Rachel Banner will begin her first year of graduate studies in English at the University of Pennsylvania this fall.*

## REPORT

## The State of the Film Studies Concentration *by Kyle Edwards*

The past year has been marked by significant changes in the Concentration in Film Aesthetics and History, an interdisciplinary Concentration housed in the English and Art & Art History departments. Here's a brief update:

Last August, I became the second faculty member in the English department dedicated to the Film Concentration. Over the past few months, I have been gratified to work closely with some of Oakland's top students in both English and Cinema courses—such as Film Adaptation, The History of Warner Bros., and Film: A Literary Approach—and to continue my research in film adaptation in the 1930s and 1940s American film industry. Despite my trepidation in anticipation of my first Michigan winter (I moved here from the considerably warmer climes of Austin, Texas), I have been warmly welcomed by my colleagues in the English department, especially English professor and Film Concentration co-founder Bob Eberwein, as well as other faculty contributing to the Film Concentration.

Last September, Professor Eberwein (as well as his wife Jane) announced his retirement effective at the conclusion of this academic year. Obviously, Bob and Jane will be sorely missed, not only for their steadfast dedication to teaching and University service, but also for their mentorship of both students and faculty colleagues, their commitment to fostering collegiality and harmony within the department and the University, and their vast knowledge of the University's inner workings. While Bob and Jane will be relaxing their teaching schedule, they will both continue their research apace. For example, in addition to his recently published *Armed Forces: Masculinity and Sexuality in the American War Film* (Rutgers UP, 2007), Bob has two books in the works, including an examination of the war film genre, and an edited collection focusing on film stars of the 1980s.

Due to the imminent retirement of our esteemed colleague and Film Concentration founder, the department is adding a new faculty member in Film Studies next academic year. We are delighted to report that Joshua Yumibe, who completed his doctoral studies in the Program in Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Chicago, will be joining the English department and the Film Concentration this fall. Josh specializes in early cinema history and the study of color in silent and sound film. He will be a valuable addition to the Concentration both for the new, innovative courses he will offer (for example, the courses in Silent Film History and Color Cinema in fall 2007) and his original research, for which he has spent considerable time in film research archives throughout the U.S. and Europe. After sitting in on a film class during his visit to OU, Josh commented on the passion for film and the sophisticated level of discussion of film form and technique by OU students, and he is eager to begin working with them this fall.

This dedication is perhaps most evident in the GrizzDance Film Festival and Competition (instituted two years ago and now held each fall), in which OU students

submit their short films in a competition judged by a select jury of faculty members and students. Categories for recognition include best film, editing, direction, and screenwriting, as well as a special audience prize based on student voting conducted after the festival's marathon film screening event held in the Oakland Center. Last fall, Josh Corbin took home the top prize for his film *Yellow*.

Other film events over the past year have included the Tournees French Film Series and the Women's Studies

Film Festival, as well as the six-week long Global Citizenship Film Series. We were also excited to welcome back OU- and Film Concentration-alumnus John Roman, currently an executive producer of *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, who presented a special lecture along with a series of master's classes to Concentration students who received valuable advice on media production and the film and television industry. Finally, our warmest congratulations go out to two other Concentration alumni, Scott Higgins, who was recently awarded tenure at Wesleyan University, where he teaches film studies, and Meredith Kadlec, who is now Vice President of Original Programming at the Here!TV cable network. Scott's new book on color filmmaking in the 1930s will be published by the University of Texas Press later this year, while Meredith is currently overseeing production on several original series for the network, including *Lesbian Sex and Sexuality* and *The Lair*.

One last note: In addition to the changes in the Film Concentration faculty, we are also considering developing and offering an interdisciplinary major in Film & Media Studies, which would exist alongside the Film Concentration. This potential program would expand the course offerings in Film & Media studies into narrative film production, screenwriting, television studies and other areas, as well as create additional events and ongoing programs that would increase the visibility of film within the university and the surrounding community. While initial queries of current OU students suggest a strong interest in a program of this kind, we would greatly appreciate your input as well. Please do not hesitate to contact me (edwards2@oakland.edu) or Bob Eberwein (eberwein@oakland.edu) to offer your thoughts on this potential major and film at OU. In any case, we promise to keep you posted on the progress of these events in the pages of *The English Channel*.

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*Professor Edwards begins his second year at OU and first year as co-chair of the Film Studies Concentration this fall.*

## News Shorts



Retired Professor of English Brian Murphy

### A Play in New York

Brian Murphy, who retired in 2005, saw a play he wrote several years ago up on the boards in New York on Feb 1 and 2. *The Importance of Being*, a play about Stewart Headlam, friend to both Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde (both of whom are characters in the play) received a “staged reading” at the Medicine Show Theater on 52nd Street.

Stewart Headlam was the model for Shaw’s Rev. James Mavor Morrell in *Candida*, so the first part of the play is a kind of imaginary “prequel” to that famous work. The last half of the play tells the story of Headlam’s courageous intervention in the trials of Wilde.

New York is filled with great actors, many of whom appeared in this “staged reading” and gave a superb performance.

Brian and his wife Toni watched both performances from the vantage point of Cloud #9. Brian reported the experience was one of the “high points of my entire life.” And he relishes still having high points at age 67.

### Creative Writing Faculty Featured in Local Publications

Associate Professor Annie Gilson and Special Instructor Kitty Dubin were each profiled in local newspapers this year. Gilson was featured in the January issue of the *Metro Times* of Detroit, discussing her debut novel *New Light*. Dubin, an accomplished playwright, was the subject of a profile in the February/March issue of *Signature Magazine*, published by the *Detroit Free Press*. Both articles are available on-line.

### Kyle Edwards Awarded University Research Fellowship

Kyle Edwards was awarded a University Research Fellowship for summer 2007. Prof. Edwards’ research has entailed traveling to archives in Wisconsin, Los Angeles, and New York to research the records of little-known Hollywood film studio Monogram Pictures, specifically those documents related to the production and marketing of their series of 1930s and 1940s films based on the Charlie Chan character. This research will form the basis of a chapter within Prof. Edwards’ larger study of film adaptation in the Hollywood studio system of the 1930s and 1940s.

### OU to Host International Conference on Romanticism

Thanks to the work of Rob Anderson and the Modern Language Department’s Chris Clason, Oakland University will host the 2008 International Conference on Romanticism. Scholars from around the world will converge on campus to exchange work on the conference theme, “The Work of Romanticism.” The ICR is a learned society that seeks to promote, maintain, and improve teaching, research, and related endeavors in the field of Romanticism studies, and to facilitate communication among scholars and teachers through annual meetings and publications. A forum for colleagues

in literature, philosophy, history, musicology, history of science, art history, and other disciplines, the International Conference on Romanticism has an interdisciplinary and international membership.

### Smydra, Mitzfeld Team-Up for Blogging Course

The notion of self-narrative continues to attract new writers and readers through new and constantly changing electronic mediums. Blogging, in particular, has found an expanding audience because of the exhibitionary or voyeur type role blogs play for many readers. Last winter, Pamela Mitzfeld and Rachel Smydra explored this medium with students in an Honors College course, *Blogging: Chronicling the Writing of the Self*.

Students considered different blog models and the cultural, psychological, and political impact of the medium in order to attempt to discover the disparities between the written word as self narrative and the electronic medium of blogging as a means of constructing the self.

To fully understand the tradition and evolution of writing the self, students read texts such as Samuel Pepys’ diary, Harvey Pekar’s *American Splendor*, and Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography, that both exemplify and examine different personas in relation to blogging. In addition, students participated in the medium by creating blogs in various personas to meet a political, cultural, or societal agenda.

### Pfeiffer Presents “First Draft”

In March, Professor Kathy Pfeiffer presented “Waldo Frank Among the Moderns, or the Problems of Biography” as part of the department’s annual “Research in Progress” series. Professor Pfeiffer’s lively talk discussed her ongoing biographical research into the life and works of the modernist writer Waldo Frank.

# AUTHORS EXPLAINED...HERMAN MELVILLE *by Jeffrey Insko*

This is not a portrait of Herman Melville, who was not a Maori from New Zealand, nor was he tattooed. He did, however, lead the sort of life that brought him into contact with such people. Born in New York in 1819, Melville did not attend college like Hawthorne, Emerson, and Thoreau, his equally famous contemporaries. Instead, as he says in *Moby Dick*, a whale ship was his Yale College and his Harvard. At the age of 19, Melville embarked on his first voyage aboard the whaler *Acushnet*. While in the South Pacific, Melville had the rare opportunity to meet many men just like this one.

Upon reaching the Marquesas Islands, Melville and a friend deserted the *Acushnet* and spent two weeks living with the native islanders, who were reputed to be fearsome cannibals. Melville's Marquesan experience became the basis of his first book, *Typee*, published in 1846. The book was an immediate success, spawning a sequel, *Omoo*, in 1847 and earned Melville a reputation as "the man who lived among the cannibals."

One of the central dramatic tensions in *Typee* centers upon the protagonist Tommo's fear of being tattooed, which rivals even his fear of being eaten. Hounded by the tattooist Karky, Tommo resists having his "visage... ruined forever." The *Typees*, in turn, wonder "how any sober-minded and sensible individual could entertain the least possible objection to so beautifying an operation."

The tattooed man pictured here is a Maori chief named Te Pehi Kupe, who, during a chance encounter in the early nineteenth century, befriended the captain of a British merchant ship. This unlikely friendship eventually became the subject of a book called *The New Zealanders* (1830), which Melville read just before beginning his masterpiece, *Moby Dick* (1851). Melville scholar Geoffrey Sanborn's recent discovery of Te Pehi Kupe shows persuasively that the Maori was the real-life model for *Moby-Dick's* famous character Queequeg.

Sitting for his portrait, Te Pehi Kupe here wears a traditional black frock coat. Melville was more accustomed to sailor's dress. After *Omoo*, Melville wrote three sea novels in two years: *Mardi*; *Redburn*; and *White Jacket*. The last of these fictionalizes Melville's experience in the navy and helped to abolish the practice of flogging. The white jacket of the novel's title, Melville claimed, was "a veritable garment," much like his own homemade white canvas jacket that failed to keep him warm on the frigate. In the novel, the white jacket symbolizes the title character's isolation from his shipmates.

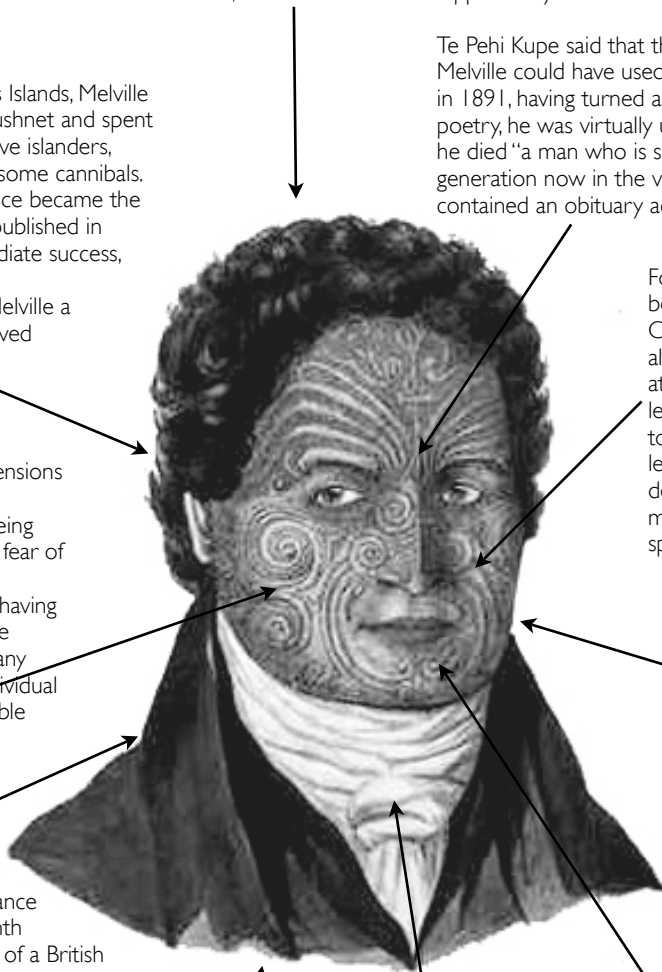
Te Pehi Kupe said that the mark just above his nose was his name. Melville could have used such a mark himself. By the time he died in 1891, having turned almost entirely to writing poorly-received poetry, he was virtually unknown. The *New York Times* noted that he died "a man who is so little known, even by name, to the generation now in the vigor of life that only one newspaper contained an obituary account of him."

Following vicious criticism of his last three books, *Pierre*, *Israel Potter*, and *The Confidence Man*, Melville quit writing novels altogether. To make money, he tried his hand at lecturing. From 1857-1860, Melville lectured all across the country. One of his topics, not surprisingly, was travel. In his lecture on the South Seas, he spoke in detail about the practice of tattooing. But by most accounts, he was a poor public speaker.

Melville never duplicated his early success and both craved and sneered at fame. Asked to sit for his own portrait by his publisher, Melville punned both on tattooing and his literary reputation: "The fact is, almost everybody is having his 'mug' engraved nowadays... and therefore, to see one's 'mug' in a magazine, is presumptive evidence that he's a nobody. So being as vain a man as ever lived; & believing that my illustrious name is famous throughout the world--I respectfully decline being oblivionated by a Daguerrotype."

Perhaps most striking here is the incongruity between Te Pehi Kupe's tattooed face and his gentlemanly attire, including his collar. In *Moby-Dick*, Melville describes Queequeg as "just enough civilized to show off his outlandishness in the strangest possible manner," and even more playfully, as "George Washington cannibalistically developed." Melville took great pleasure in such incongruities. After finishing *Moby-Dick*, he said, "I have written a wicked book-- and feel spotless as the lamb."

*Moby-Dick* was not a success. In fact, Melville thought of himself as a failure in the literary marketplace. As he wrote to his friend Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1851, "Though I wrote the Gospels in this century, I should die in the gutter... Think of it! To go down to posterity is bad enough, any way; but to go down as a man who lived among the cannibals!'"



## POETRY TRANSLATION

“Dudul” (The Mulberry Tree) *by Doris Runey*

“Dudul”

Crește lângă prispa mea  
un dud ca anii fără sărutări, inmulțit  
cu atâtea duche, că numai într-o  
noapte de dragoste le-aș putea număra pe toate.

Sub ramurile covârșite de dor îmbobocit,  
ciugulesc încetișor boabele dulci ce  
se coc parcă deasupra gurii mele

una câte una rup din ele,  
mustul dudelor pe limbă mi se  
lasă, dorul în sfârșit să-l  
gust

mai prind cu mână iute, zeama  
ce picură de pe buze să nu scap  
farmecul sărutărilor de dor

pentru o clipă se revarsă ființa  
dudului în mine  
și pentru o clipă uit că am trăit ani  
fără sărutări

uit că într-o noapte de dragoste  
am visat că lângă prispa mea crește  
un dud.

The Mulberry Tree

A mulberry tree grows near my porch  
like years without kisses  
heavy with so many berries that only in  
a night of love could I count them all.

Beneath its branches overwhelmed with  
buds of longing that seem to ripen  
over my mouth  
I nibble at the sweet fruit

one by one I break the berries  
and the mash settles on my tongue

I taste the longing  
at last, catching quickly with my hand  
the juice that trickles off my lips  
like the sudden harvest of  
kisses in their yearning

for a moment the mulberry shares my spirit  
and for an instant I forget that I  
lived years without kisses,  
I forget that once in a night of  
love I dreamed of a mulberry tree.

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*Professor Runey's most recent book of poems is a translation of the Romanian poet Ion Bogdan Stefanescu's Of Stones and Birds.*

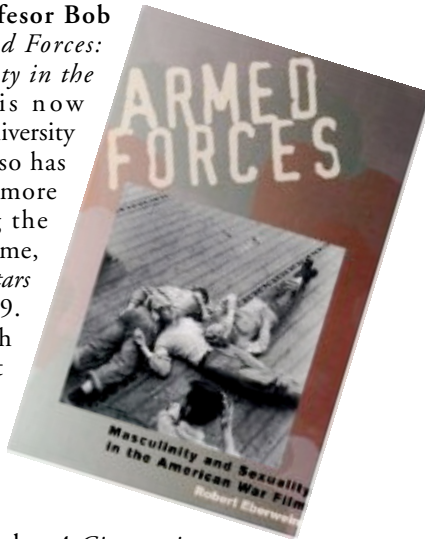
# Faculty Notes

## IN PRINT

**Jude Nixon** has recently published three articles: "Eternity in the Vesture of Time': Carlyle, Thermodynamics, and Apocalyptic Anxieties," *Literature and Belief* (2005); "[V]ital candle in close heart's vault': Energy, Optics and Hopkins's Spermaceti Flame," *The Hopkins Quarterly* (2006); and "Fathering Graces at Hampstead: Manley Hopkins's 'The Old Trees' and Gerard Manley Hopkins's 'Binsey Poplars,'" in *Victorian Poetry* (2006).

**Natalie Cole's** essay, "Travel, the Road and the City in Adaptations of *Great Expectations*" was published in *Great Expectations: Nel laboratorio di Charles Dickens*, Ed. Francesco Marroni and is out now. Prof. Cole's essay examines the trope of the road and images of travel and the city in film and television adaptations by David Lean, Kevin Connor, and Julian Jarrold.

**Distinguished Professor Bob Eberwein's** book *Armed Forces: Masculinity and Sexuality in the American War Film* is now available from Rutgers University Press. Prof. Eberwein also has book contracts for two more volumes. He is editing the *1980s Stars Decades* volume, part of the larger series, *Stars Decades*, due out in 2009. His second project is with Blackwell's Press. As part of their genre series, Prof. Eberwein is writing the volume on the war film; his manuscript is due next January.



**Doris Runey's** book, *A Cinematic Translation of Ionel Teodoreanu's Lorelei: Creating a Film Script from a Classic Romanian Novel* was published in June.

**Kitty Dubin's** one act play, *Mimi and Me*, was one of six plays included at a festival called 6 women at 60 that appeared in 6 different cities this year.

**Susan Beckwith** published two encyclopedia entries on the works of James Patterson. The titles of the individual works focused on are *London Bridges* and *The Big Bad Wolf* and will appear in the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction*.

## AT THE PODIUM

**Natalie Cole** delivered a paper on Dickens's *Little Dorrit* and Wilkie Collins' *Haunted Hotel* at an international symposium on "Dickens, Victorian Culture and Italy" in June in Genoa Italy. Her paper is titled "'A Bed Abroad': Traveling in Strange and Intimate Spaces in Fictions by Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins."

**Annie Gilson** presented her paper, "Hard-boiled Sci-Fi: Detonations of Masculine Constructions of Consciousness in Jonathan Lethem's *Gun with Occasional Music*," at the International Conference for the Fantastic in the Arts in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in March.

**Rob Anderson** attended the International Conference on Romanticism at Arizona State University in November, where he spoke on "The Calamity of Labor: Godwin and Romantic Leisure." In May, Prof. Anderson gave his paper, "Godwin Disguised: Politics in the Juvenile Library" at a conference on "The Godwinian Moment: Revolutionary Revisions of Enlightenment" at the Clark Andrews Memorial Library of UCLA.

**Kevin Laam** presented a paper, "John Donne, Richard Rogers, and Practical Piety in Early Stuart England," at the annual John Donne Society conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in February.

As if three book projects weren't enough, in March **Distinguished Professor Bob Eberwein** spoke on "Drag in the War Film" at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference in Chicago.

**Jeffrey Insko** organized and chaired a panel on "The Pragmatist Revival and George Herbert Mead" at the Modern Language Association annual conference in Philadelphia last December. In May, he delivered his paper, "Passing Current: Electricity and Historical Transmission in *The Linwoods*" at the American Literature Association annual conference in Boston.

**Susan Hawkins** also attended the American Literature Association conference where she presented her paper, "Historical Endings, Vestigial Times: On The Road with Cormac McCarthy."

**Gladys Cardiff** was invited to conduct a Poetry Workshop at the Oklahoma City University Writers' Festival, in April. Prof. Cardiff also spoke to the Meadow Brook University Women's Club at their monthly luncheon at the Fox and Hounds Restaurant in March. And along with Prof. Hawkins, Prof. Cardiff attended the Native American Literature Symposium in Mt. Pleasant in March.

In December, **Doris Runey** presented her paper, "Resisting Texts: Teaching Translated Literature" at the Modern Language Association Conference in Philadelphia.

Last December, **Kathy Pfeiffer** traveled to Puerto Vallarta Mexico for the American Literature Association Symposium on Biography. She also organized a panel, "Waldo Frank Reconsidered" for the ALA conference in Boston. The panel included Prof. Pfeiffer's talk, "Waldo Frank Among the Modernists." Prof. Pfeiffer also reports that Waldo Frank's eldest living son, Dr. Thomas Frank (age 84) and his wife Kate attended the panel. In addition, Prof. Pfeiffer was invited to two Liberty Fund colloquia, one on "Benjamin Franklin and Liberty," in La Jolla California in March, and the other on "The Pulse of Liberty in Desiderius Erasmus" in Lake Tahoe in June. The Liberty Fund colloquia include scholars, independent researchers and public policy advocates, brought together by invitation only to engage in a fairly rigorous and formal group of discussions around a set of common readings.



# Student News



Peter Halabu

## English Major Aces LSAT

With an LSAT score of 177, English major Peter Halabu ranked in the 99th percentile of all test-takers. As a result of this rare achievement, Peter received a number of letters from law schools, such as The College of William and Mary and Harvard, inviting him to apply to their programs.

Facing a difficult (if enviable) decision, Halabu, who graduated this past spring, has decided to attend Harvard Law school in the fall. Congratulations, Peter!

## English Majors Win Prestigious Wilson Awards

In addition to his outstanding performance on the LSAT, Halabu was also one of two English majors to receive the prestigious 2007 Wilson Awards. Halabu was presented with the Alfred G. Wilson Award, while fellow English major and Honors College student Jianna Hair was honored with the Matilda R. Wilson Award.

Established in 1965, the Wilson Awards are presented annually to an OU senior man and woman who have achieved academic excellence and made significant contributions to campus life, the community and society in general. The English department is proud to congratulate Peter and Jianna on their outstanding accomplishments and stellar careers at Oakland.

## English Major Earns Honors Thesis Award

Along with the Wilson Award, Jianna Hair also received the 2007 Honors College Thesis Award. Her thesis, written under the guidance of Professor Jeff Insko, was titled "The Deadly Space Between": Truth and Language in the Fiction of Herman Melville."



Jianna Hair

## English Majors Recognized for Meritorious Achievement

Continuing an outstanding run of awards earned by this year's crop of graduating English majors, Stephanie Bohde was given the 2007 Meritorious Achievement Award during spring commencement ceremonies, a distinction awarded to English major Rachel Banner in December 2006 (see page 3). Congratulations to both Stephanie and Rachel for such well-deserved recognition.

## Student Plays Earn Recognition

English major Franco Vitella had a staged reading of his new play, *Come, Beauty* in Varner Hall. Franco also had a play included in the American College Theatre Festival held in Milwaukee this past January.

English majors Matt Bell and Brad Austin had plays selected for production last April in the Lab Theatre in Varner Hall.

In further news, Franco Vitella was selected to attend the Kennedy Center Playwright's Intensive for two weeks this summer in Washington, D.C. He was among the few to be selected out of a large number of applicants, an impressive achievement!

## Grad Students Present at Michigan Academy

Three M.A. students presented papers at this year's Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters conference in March. For a panel titled "Framing Spaces in Dickens' *Great Expectations*: Domestic, Urban and Interpretive." Chinmayi Kattamalavadi spoke on "Empty Spaces and Echoes: Women and Domestic Spaces in Jarrold's *Great Expectations*." Melinda Booth's paper, was titled "'Decidedly overrated': Urban Arrivals and Impressions in Lean's and Cuaron's *Great Expectations*." Daniel Runey delivered a paper on "Alfonso Cuaron and the Cinematic Challenge of Interpretive Space in *Great Expectations*." All three papers were developed in a spring 2006 course with Professor Natalie Cole called, "Screening Dickens," which explored adaptations of *Great Expectations*.

### 2007-08 Scholarships

The English Department is pleased to announce this year's departmental scholarships, selected once again from a very impressive pool of applicants. We are especially proud to celebrate the achievements of these worthy recipients. Continuing thanks also are due to our generous donors for making such recognition possible.

#### The Werner Holzbock Humanities Scholarship

Chris Thomas

#### The Mr. and Mrs. Roger Kyes Scholarship

Madana Hermiz

Melissa Goins

#### The Doris J. Dressler Scholarship

Michael Becker

#### Eva L. Otto Scholarship

Dawn Webster

Elizabeth Milam

(Continued on page 11)

# Alumni Corner

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**"The Alumni Corner" is your chance to share your news. Beginning fall 2007, send your contributions to Susan E. Hawkins at [hawkins@oakland.edu](mailto:hawkins@oakland.edu)**

**Patrick Bates** (BA '85, MA '93) is currently teaching English and Speech in the Utica Community Schools. He is also an Adjunct theatre instructor at Macomb Community College. In addition, Patrick has had several short plays produced and has received festival recognition for several original screenplays. Currently, his screenplay *Santa Claus Goes to Pirate Island* is in development with a California based production company.

**Amy (Rickstad) Wilczynski** writes, "Although it's been almost 10 years since I was a student at Oakland, I enjoy hearing news from the University and of course the Department of English. I was especially happy to learn of the Eberwein's retirement. Professor Robert Eberwein had such an impact on me as an undergraduate student — this provided me with the perfect opportunity to reach out to him and extend my well wishes."

**Winnie Chrzanowski** (MA '96) writes, "I read Natalie's article on the academic conference and it brought back memories of my one and only presentation of a paper at a conference—influenced by her. It was a scary endeavor, but one that helped give me more confidence in presenting my ideas—academic or business—in a relatively public venue. The conference was a Bowling Green U and my paper topic was Jenny Wren. Ahh nostalgia. Thanks Natalie for the memories."

**Shayla Hawkins** (BA '98) reports that her interview with National Book Award-winning novelist Charles Johnson, titled "To Transcribe and Transfigure: An Interview with Charles Johnson," is scheduled to be published in the winter 2007 issue of *Passages North*, the nationally distributed literary journal of Northern Michigan University.

**Joan Kiser**, formerly Joan Wells (BA '05) is currently a reading teaching in the Osceola County School District in Central Florida, where she has just received Teacher of the Year honors. Congratulations, Joanie! She also provided us with this heartening anecdote: "When I interviewed for my teaching job, principals were asking where I received my Bachelor's degree. When I said OU they got excited and I was not sure why. They went on to tell me that they heard about the school and that the state of Michigan in general has wonderful teachers, but more importantly that they had heard about the English department and were even more thrilled."

**Diana Pode-DeGroot** (MA '99) reports that she is now the proud mother of identical twin boys, nearly 3 years old. Diana writes, "They were a surprise and premature and have needed (and still need) a lot of extra care so they have been keeping me pretty busy."

**Leslie Lane King** currently resides in Fort Lauderdale, FL, where she is a self-employed writer working on her second historical fiction novel, called *Rhythm and Blues*, about a single female jazz singer in post-WWII Detroit. She also reports that she has received a query proposal for her most recent novel, *A Girl Named Fabrizia and a Fish Named Shells*, which will be sent to agents across the country, from NY to CA, in August.

**Matt Bell** reports that he has published almost thirty stories, flash fictions, and prose poems in a wide variety of publications. Matt has also served as guest editor of *SmokeLong Quarterly*'s upcoming fifteenth issue, and writes literary magazine reviews for *NewPages.com*. Three of Matt's works have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, including two for 2006: "White Lines and Headlights," which was published in *Barrelhouse*, and "The Present," which was written in Gladys Cardiff's Adv. Poetry workshop. "In fact," Matt adds, "four of the prose poems I wrote in Cardiff's class have since been published."

**Ted Bolak** (MA '05) has recently accepted a position as Stewardship Director for the Clinton River Watershed Council. In his spare time, Ted teaches English courses at local community colleges.

**Jane Asher** (MA '06) is currently teaching composition at Macomb Community College

**Sandra Merriweather** continues to teach at Henry Ford Community College, where she's been offered a range of courses over the past several semesters.

**Rachel Fellows** continues to teach at Davenport College, and she, too, is expanding her course offerings.

The *Channel* has recently learned that there is another Kathy Pfeiffer out there--our alum **Katherine Udicki Pfeiffer** wrote after last year's Maya Angelou reading to say that she's working as a full-time mom now, but misses her literature classes.

**Lyndsey Ferro** is working as the assistant to the VP of Certification and Diversity at the Institute for Supply Management and reports that the woman who hired her told her later that it was her understanding of African-American literature that helped get her the job. Lyndsey wrote a paper on Charles Chesnutt for her senior seminar on American Realism, and she mentioned her paper during the interview.

(Continued on page 11)

## Student News (cont'd from page 9)

### Flash Fiction Contest Winners

The top prize for this year's Flash Fiction Contest was awarded to Wendy Hedstrom for her story "Maybe They Do Float." Savannah Gignac took second and third place for her stories "St. Mary of Magadlena" and "Judith," and Chris Thompson earned honorable mention for his story "The Man Acted Crazy." Congratulations to our winners and thanks to all who submitted. The winning entries can be read on the department website (click on "Events") and have been published in the student literary

journal *Swallow the Moon*.

### Ekphrasis Poetry Contest Winners Announced

Michigan poet Karin Hoffecker served as judge for this year's Ekphrasis poetry contest. This year's top prize was given to Warren Keith Wright for his entry "Inescapable Prospect." Cameron Underdown earned second place honors for "Technicolor," while third place went to Kellie Riddell's "And Some Will Carry Burdens Heavy." Shayla Hawkins's "Web of Gold" and Mary Kathleen Angel's "The

Poet's Heart Beats in the Center" were given honorable mention. The winning poems were read at the annual Poetry Bash on Monday, April 16th.

### Sigma Tau Delta Awards

The English Honor's society is pleased to announce the winter semester Sigma Awards: Melissa L. Scott was honored for her outstanding service contributions to the society and Crystal Dale was recognized for her impressive academic performance.

## Alumni Corner (cont'd from page 10)

Melissa Zinn has founded a theatre company, Abstraction Theatre, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Abstraction Theatre's first production, *Things Didn't Turn Out The Way I Planned*, was performed in November 2006. It featured four short plays by Michigan authors, including a play by Zinn, *Oedipus (Wrecked)*. Zinn directed the production and played Ismene. Abstraction Theatre's second production, *Nineteen Variations on Hamlet*, premiered in March 2007. It was also written and directed by Zinn, who portrayed Ophelia. *Nineteen Variations on Hamlet* was awarded a grant from Bread for the Journey of Southwest Michigan.

Anne Zanoni writes to report that she is working as a personal assistant in Las Vegas and notes that her author, Stephen Brust, recently made it on to the *New York Times* best seller list.

Joy Friedler writes to announce that she has published an essay on the topic of "Praying" in the "Reader's Write" section of *The Sun Magazine*, available on-line.

Donald Beagle (BA, '75) reports the publication of his first book, published this past October, titled "The Information Commons Handbook." His next book, titled *Poet of the Lost Cause*, is now under contract to the University of Tennessee Press. A biography of the Irish-American Civil War poet and Confederate chaplain, Fr. Abram Ryan, the book traces Ryan's cultural impact as a popular versifier, lecturer, and influential southern

newspaper editor during Reconstruction.

Jacob Michael has been accepted to film school at the University of Southern California, one of the top film schools in the nation. He will begin this fall and study for an MFA degree in Writing for the Screen and Television.

### Keep It Coming

The Alumni Corner continues to grow! Thanks to all of you who have contributed. Please continue to keep us updated on the latest news in your lives, your accomplishments and milestones. Send your news to [hawkins@oakland.edu](mailto:hawkins@oakland.edu)

### Additional Feedback

*The English Channel* aims to keep you informed of all the happenings up on the fifth floor of Wilson Hall. As a cost-saving measure, the editorial committee has recently considered distributing the *Channel* entirely in electronic form (via email or the department website). We would like to solicit your input on this matter. Would you like to have the *Channel* zipped to you via email? Or do you prefer to receive it in hard copy? Please let us know!

## 2007: A Year of Transitions



*Retiring Distinguished Professors  
Jane and Bob Eberwein.*

2007 looks to be a year of transitions in the department of English. In January, the department bid farewell to our beloved administrative secretary Rosemary Aiello, who has retired to warmer climes in Arizona. And while Rosemary will be

deeply missed, the department is also delighted to welcome a new secretary, Cyndie Ferrera (see stories on page 2).

This year also marks the equally momentous retirements of the irreplaceable Distinguished Professors Jane and Bob Eberwein, who leave the department after more than 30 years of dedication (see story page 1).

As Rosemary and the Eberweins retire, the department is also excited to welcome two new faculty members. Andrea Knutson and Josh Yumibe will join the department this fall. Professor Knutson, a specialist in Early American Literature, comes to us from Minnesota. She received her PhD from the City University of New York. Professor Yumibe, a Film Studies specialist, comes to us from the University of Chicago where he recently completed his PhD. Please join us in welcoming these two fine additions to the department.

### Also in this issue

#### **Say it Ain't So**

The Eberweins Retire

#### **All on Fire**

An address by Rachel Banner

#### **Dudul**

A Romanian poem by Doris Runey

#### **Film Studies**

Kyle Edwards looks to the future

#### **A New Sheriff in Town**

Meet Cynthia Ferrera

#### **Honored**

An armload of student awards in '07

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