

The English Channel

The Alumni Newsletter of the Department of English

English Department Welcomes New Faculty

The English department is pleased to welcome two new members of the faculty this year, Andrea Knutson and Josh Yumibe. Professors Knutson and Yumibe specialize in early American literature and film studies, respectively.

Originally from Minnesota, Andrea comes to Oakland after earning her Ph.D. from The Graduate Center of the City University of New York. During her first semester, she is teaching courses on early American literature and Puritan theology, and notes that she has been happy to find “friendly, hard-working, and insightful students who make the imaginative leaps necessary to understand colonial America.” When she’s not working on her book manuscript, she’s exploring the Detroit area or biking the trails around Rochester.

Along with teaching classes on silent film history and on the technologies and aesthetics of the color cinema, Josh has been having fun exploring film culture in Detroit. He has taken his students to the Redford Theater and to the Detroit Film Theatre of the DIA for screenings and has sent students to do research at the Detroit Historical Museum, which currently has an excellent exhibit on the history of cinema theaters in the area. Josh says that he is “excited about the students’ interest in and knowledge of Detroit film history” and hopes to help them get involved with local filmmaking and programming venues.

We’re delighted to welcome these two dedicated teachers and accomplished scholars to the department and to introduce them to you.



Andrea Knutson (top) and Josh Yumibe

Bryan Dazzles at Annual Maurice Brown Reading

A packed house gathered on Thursday, October 26th for the 20th Annual Maurice Brown Poetry Reading. This year’s event was attended by over two hundred people from the university and the greater community and featured poet Sharon Bryan.

Bryan has published three collections of poetry: *Salt Air*, *Objects of Affection*, and *Flying Blind*. She edited a collection of essays, *Where We Stand: Women Poets on Literary Tradition*, and co-edited, with William Olsen, *Planet on the Table: Poets on the Reading Life*. She has



Poet Sharon Bryan

received two NEA fellowships for her poetry, a Governor’s Award from the state of Washington, and other prizes. Her poems appear in numerous anthologies, including *Writing Poems*, *Poetry 180*, and *Good Poems*. Sharon was pleased to announce that her fourth collection of poems *Stardust* is forthcoming from BOA early in 2008. During the event, Bryan read poems from all three books, which featured her eloquence and wit.

Many students in the audience were attending a poetry reading for the first time. They found themselves captivated and surprised by how much fun a poetry reading can be. For a taste of student reactions to the reading, see page 14.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR by Susan E. Hawkins

Fall 2007 has been filled with an amazing number of changes in the department: I've moved into the corner office as Chair while Kevin Grimm has moved into 513 Wilson Hall, former abode of Distinguished Professor Emerita, Jane D. Eberwein; in the meantime, Ed Haworth Hoepfner has taken over my old office, 519; and Brian Connery now occupies 501, former space of Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Robert T. Eberwein. In the midst of all this to-ing and fro-ing, two new and delightful faculty members, Andrea Knutson and Josh Yumibe (see story on p. 1), have settled into life here on the fifth floor of Wilson. We are grateful for their smart and energetic presence. Finally, department secretary Dana Pierce left at the beginning of fall semester to take a new position in Human Resources. Congratulations to Dana! We have greatly enjoyed working with our new

department secretary, Becky Fernandez, who joined us November 26.

The department would never have managed all these changes nor gotten through the multiple tasks of this semester without the oversight and grace of our Fabulous Administrative Secretary, Cynthia Ferrara. We cannot thank her enough.

The fall semester was filled with successful events, as you will see throughout the newsletter. Be sure to check the English Department website for winter semester's events.

We have received so much alumni news that it can no longer be confined to one corner! It has been gratifying to hear from you. Please keep those emails coming; we want to hear from you. And while I've got you in the spotlight, let me make my shameless appeal: this edition of the newsletter contains a form for charitable donations. Please make your checks out to Oakland University and write in the memo space at the bottom: English dept. Gift acct. #37519.

Our gift account, which comes from donations only, supports student travel, speakers, and special visiting writers, but we'd like to do more: for example, we very much want to initiate an annual event for our graduates as a way to honor their achievements. What a great way for students to celebrate their completion of the BA and MA degrees.

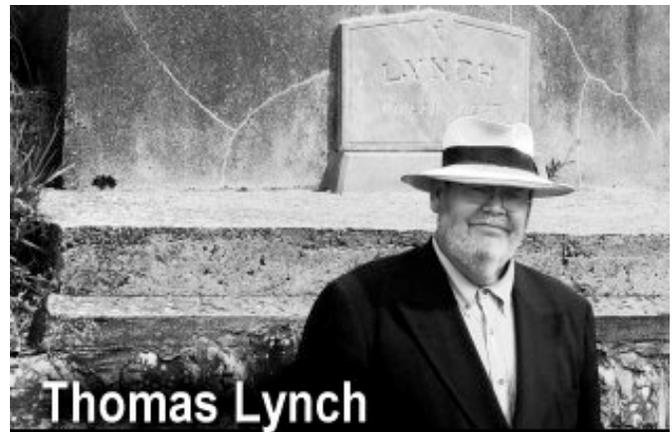
PBS Profiles Former OU English Major

In late October, the PBS series *Frontline* featured a film about the world of Thomas Lynch, "a poet and undertaker whose family for three generations has cared for both the living and the dead in Milford, Michigan." Tom was an English major at OU in 1969 when he got a lucky draft lottery number, dropped out of college, and went to Ireland to stay with his aunt Nora Lynch. His time in Ireland with Nora has been recounted in several of his books of essays, including *The Undertaking*, *Bodies in Motion and at Rest*, and *Booking Passage*, all of which weave Irish and Michigan heritage together with his eventual dual vocations as writer and funeral director,

Tom has maintained his ties with OU and the English Department, having offered one of the very first of our Maurice Brown Memorial Poetry Readings and having come back several times since. In 2001, he was awarded OU's honorary Doctoral Degree in Humanities.

As the *Frontline* documentary makes clear, Tom's family business (Lynch & Sons Funeral Homes) remains at the heart of his life and thought, and it is the way in which he has become particularly intimate with our local community.

"What I've written is that while the dead don't care, the dead matter," Lynch explains. "The dead matter to the living. In accompanying the dead, getting them



where they need to go, we get where we need to be -- to the edge of that oblivion and then returned to life with the certain knowledge that life has changed."

Alan Ball, the creator of the program *Six Feet Under*, has said that it was Lynch's writing that most influenced him as he thought about what the show was going to be. The *Frontline* documentary, which is both an attempt to understand the relation between the dead and the living, and a tribute to Tom and his family, can be viewed at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/undertaking/view/#more>

STEP Interns Experience Professional Development

**Promoting Adolescent Literacy through Technology...Inspiring Student Success with Poetry...
Using Science Fiction to Connect Math, Science, and Language Arts...Assessing Student Learning**

These were just some of the captivating sessions available to Secondary Teacher Education Program (STEP) students at the fall conference of the Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MCTE) in Lansing on October 5, 2007. Bridget Yaldou, Cindy LaDuke, Ralph Hickmott, Ashley Hart, Stacey Neef, Megan Penn, and Jianna Hair attended the conference with STEP Coordinator, Dr. Nancy Joseph. All of these students are engaged in their teaching internships for the 2007-08 school year.

The conference keynote speaker, Dr. Kathleen Blake Yancey, incoming president of the National Council of Teachers of English, presented "Literacy, Technologies, and the 21st Century: Where We Have Been, Are Now, and Are Going." She described how technology--whether it be chalkboards, keyboards, white boards, videos, or wireless laptops and Web sites--shapes the ways we read and write. According to Blake Yancey, middle school and high school teachers must understand the impact technology has on student learning, being especially aware of how the demands of literacy are changing in the 21st century.

STEP students noted that this professional development opportunity was directly related to their work in the classroom with their students. Ralph (Dan) Hickmott was interested in the emphasis on technology in the classroom because he has been promoting the development of reading and writing skills with his students at Eisenhower High School in Shelby Township. Hickmott comments, "I especially enjoyed the Digital Storytelling seminar at the conference. A student could use iMovie or Windows Movie Maker to create a video with narration on a personal or informational topic and then burn the video to a DVD and upload it online for others to view." He explains

that students would find this form of communication captivating as they hone their writing skills on the scripts they prepare.

Ashley Hart, who is interning at Heritage Junior High in Sterling Heights, also was intrigued by the many possibilities for digital storytelling presented at the conference: "Students add their voice, pictures, and music to create a meaningful effect in the stories or essays they write. I can't wait to try this with my students. I never realized how many innovative ideas teachers could take back to try in the classroom. I look forward to attending many more conferences like this in the future."

Thinking about the future, Jianna Hair, currently interning at Orchard Lake Middle School in West Bloomfield, attended a session on teachers as writers that will be relevant to her future as an educator. She discovered that "Teachers Writing for Publication" presented inspiring information for new teachers: "I went into this session thinking that I would get information for later in my career, but I came out with new connections and an idea for something I might write now,

so I think that the conference was a great opportunity."

Dr. Joseph encourages STEP students to attend the professional conferences available through the Michigan Council of Teachers of English. She explains, "Involvement with professional organizations gives teachers a sense of community and support while encouraging them to learn new strategies. Attending the conference is an enriching opportunity for new teachers as well as for veteran teachers, and I'm pleased that the STEP interns have the opportunity to become familiar with MCTE." The next conference will be held in April 2008 on the campus of Michigan State University.



Cindy LaDuke, Jianna Hair, Ashley Hart, Nancy Joseph, Bridget Yaldou (front). Megan Penn, Stacey Neef, Ralph Hickmott (back).

ESSAY

Unlikely Actors Bring Shakespeare to Life *by Niels Herold*

This October 19th, I passed through the metal detectors at Luther Luckett Correctional Complex for the third time—to observe the nationally acclaimed theater program called *Shakespeare Behind Bars* in rehearsal for their production of *Julius Caesar*. The SBB actors devote an entire year to the preparation of a Shakespeare play for public performance. Summer months are used for casting and studying the play; in the fall the company convenes for theater workshops and an intensive reading and discussion of the entire play. Performances of *Julius Caesar*, both for the prison population and the public, will occur in April, 2008.

For two days at the end of this coming January, SPB director Curt Tofteland will visit Oakland University to conduct theater workshops on campus, engage Shakespeare classes, and preside over a screening and “talk-back” of the award winning documentary film about his acting company: *Shakespeare Behind Bars*. My recent October visit with the inmates was another eye-opener into the magical theatrical process Tofteland has created to produce truly memorable and professional performances of Shakespeare’s greatest plays.

Since a number of the actors are new to the company this year, their sessions with each other at the moment begin with a vigorous set of ensemble exercises designed to build collaborative strength and performance power. The actors form a circle and “pass around” the sound of clapped hands. The clarity of purpose this exercise produces is immediately apparent; fifteen men are suddenly focused in the present, somatically engaged and rhythmically related through a cadence that quickly grows in speed and grace. The actors then team up in a game of “zip, zap, zoe”; in rapid succession they fire off one of the three syllables in this phrase to one another randomly, by shooting their arms out like arrows. This game builds solidarity and quickness of recovery; in a live theatrical show the company members have to trust each other to sustain the staccato cadence and seamless fiction of performance, even in the presence of an occasionally mis-remembered or forgotten line.

The third workshop game segued into the performance text of *Julius Caesar* and was for me the most interesting of these exercises in developing a sort of group-dynamic muscle tone. Here all the actors in the company had memorized a fairly long and emotionally charged speech from Julius Caesar, which begins with the eerily relevant words (to a company of inmate actors): “O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth, / That I am meek and gentle with these

butchers!” — the opening lines to Antony’s great soliloquy as he’s left alone on stage to commune with the body of freshly murdered Caesar. This is electric poetry, ritually pulsing with Antony’s vision of a rebellious world suddenly turned to revenge and disorder:

Blood and destruction shall be so in use
And dreadful objects so familiar
That mothers shall but smile when they behold
Their infants quarter’d with the hands of war;
All pity choked with custom of fell deeds:
And Caesar’s spirit, ranging for revenge,
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,
Shall in these confines with a monarch’s voice
Cry ‘Havoc’, and let slip the dogs of war...

This magnificent speech was set in motion by each actor taking one word of it, at first slowly and deliberately, and then gradually accelerating the recitation until fifteen men were speaking in one unified voice. It’s a mystery to me how profoundly Shakespeare’s language inhabits the performance minds and bodies of these actors, for at the accelerated moment of this game, all are Antony!

In the time remaining, the actors continued their “first reading” and “discovery” of the play, and many of them were already “off-book” (not reading but reciting and even acting). They had reached the pivotal third act of the play where we watch the major conspirators—Brutus and Cassius—begin to crack and falter in their revolt. Having convinced themselves that it was the right thing to do for republican Rome (getting rid of imperious Caesar through knife wounds delivered like votes), they now fall into conscience-plagued distrust of each other, even as Mark Antony and the tribunal that replaces Caesar hardens into the killing machine that will eventually annihilate Caesar’s assassins. The discovery discussions that followed each scene were filled with lots of animated talk about personal loyalty and blood honor, and they generated for me a peculiar, disturbing and yet liberating, mimetic intensity.

There is something about seeing this particular company in action that makes me feel mysteriously close to Shakespeare and renewed as a teacher of his works. Come see the film documentary about this remarkable theater company and talk to its revolutionary artistic director when he comes to Oakland University, January 31–February 1.

Prof. Herold is currently teaching a graduate course on Shakespearean drama

ANECDOTES

The Lives of Writers *by Kathy Pfeiffer*

While a good deal of my scholarly work in biography studies is motivated by academic inquiry into the genre, I must confess that I keep reading biographies looking for juicy details from other people's lives. This extends beyond my interest in authors; did you know that Julia Child had plastic surgery? More than once? No, of course you didn't, because she recovered in complete isolation and never spoke of it publicly. But as I keep learning, you cannot libel the dead, and so the anecdotes that emerge in biographies reveal secrets long protected by the living. For all that Anne Sexton revealed to us in her confessional poetry, for example, what I find deeply affecting in her biography is the habit that she and Maxine Kumin developed early in their friendship of telephoning each other every morning to read their current poems to each other for commentary and review. They would keep the line connected for hours at a time and whistle into the telephone to get the other's attention to ask a question or read a revised line.

My favorite stories to date, however, come from Hermione Lee's recent biography of Edith Wharton and deal with Wharton's friendship with Henry James. Lee reports:

Wharton mentioned once that the car in which they were riding had been bought with the proceeds of her last novel. "With the proceeds of my last novel," said Henry meditatively, "I purchased a small go-cart, or hand-barrow, on which my guests' luggage is wheeled from the station to my house. With the proceeds of my next novel I shall have it painted."

On another automobile trip, Wharton and James were looking for the King's Road in Windsor, and they sought directions of an elderly man. Wharton relates the story of how James—with quintessentially Jamesian elaboration—asked for help:

"In short, my good man, what I want to put to you in a word is this: supposing we have already (as I have reason to think we have) driven past the turn down to the railway station (which, in that case, by the way, should probably not have been on our left hand, but on our right), where are we now in relation to..."

"Oh, please," I interrupted, feeling myself utterly unable to sit through another parenthesis, "do ask him where the King's Road is."

"Ah--? The King's Road? Just so! Can you, as a matter of fact, my good man, tell us where in relation to our present position, the King's Road exactly *is*?"

"Ye're in it," said the aged face at the window.

Read biographies and memorize their anecdotes; trot them out at cocktail parties and lunch meetings. Years from now, perhaps, your own biographer will report that you had a head full of amusing details and a gift for storytelling.

In addition to her continuing work on a biography of Waldo Frank, Prof. Pfeiffer recently taught a graduate course on biography as a genre

BOOK REVIEW

The Keep is a Keeper *by Rob Anderson*

Jennifer Egan's recent novel *The Keep* is an ambitious reworking of the gothic novel, with all the trappings familiar from the tradition initiated by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). Egan's novel updates the Gothic elements in surprising (and gratifying) ways. It is set in a castle with secret subterranean passageways—but this castle is being converted to an upscale resort hotel. Like all good gothic novels, *The Keep* involves disputed claims to property, unusual sexual experiences, being trapped in underground tunnels, paranoia-inducing odd towns, and gender-bending characters.

The main plot revolves around Danny, who is asked to help his cousin Howard convert an old castle in an unnamed Eastern European country into an upscale technology-free resort hotel designed to heal people's imagination. The invitation is complicated by two facts. First, Danny is addicted (one of many addictions in the novel) to electronic communication—particularly the feelings of being in a place and not being there, of being in two places at one time. Second, the last time Danny saw his cousin, he was Howie, an overweight misfit who played imaginative games, and whom Danny had lured, pushed, and abandoned in a pool in a subterranean cave. While the family was searching for Howie for days, Danny never let on he knew where he was. Although Howard never says anything about the cave, the possibility of revenge haunts the novel.

Danny's childhood prank of leaving Howie in the cave to die reverberates throughout the novel in more subtle ways as well. In fact, Howard's kooky project of restoring people's imagination by weaning them away from technology can be seen as an attempt to rescue people from caves of the platonic variety. In an argument with Danny, he explains that the people Danny talks to on the cell phone aren't really there, they are just "shadows" and "disembodied voices"—recalling the shadows and disembodied voices on the back of the wall in Plato's allegory of the cave, which the prisoners of the cave mistake for reality.

It is tempting to see the implicit allusion to Plato as a sign that the novel is articulating an unqualified critique of our own technological addiction—and every time I see a student "secretly" checking email or text mail messages during class, I think the novel's critique of the inability to be satisfied in one place is spot on. But the novel connects the disease (the illusion of seeing and hearing things that aren't really there and the need to be in two places at one time) with the cure: imagination, which is also a means of seeing things which aren't there and fosters the feeling of being in two places at once. This leads to one of the most rewarding aspects of the novel. The novel's meditation on writing and loss and guilt is delightful and surprising.

(continued on next page)

BOOK REVIEW: *THE KEEP* (continued from page 5)

I don't want to say too much here because a significant portion of the novel's many pleasures is its experimentation with narrative technique. Each narrative voice is simultaneously "real" and ostentatiously artificial. The novel's twisting plot has the kind of suspense typical of a gothic novel, but it also provides many formal surprises as well. I will only offer

one mild spoiler (it is revealed on page 12): after establishing a quirky but omniscient third person narrative voice, we learn that the narrator is, in fact, a character who is writing the novel for a writing class—in prison. This sounds like a cheap gimmick, but it is not. In Egan's hands, the sections devoted to this are compelling. Take a look at *The Keep*. It will reward you

REPORT

The Changing Face of Publishing *by Annie Gilson*

I have been involved in the publishing world for only a brief time (about two years), but I thought I would give a report "from the front," in so far as one can say that there is one, or that I know what it is. On the critic's end of the business, I have been reviewing fiction for a year now, for *Publishers Weekly*, *Rain Taxi*, and *American Book Review*. *PW* provides capsule reviews of novels before they're published (though they don't review all novels that come out). *RT* and *ABR* attempt to help close the gap left by publications such as *PW* by attending mostly to novels published by small presses. It is not their intention to cover all novels published by small presses; instead, they provide more in-depth reviews of a select number of books.

The existence of *Rain Taxi* and *ABR* speaks to an important trend in mainstream publishing of which I wasn't aware: that these days, more and more frequently, the mainstream (read: corporate) presses are bypassing literary fiction, which doesn't sell as well as commercial and genre fiction. One result (or perhaps co-casualty) of this trend: the review sections of newspapers and magazines that traditionally reviewed literary fiction are disappearing. Another result: small presses are now becoming the most reliable publishers of innovative, serious fiction in this country. At the annual conference of the Associated Writing Programs last year, panel after panel of speakers testified to the difficulty of getting literary novels published. Overall, writers and readers at the conference had the sense that literary fiction is going the way of poetry, in that it will not be handled by mainstream presses (with a few exceptions, among these, the work of celebrity novelists).

I'm especially interested in this matter because I'm about to begin searching for a literary agent to see if I can place my second novel, *A Book of Mirrors*, with a mainstream press. I published my first novel, *New Light*, with *Black Heron*, a small press out of Seattle, and thought I would look into the universe of mainstream publishing, now that I have job security. My research has revealed some interesting impressions (I can't call

them facts.) New novels are still being published: indeed, some literary agents are especially interested in debut fiction, with the hopes that new voices may garner attention in the mainstream publishing arena. But what I find shocking is that accomplished writers, many of whom have received national prizes and have published three or four or five novels, are often unable to get agents, or get their calls returned by potential agents, and are unable to place their new works at mainstream publishing houses. This seems to be a symptom of what folks in the business call "the death of the mid-list." New novelists can get published (a few, if they're lucky), and the greats and the trendy will continue to make their literary splashes. But the authors who sold okay but not spectacularly? These folks are going to be forced out of the mainstream lists.

What to do about this? Well, first of all, readers can all make an effort to buy new fiction. We can call our libraries and ask them to stock books that we love. Sales really do help authors of literary fiction to justify their existence in the mainstream press universe. Second, we can help to support the small presses that publish literary fiction, by reading *Rain Taxi* and *American Book Review*, to keep tabs on what's out there. There are other sources, too: Dustbooks, a publishing house (www.dustbooks.com) that also records and reviews small press publications; and Small Press Distribution, which calls itself A Nonprofit for New Writing and sends out an e-newsletter (www.spdbooks.org), to name a few.

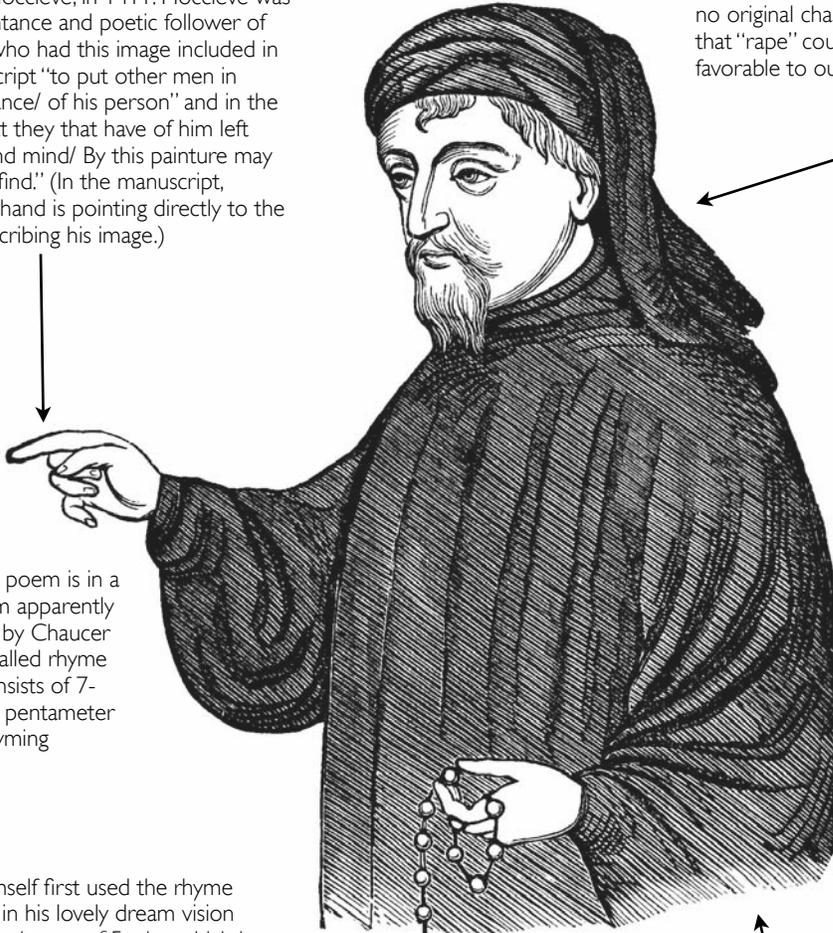
It's a brave new world for writers these days. There are some terrific small presses and small magazines out there, helping to make a difference. Readers and writers have to join ranks. We have to fight the good fight. The battle is on.

Prof. Gilson is currently teaching an Advanced Workshop in Fiction.

AUTHORS EXPLAINED...GEOFFREY CHAUCER by Kevin Grimm

The son of a wine merchant and having achieved the status of "esquire" (that is, "gentle," but not aristocratic), Chaucer supported himself through various positions in the royal bureaucracy of 14th-century England, apparently serving three kings successfully (and relatively quietly).

This image of Chaucer was painted into a manuscript of *The Regement of Princes*, by Thomas Hoccleve, in 1411. Hoccleve was an acquaintance and poetic follower of Chaucer, who had this image included in his manuscript "to put other men in remembrance/ of his person" and in the hope "That they that have of him left thought and mind/ By this painture may again him find." (In the manuscript, Chaucer's hand is pointing directly to the stanza describing his image.)



A final, less happy first: the first English writer to apparently have been charged with rape. In 1380 one Cecily Chaumpaigne legally released Chaucer from all legal action relating to her rape. While we don't know any of the details, as we only have the release and no original charge or accusation, and while medieval usage meant that "rape" could mean abduction, the overall impression is not favorable to our author.

He is the first English writer to refer to and reveal the significant influence of Dante (likely the result of three trips to Italy Chaucer undertook on the business of the King during the 1370s). Chaucer also draws on the work of other Italian writers, Petrarch and Boccaccio.

Though now known most widely for *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer was best known in his own day for his masterpiece *Troilus and Criseyde* (which many modern scholars also consider his finest work). This poem, along with his earlier poems, established him as the first great love poet in English.

We might note here Chaucer's tremendous versatility, composing in virtually every conceivable genre and poetic form of his day. *The Canterbury Tales* is an anthology of medieval literary forms—satire, romance, fabliau, beast fable, sermon, saint's life, penitential manual, moral exemplum, tail-rhyme romance.

Hoccleve's poem is in a poetic form apparently pioneered by Chaucer and later called rhyme royal. It consists of 7-line iambic pentameter stanzas, rhyming ababbcc.

Chaucer himself first used the rhyme royal stanza in his lovely dream vision poem, *The Parlement of Fowles*, which is the first Valentine's Day poem. (That is, it is the first written record, of any kind, that directly links the feast of St. Valentine to the idea of human romantic love. You're welcome, Hallmark.)

Chaucer is responsible for many recorded firsts in English literature. He is the first to employ iambic pentameter couplets (later to be called heroic couplets). He is the first to use the word "army;" and the English word "pander" very likely seems to descend from Chaucer's character, Pandarus, in *Troilus and Criseyde*.

He seems also to be the first known technical writer in English, as among his literary productions is a "Treatise on the Astrolabe," a fine technical manual on the theory and practical use of this device for measuring the positions of stars and planets. Chaucer wrote this work for his "little son Lewis."

News Shorts

Readers Ride *The Waves*

On November 19th, the English Department held its Third Annual Read-In at the OC's Fireside Lounge. This year's text was Virginia Woolf's difficult, beautiful novel, *The Waves*.

Read-In founder Rob Anderson reports that the event drew "34 readers filling up 49 slots: 10 faculty, 6 grad students, 1 alum (Lisa Czapski, who read beautifully 5 times, and brought us home), and 17 undergraduate students." This year's read-in also boasted our largest audience yet, ranging from nearly 30 listeners at the beginning to 3 die-hards who stayed through to the end (Lisa Czapski, Gwyn Skindzier, and Rob). Anderson also notes that "Jennifer Parker and Treasure Groh from Sigma Tau Delta made crucial contributions both in reading and providing food and taking pictures." Next year's event will feature John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and will once again take place the Monday before Thanksgiving.

English Faculty Take On Detroit Marathon

Eard-Stapan, the English Dept's marathon relay team, pounded its way to second place in the Universities and Colleges division of the Detroit Marathon with a time of 3:48:53 (115th place in the relays overall). Kevin Grimm led the charge with a breathtaking sprint over the Ambassador Bridge; Kevin Laam brought the chip back to Michigan through the tunnel; Susan Beckwith ran a double-leg (filling in for the ailing Jeff Insko) out to Belle Isle and back; and Brian Connery brought the team home through Greektown. Team captain Connery has issued a challenge to other OU departments for next year's marathon, offering to put a contribution to a dept., specified by the winners, on the line. Alums and friends of the dept. are invited to train with members of the team at the inaugural running of the Brookside Half-Marathon, with a start line at Meadowbrook Hall, Oct. 8, 2008.



Eard Stapan Team Captain Brian Connery at the Detroit Marathon.

Addams Biographer Lectures on New Book

On Monday, Nov. 12, Katherine Joslin, professor of English at Western Michigan University and a 1970 graduate of Oakland University, presented a lecture, "Jane Addams: A Female Revolutionary," Joslin is the author of the acclaimed biography *Jane Addams, A Writer's Life*. As a special treat to OU students, Joslin remained on campus Tuesday to read from her new book and answer questions from the audience, which included members of Kathy Pfeiffer's Biography class, literature lovers, and supporters of female revolutionaries like Addams.



Susan Hawkins (above) and Lisa Czapski at the Third Annual Read-In.

Visiting Scholar Speaks on the Nigerian Novel

Professor/Author Mariaconcetta Costantini generously shared her time this fall with Oakland University students from the Honors College and Professor Natalie Cole's Advanced English Courses (ENG 303 and 452). Professor Costantini is an Associate Professor of English at the University G. d'Annunzio of Chieti-Pescara in Pescara, Italy. Published extensively on Victorian literature, postmodern fiction, and the postcolonial novel, she is also the author of *Behind the Mask: A Study of Ben Okri's Fiction* and *Poesia E. Soversione: Christina Rossetti, Gerard Manley Hopkins*.

In addition to her class visits, Prof. Costantini also delivered a public lecture on "The Idea of Palingenesis in the Nigerian Novel." She discussed four Nigerian author's fictional works that use the palingenesis as a figurative tool in their writing. Palingenesis means the rebirth, revival, or resuscitation of an entity. Each of the author's stories involves protagonists in Nigeria and how they are coping with the changes of government, philosophy, and religion during the rebirth of their nation.

The talk focused upon Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*, Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy*, and Ben Okri's *Dangerous Love* and *The Joys of Storytelling*. The four authors each gave morsels and glimpses into the evolutionary history of the Nigerian people during the 1900's through fictional characters. Achebe's novel's time period was when society was nativistic and clinging to their past beliefs. Soyinka's and Ken Saro-Wiwa's novels show us the time period when Nigerians believed that their country should have been established and prosperous; instead life was full of frustrating decades of confusion and disillusionment. Okri's stories give people hope and inspiration, with new ideas that metamorphose into a brighter future.

[Editor's Note: The Channel would like to thank student Kelly Coakley for this account of Professor Costantini's visit.]

Faculty Notes

IN PRINT

Ed Haworth Hoepfner's second volume of poems, *Ancestral Radio*, is scheduled for publication in December by Word Press.

Natalie Cole's essay, "'A bed abroad': Travel Lodgings and the Apartment House Plot in *Little Dorrit* and *The Haunted Hotel*," will be published in the next issue of *The Wilkie Collins Society Journal*.

Brian Connery has provided an introduction for Rutgers University Press's reissue of Matthew Hodgart's *Satire*, a groundbreaking exploration of satire in several media, due for publication in 2008. Brian has also rejoined with Kirk Combe (Denison University), with whom he edited the 1995 volume, *Theorizing Satire*, to work on a new volume, *Practicing Satire*, which will explore the work of contemporary satirists in a variety of media.

Andrea Knutson's book, tentatively titled *American Spaces of Conversion: The Pragmatist Imaginaries of Jonathan Edwards, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and William James*, has been accepted for publication by Oxford University Press. The book is due out in early 2009.

Jeffrey Insko published "'All of us are Ahabs: *Moby-Dick* in Contemporary Public Discourse" in the Fall 2007 issue of the *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*. His essay on Washington Irving, "Diedrich Knickerbocker, Regular Bred Historian," will be published in the Summer 2008 issue of *Early American Literature*.

Kevin Laam's essay, "'Like Chaucers boye': Poetry and Penitence in Gascoigne's Grief of Joye" will appear in an upcoming issue of *Early Modern Literary Studies*.

Pam Mitzelfeld is writing a memoir of James Rosenthal, the president of National Lumber, based in Warren, who has watched his very successful business fall into a downward spiral over the last two years because of the state of the housing industry in our region. The book will recount his experience and offer advice for others on managing in a crisis. The 18-month project will begin in August. Pam has secured two \$1,000 scholarships for Honors College students, English major Jaclyn Carline and Business major Alan Jaros, to assist with the project.

Kathy Pfeiffer is editing the correspondence of Jean Toomer and Waldo Frank, to be published by the University of Illinois Press, due out in 2009. The University of Florida Press will publish her edition of Selected Letters of Waldo

Frank, scheduled for delivery in 2012.

Rachel Smydra's essay, "'Chick Lit' in Publishing and Academia: Commodity or Genre?" will be published in the online journal *Plagiarist 2007*.

Joshua Yumibe's essay, "Silent Cinema Color Aesthetics," has been published in *Questions of Color in Cinema: From Paintbrush to Pixel*, edited by Wendy Everett (Oxford: Peter Lang Publishing), 2007.

AT THE PODIUM

Rob Anderson presented "Raising Objections: Godwin's Juvenile Library" at the International Conference on Romanticism at Towson University in Baltimore in

October. Rob also presented "'The hourglass contemn'd': Time and Labor in Blake and Wordsworth," co-authored with Jeff Insko at the joint conference of the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism and the British Association of Romantic Studies at the University of Bristol, in Bristol, England last July.

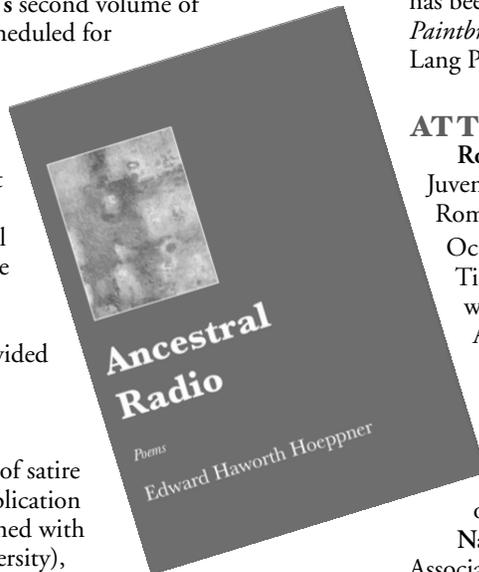
Natalie Cole gave a paper at the 2007 Dickens Symposium in Montreal: "Giants' Tea, Beanstalks, and Bride-Cake: Leisure Practices in Vacations Texts of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins."

Nancy Joseph attended the North Carolina Reading Association Annual Conference in Greensboro where she presented, "Exploring the World of Content-Area Reading: What are Secondary Students Telling Us?"

Andrea Knutson attended the American Literature symposium on American Literary Naturalism in October and delivered a paper called "William James's Response to Darwin: Theory as Theology in The Varieties of Religious Experience." Andrea, along with Jeff Insko also attended a conference gathering of Michigan early Americanists in July on the campus of Michigan State. Andrea spoke on "Jonathan Edwards and the Aesthetics of Thinking." Jeff spoke on "Electricity in *The Linwoods*."

Kathy Pfeiffer participated in the Socratic Leadership Seminar at the Liberty Fund, Inc in Indianapolis. This colloquium runs by invitation only and is designed to give participants a detailed understanding of the founding principles and ideology of the organization. Kathy has been invited to direct a conference sponsored by the Liberty Fund this coming April, 2008 on "Liberty and Responsibility in the Work of Ralph Ellison and Robert Penn Warren." The conferees who have accepted her invitation to participate include the literary executor of each writer as well as other scholars and writers.

In October, Joshua Yumibe attended the Giornate del Cinema Muto in Pordenone, Italy. He is collaborating with the Giornate on a project to preserve the Davide Turconi Frame Collection, a collection of 18,000 frame fragments from silent films made between 1905 and 1912.



Student News

Semester Abroad



Orsola Curcuru, a senior English major and Secondary Teacher Education student, is spending the semester in Macerata, Italy. Her study abroad coursework includes a cross-cultural Italian language course and courses in art history and painting, an international experience that allows her to enjoy the history, culture, and lifestyle of another country. Living and studying in Italy has been a valuable experience for Orsola who reports, "I love living in another culture and being able to practice my Italian on a daily basis. I am going to be at OU for a total of six years, and I planned this semester purposely so that I could study in Italy. It was the best decision I've ever made, and I'm finally doing something that is just for me. I would recommend this to other students because this is a beautiful, enriching experiencing."

Why did Orsola choose to study in Italy? She grew up speaking Sicilian and studied Italian for two years. She has relatives in Sicily and enjoys studying the Italian language, noting that she truly enjoys developing her language skills. Her regular schedule includes meeting each week with a local student to practice speaking Italian. Orsola

plans to become an English teacher and looks forward to sharing stories of Italy with her students. "This experience will affect my work as a teacher. It's helped me become more tolerant and open minded about other cultures and foreign ideas," she comments.

Orsola's experiences in Italy include excursions by train to towns such as Assisi and Mantova where she finds good food and a relaxed, tourist-free atmosphere. She delights in the old world charm of these lovely towns. Other pastimes include sampling gelato from local vendors, eating lots of pizza and pasta, visiting new Italian friends, shopping at the farmers' market, and picking olives.

The program Orsola participates in is called Macerata and is available through Oakland University's study abroad program. After a semester in Italy creating memories to last a lifetime, Orsola will return to campus in January 2008. Ciao!

Student Attends Dickens Symposium

Graduate student Chinmayi Kattemalavadi presented a paper, "Losing the Apron, Releasing the Voice: Jarrold's Composing Space for Women in *Great Expectations*" at the 2007 Dickens Symposium in Montreal.

Writing Excellence Awards

On November 14, English majors Brian Weibel, Ashley McIntosh and Nancy Andrews were honored at the Writing Excellence Awards luncheon sponsored by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Virinder Moudgil, and the Department of Rhetoric, Communication and Journalism. Their essays swept the awards in Category Five: Papers submitted in Humanities courses, including advanced Rhetoric courses.

Brian's essay, "Have a Coke and a Smile," placed first and was originally

written in Linda McCloskey's Creative Nonfiction Workshop in Fall '06. Ashley's essay, "While Thinking of Spiders" (2nd place), and Nancy's essay, "What the Words Have Said" (Hon. Mention), were submitted in Professor McCloskey's Advanced Writing course in Winter '07.

Excerpts from Writing Excellence Award Winners

My phone is on the fritz. I dial customer service from my wife's phone and I'm greeted by the friendly and helpful automated voice system.

Thank you for calling. Your call is important to us. Please listen to all of the menu options as some options may have recently changed.

It occurs to me that if I were calling so often that I actually had the voice mail tree memorized, I'd either have no business utilizing this technology, or I may wish to consider a more reliable service provider.

Please press 1 if you are a corporate customer

Please press 2 if you are a Small Business customer

Please press 3 if you are a domestic service customer

I press 3.

—from "Have a Coke and a Smile" by Brian Weibel

How did the beetle feel in that moment, I wonder, as the spider's fangs relentlessly plunged into her helpless body over and over again, as she twitched and writhed in agony, thrashing to and fro in a futile attempt to escape her imminent demise?

—from "While Thinking of Spiders" by Ashley McIntosh

Friends have always made fun of me because when I tell stories, I include every little detail. I love the details. I'm obsessed with details; the color of stitching in jeans, the freckles just to the side of the eye, the pinprick dimple beside a smile. Details are what make people and places dear to us. Details make things comfortable, familiar, and recognizable.

—from "What the Words Have Said" by Nancy Andrews

Alumni Corner

“The Alumni Corner” is your chance to share your news. Beginning fall 2007, send your contributions to Susan E. Hawkins at hawkins@oakland.edu

Molly Brodak (BA '04) won the 2006 Midwest Chapbook competition hosted by Green Tower Press. The result is her first collection of poems, *Instructions for a Painting*. Molly is currently completing her MFA in creative writing at West Virginia University.

Scott Higgins (BA '90) recently helped put together a series of film retrospectives on “Glorious Technicolor” for the Museum of the Moving Image in New York City. On Nov. 17, 2007, Scott gave a public lecture at the Museum to kick off the series as well as the publication of his new book *Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow: Color Design in the 1930s* (U of Texas Press). Scott is currently Associate Professor of Film Studies at Wesleyan University.

Jon Ballard (BA '94; MA '98) reports that his poetry has now appeared in over forty literary journals, including *The Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Barnwood Magazine*, *Soundings East*, *Blue Earth Review*, and *The MacGuffin*, and he is the author of two poetry chapbooks, *Lonesome* (Pudding House) and *Sad Town* (Maverick Duck Press), with a third chapbook, *Trees Make You Think of Other Things* (Foothills Publishing) forthcoming in 2008. Over the past several years he has taught composition, creative writing and literature at Oakland Community College in Royal Oak. Currently, he is living in Mexico City, Mexico, with his wife Betsy and two daughters, Madeleine and Natalie.

Anne Cattermole Levy (BA '72, MA '81) has received her MA in Theatre from Michigan State University and has been named an Associate Professor of Theatre at MSU with a joint appointment with the College of Business where she has taught law since 1987. Anne has also started her own theatre company, The Phoenix Players, in South Lyon Michigan, which begins its second full season of adult and children's productions and workshops.

Kathryn Balteff writes from the east coast: “We now live in Maine where I'm the lead teacher of the Life Skills Special Education Program at Mt. Desert Island High School (Bar Harbor). I'm also working on my Ed.D. in Educational Leadership at the University of Maine, Orono. Teaching, research, and writing being what they are, my work days are very full. However, I still find plenty of time to enjoy the beautiful wilderness where we live. My husband Brian is a Park Ranger at Acadia National Park. The kids are all grown, out on their own, and we have two beautiful granddaughters -

ages 2 1/2 and 6 months - thanks to our youngest Alyssa and her husband Scott. They also live here in Maine which is very nice!

Joy Gaines-Friedler has good news: “On Halloween night I received an email from Judith Kerman at Mayapple Press to inform me that my poetry manuscript, *Childless Morning*, has been picked up by her press and will be published sometime in late summer 2008. Her assistant Amee described my work as “stunning” but scolded me for my “irregular punctuation, even for poetry.” Jack Ridl, a poet and teacher from Hope College whom I tremendously admire, says this: “Your work puts the soul in the place it should be. . . . These poems are necessary.”

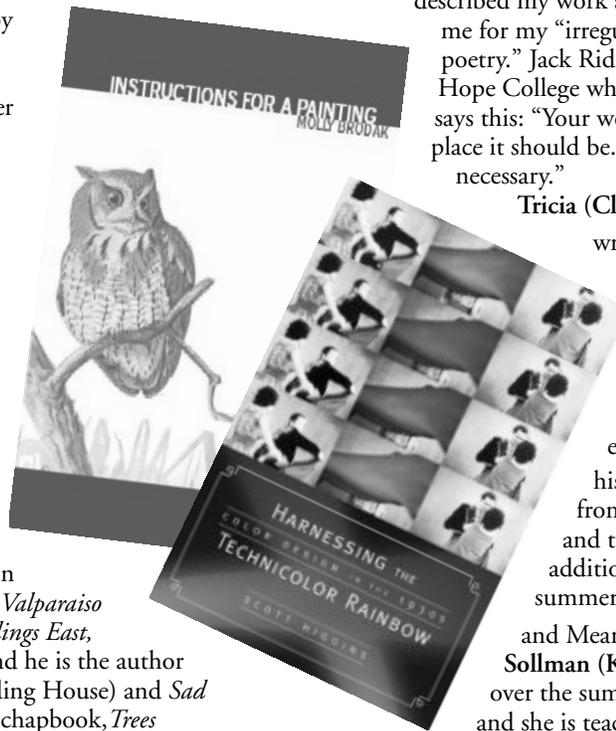
Tricia (Clendenan) La Valley

writes: “I got a new teaching assignment the second week of school here-gave up drama for history! YEAH! It was/is a big change and a lot more work, really, but I'm enjoying teaching American history. I got my Masters from Marygrove this last May, and then I completed an additional 15 credits over the summer in Classroom Management and Meaningful Activities. Jennie Sollman (Kotowski) had a baby boy over the summer. We are very close, still, and she is teaching English and Science in Orion in her 3rd year.

Lake

Debora K. (Craft) Marsh (MA '92) writes: I've been teaching at Dexter High School since 1994 (got my masters in 1992 from OU in English) and am the chair of the English department. We're in the process of moving from semesters to trimesters so we're revamping our whole English curriculum. It's a lot of work but it's exciting. We're having fun and we're making some great changes to engage kids (hopefully) in their last two years of high school. I'm also the Debate and Forensics coach there and am involved in a variety of committees and work at school. I'm also writing a lot. I participated in the Eastern Michigan Writing Project this past summer and loved it! My favorite part was “sacred writing time” and I've adapted the practice to use in some of my high school classes. I started a novel that I hope I finish one of these days and made a lot of good friends. The Writing Project is an amazing opportunity and I think every teacher should participate in it at least once!

“Finally it might be interesting to know that my poetry is really taking off. I have several poems published in anthologies as well as my own book of poetry and a new political parody of *Horton Hears a Who* called I'm also working on a poetry textbook for Poetry Slam, Inc. using performance poets as video examples of poetry as well as written pieces. I hope that will be done by next summer. I am



also the program director of the first ever Women of the World Poetry Slam to be held in Chicago on March 27-29, 2008. It should be amazing!"

Alicia McCalla (formerly Cunningham-Sampson) is currently a Media Specialist with Gwinnett County Schools in the Metro Atlanta Area. In addition to introducing students to the library, she also teaches Video Broadcast and works with the school's TV Team to produce a TV show. At Oakland, she studied literature and film under both Eberweins and wishes them much success in retirement.

Shayla Hawkins reports that her short story "Grandma Iguana" appears in Volume 21 of *The Caribbean Writer* and two of her poems are featured in the latest issue (Volume 39) of *Pembroke Magazine* published annually through the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. Her second interview with National Book Award-winning novelist Charles Johnson is slated for publication in *The Writer* magazine in early 2008.

Gary Miron (BA '03) writes, "My girlfriend (fellow alum, **Kelly DuBois**) and I regularly read through *The English Channel* to keep up on some of the latest news from our favorite English department. We were saddened to learn of the Eberweins' retirement, but happy for them. Kelly and I were both lucky enough to have them as professors at OU.

It was Kelly's urging that finally convinced me that I have news worth sharing. About a year or so ago, I started submitting poetry to various journals around the country. I've now had fourteen poems published in publications such as *Ceremony Collected*, *Remark*, and *Black Book Press*. I've also finished the manuscript for a novel that I'm going to start shopping around in the very near future.

But besides all of that, I relocated earlier this year to northern Chicago where I'm taking some tentative steps toward becoming involved in the rich literary community of the big city. Chicago is a great place but I still miss the Michigan farmlands where I grew up.

P.S. Early in our relationship, I impressed Kelly by reading her some passages from *The Riverside Chaucer*. (Thanks, Professor Grimm!)"

Lance Norman reports that he is "just starting to adjust to life post-graduate school. Last summer I defended my dissertation and completed my PhD from Michigan State University. My dissertation: "A Different Kind of Failure: Rupture, Transfiguration, and the Future of Indeterminacy in Modern Drama," embraces dramatic indeterminacy as a guiding principle that encompasses the seemingly divergent theatres of Henrik Ibsen, Eugene O'Neill, Harold Pinter, Sarah Kane, Sam Shepard, and Eugene Ionesco. In modern and contemporary drama, I argue, the perpetually referenced but never seen off-stage object, the paradoxical proliferation of the dead child as dramatic emblem, and invisible objects establish the disunity of dramatic form as integral to performative practice.

This year I have a one-year postdoc at U of M. In addition to revising my dissertation for publication, I have one forthcoming essay on Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*, another on Harold Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*, and I am editing an essay collection on drama and dismemberment.

Mary Ann Samyn (BA '92), an assistant professor of English and creative writing, was named one of the 2007 Outstanding Teachers at the University of West Virginia. After graduating from Oakland and earning her MA at Ohio University and MFA at the University of Virginia, Samyn began her teaching career as a poet-in-residence for a four-county school district in Michigan. She also taught composition, creative writing and literature for three years at Kirkland Community College, and before that, taught rhetoric at Oakland University before going to WVU in 2002. She has published four books of poetry: *Purr*, *Inside the Yellow Dress*, *Captivity Narrative* (winner of the 1999 Ohio State University Press/The Journal Award) and *Rooms by the Sea* (Wick Chapbook Prize 1994). Mary Ann returns to OU annually to direct our Far Field Retreat for Writers.

Nancy Vitale (BA '01) is in the Big Apple: I was so pleased to read the latest edition of *The English Channel*. So many familiar names and faces really brought me back to just a few years ago when the Modernists and the Romantics were fresh to me, and when I was not in debt. I just finished my M.F.A. at Columbia's School of the Arts in Dramaturgy and New Script Development, and I'm currently hunting for a job in the big city that I've been calling home for the past three years.

I love New York! I miss Michigan, and particularly Oakland, Wilson Hall and the Honors College office at Vanderbilt Hall. I left right after graduation to pursue years of work at non-profit theatres around the country before settling down for a Masters. I don't know how much longer I'll be working in theatre before I move to television or film, but I do know that my love of storytelling began my freshman year (1996) in [Professor Grimm's] HC class on Literary Romance. Though we didn't read the smutty romance novels that had so intrigued me as objects of critical analysis, I did meet many wonderful folks in that class; I delighted in [Professor Grimm's] recitation of Chaucer in dialect; I fell in love with Marie de France and *Frankenstein*. This amazing course also convinced me to stay in the Honors College, where I became inextricably linked with the likes of the trouble-making and brilliant Brian Murphy. I don't know if [Professor Grimm] knows this, but my Honors thesis was a translation of "Lanval" from Old French to modern French and then into English, the product of which I then adapted to a full-length play set in the modern day. Good times and geekdom!

Thank you to all of our contributors to the Alumni Corner. And keep that news coming. Send your news, views, and comments to Susan E. Hawkins:

hawkins@oakland.edu

You can also keep up with further English department happenings at our website:

<http://www2.oakland.edu/english/>

TRAVELOGUE

Teach English in China and Experience the World *by Christopher VanVolkom.*

I always wanted to travel and see the world, so I decided to go to China after graduating from Oakland University in April 2007. I was an English major and political science minor in the Secondary Teacher Education Program (STEP). There is a high demand for certified English teachers throughout Europe and Asia, and my teaching credentials from O.U. allow me to make good money while living abroad. Teaching English in China is an amazing experience, something anyone looking for adventure as well as for some unique professional experience should consider.

My school, located in the Puxi District of Shanghai, China, has all the technology and educational resources of public schools in the United States. I work for a private English school company called Education First (also known as English First) which has schools throughout Asia and Europe and even one in the United States. I have the pleasure of working with wonderful teachers from all over the world including China, Russia, New Zealand, Germany, France, Poland, and the United Kingdom. Since we all share a passion for teaching and an adventurous lifestyle, I have already made many lifelong friends.

Interacting with other Americans is easy; however, it's nice to meet people from any country who are able to speak English. It is an awesome experience to have conversation with people from China, South Africa, India, Poland, Brazil, Spain, Japan, Russia, and Germany. English is the bridge language for so many people from different countries and cultures. Teaching people English so that they can participate in this international cultural exchange of ideas and experience is wonderfully rewarding.

As far as cost of living, I pay a little less than \$300 for a very nice, large apartment, fully furnished, with hardwood floors, a washing machine, and two large bedrooms. I share my apartment with an excellent teacher and musician from the U.K. It costs me about 2 cents a minute to call the U.S. with my China Mobile cellular phone plan. Fast Cable or DSL Internet (I just had mine installed today) costs \$130 for one year. I can eat traditional Chinese cuisine (rice, meat, noodles, vegetable, fruit, and tea) for about one dollar a day.

However, Shanghai has fantastic restaurants from many different countries and most are unbelievable. The most expensive meal I've had cost about \$15 and included all

you can eat seafood (sushi, salmon, crab, lobster, clams), as well as beef, chicken, lamb, vegetables,



fruit and all you can drink (beer, plum wine, Saki, mixed drinks). These kinds of restaurants are called Japanese Teppenyaki, and the food is prepared and cooked at the table by a chef. Definitely the best meal I've had in my life.

Teaching abroad usually requires a bachelors degree (preferably in English) and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) training or a teaching certificate. TEFL certificates can be earned through university programs throughout the United States and Europe and range from four week intensive programs to online courses. If you have a teaching certificate from a state in the U.S., you can expect better jobs and higher pay. Whatever your plans are after graduation, consider teaching abroad as an option. It is an experience you will never forget or regret.

I currently plan to travel to the Philippines next month, Vietnam for New Years, and Harbin (northern China near Russia) during the spring holiday in February to see the Ice Festival. Although I don't have immediate plans to return to the United States, it may become necessary to maintain my teaching certificate in Michigan. In the meantime, I am a 26 year old adventurer, teacher, writer and lifelong learner. The world is a big place, and I want to experience as much as I can. Send me an email at vanvolkom@prodigy.net. I would love to tell you more about my experiences in China.

APPRECIATION

Something Something Else *by**Peter Hopp, '93*

I graduated in December 1993 from OU with my degree in English and very proud of my GPA of 3.62. I was not the brightest, I was not the best, and I am fine with that. What made my time at OU and my time with the Eberweins truly special was the assumption that I was not supposed to be there in the first place. The first to finish college in my immediate family, I started late after time in the United States Air Force.

I doubt that Jane and Bob Eberwein would remember my time in their classes. Me, the very average guy, working like crazy to succeed in this environment where people like the Eberweins inspired me with pure, simple . . . awe.

Their ability to think, to connect, to understand the vast subjects at hand for me, hoping like heck to get it, to pull at least some part of what they had to send my way, motivated me to prepare myself for each session in their classroom.

I had to. They knew so much, they were so smart, they had so many places they could go, they had so many big ideas, and I was hoping to grab hold of just one.

I am no brilliant scholar. I will never be published. I am the average guy in every English professor's class that can be motivated by what the teacher in the front of the room is willing to share; the guy who can be led to believe in his capacity to understand; the guy who can learn that just a slice of what brilliant minds can impart can change the way he moves through life.

I am the guy that the Eberweins may have never known to what extent they made him different. The guy that found a simple solution to most of life's most pressing problems; to the daily dilemmas we all face; to the difficult choices and challenges in front of us all.

That solution? That lesson I learned from the Eberweins? When in doubt - think!

[*Editor's note: Readers will not be surprised to learn that Bob and Jane Eberwein not only remember Pete, but continue to regard him with admiration and affection.*]

POETRY

Excerpts from Alumni

The tour maps and brochures make no mention
of all the black people in Belgium,
the immigrants and their descendants
from Rwanda, Burundi, the Congo,
who came here after fleeing
wars, massacres and famines,
after King Leopold II
stripped their lands of diamonds
just as fast as he could steal them . . .

—from "Brussels" by Shayla Hawkins

I remember the night we met;
I was alone and you had lights
in your eyes. The room was so hot,
I sweat while standing still
and you told me through the haze:

I never wanna say my best days are behind me.

A heart nestled in a question mark,
dirty stages, cigarette smoke, and toy robots.
You reach out and grip my spirit.
We're children again—ich bin glücklich.

—from "Question-Mark Heart" by Gary Miron in
Ceremony Collected, Ed., Melanie M. Eyth

Where is that part of *no*
that forms at the mouth
so sure of itself
it can even beat up the boys?

—from "Too Much Yes" by Joy Gaines-Friedler

Sometimes I am selfish in my human way - unintended.
So many stray munitions falling on wedding parties.
Whole clans perish on my watch!

—from "The Fields" by Jon Ballard in his
poetry chapbook Sad Town

Students Respond to Sharon Bryan

"I have never been to a poetry reading before and it was an amazing experience for me! . . . I also really like the poem Sharon Bryan wrote about Adam and Eve, especially the part where Adam said, "Well, well, well. . ." and then three wells appeared!"—Nicole Marchowicz

"The poem "Sweater Weather" is like a nursery rhyme which made the audience laugh and feel joyful."—Jessie Qi

"Sharon Bryan was amusing, she touched on emotions, brought back good memories of childhood and showed me that poetry is enjoyable."—Lisa Hall

"I really love how she uses ordinary language and puts a deeper meaning to it through her poetry."—Amber Degayner

"I had a great experience at this poetry reading. The refreshments were delicious, the water was cold and I learned a little bit about myself while being surrounded by insightful poetry and people interested in learning more about it."—Kathryn Lett

"Use Capricious in a Sentence" was my favorite poem."—Sahar Khan

"Contrary to popular belief no one was wearing all black with black hats on."—Vincent Buscemi

"Her fun-natured poetry had heart, lightness, inspiration, and she read them all so humbly."—Terra Donnelly

APPEAL

The Department of English depends on the continuing contributions and support of our alumni and friends to fund community events like lectures and readings, to support student research and travel and to purchase special video and book materials for classroom use. We ask you to please consider making a contribution (which is tax deductible and doubly deductible for Michigan residents).

Thank you for your generosity!

Contributions may be made by mail using the form below or online at <https://www.applyweb.com/public/contribute?s=oaklandd>.

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Thank you for your support!

Upcoming Events: Shakespeare and more!



On January 31st, Kurt Tofteland, subject of the film *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, will visit Oakland University (see story, p. 4). The Honors College has planned a dinner and conversation with Tofteland, to be followed at 8pm with a screening of the film, including a "Talk Back" with Professor Niels Herold. Please mark your calendars and stay tuned to the English department website for more details on this exciting event co-hosted by the English department and the Honors College.

<http://www2.oakland.edu/english/>

Other upcoming Winter events include a Career Night, where English majors or those considering the English major will have the opportunity to learn about employment opportunities from professionals in the community. Students will also have the chance to have their resumes reviewed and get information about internships and graduate school.

In February, Nancy Joseph will deliver a "Research in Progress" talk to members of the English department. March and April will once again feature our Ekphrasis Poetry and Flash Fiction Contests. On April 15th, we will once again fight off tax-time blues with our Annual Poetry Bash. And May will feature the OU-Absinthe European Literature and Film Festival.

Our Cultural Events committee is diligently working on even more events. Look for details on all this and more at our department website!

Also in this issue

New Faces

Meet Andrea Knutson & Josh Yumibe

Undertakings

An OU English major on PBS

On *The Keep*

A book review by Rob Anderson

Fight the Good Fight

Annie Gilson on the future of fiction

Cheap Teppenyaki

An alum finds rewards in China

Crowded Corner

And more alumni news than you can shake a stick at...

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