

# The English Channel

The Alumni Newsletter of the Oakland University Department of English

## Coming Soon: New Faculty

*Film Studies, 17th-century British poetry positions filled*

Next fall, the English department will welcome two new additions to our faculty. Our search process has culminated in the successful hiring of new professors in Film Studies and Early Modern poetry.

Kyle Edwards, will come to us from the University of Texas at Austin, where he has just completed his doctorate. Kyle will teach courses in our Concentration in Film Aesthetics and History.

“We’re happy to welcome Professor Edwards who brings special expertise in the study of adaptation,” said Distinguished Professor Bob Eberwein. “He will offer the Department’s new course, ‘English 309: Adaptation’ in Fall 2006. Because of his welcome presence, we will be able to expand our offerings to

include new Cinema Studies courses in film genre and film history.”

Early modern specialist Kevin Laam has completed his degree at the University of Southern California. Kevin’s area of expertise is sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poetry, particularly the devotional poetry of John Donne.

Professor Laam will add to the existing strength of our British literature faculty. As hiring committee member Natalie Cole said, “We are excited about the scholarly and teaching expertise on 17th century poetry that Prof. Laam brings to the English Department.”

Please join us in welcoming Professors Edwards and Laam. We hope to make their transition here from sunnier climes a smooth one.

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## Letter from the Chair *by Kevin Grimm.*



As you must have noticed already, we are changing the face (and body) of *The English Channel*. We hope you find this newest edition informative and interesting. Thanks go to Professor Jeffrey Insko for this exciting make-over. The expanded *English Channel* represents part of our ongoing effort to keep you informed about and connected to the OU English Department. As I’ve mentioned before, however, that works both ways. So, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us with news about yourself, fellow alums, and feedback on the *English Channel*, all of which we will include in our “Alumni Corner” section. You can e-mail me your news and contributions at [grimm@oakland.edu](mailto:grimm@oakland.edu). In addition, I hope you are able to make it to one or more of our upcoming events in the fall. Remember, also, to visit our Website at <http://www2.oakland.edu/english/>. Hope to hear from you soon!

# Blake Roars at First Annual Read-in

On November 28, the 248th birthday of the British poet and printer William Blake, the English department sponsored its first annual “read-in.” Held at the Fireside Lounge of the Oakland Center, the event featured a continuous reading of Blake’s epic poem *Jerusalem*. The reading lasted nearly seven full hours, attracting students, faculty, and curious on-lookers. Participants took turns reading ten minutes blocks of the poem, while images from Blake’s “illuminated manuscripts” were projected onto a screen for those watching and listening in the audience.

The read-in was the brainchild of Professor Rob Anderson, who conceived of the event as a way to celebrate the birthday of Blake, his favorite poet. Anderson said that he had been thinking for years of an appropriate celebration. “After mulling over and rejecting the possibility of a costume party where guests came (un)dressed as their favorite Blake character,” he said, “I decided that a more fitting celebration would be to read his epic masterpiece in a public setting.”

Anderson estimates that about 30 different people read, including students, faculty, alumnae, and members of the community. Altogether 40 or 50 people attended for some portion of the reading. Many of them found the experience of reading from Blake’s poetry exhilarating.

For Anderson, one of the highlights of the event was hearing the variety of ways different readers recited passages from the poem. “Readers familiar and alien to Blake’s poetry made Blake roar in different voices,” he said. Given the event’s success, the department plans to hold the read-in annually, featuring a different work by a different author each year.



*Rob Anderson, creator of the read-in.*



*Student Fred Spears reading from Blake*

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## English Dept. Hosts Acclaimed Authors Dybek, Kennedy

In March, students and faculty gathered for talks by two distinguished authors. On Thursday, March 9th, critically acclaimed poet and fiction writer Stuart Dybek dazzled the audience by reading from his fiction. On Tuesday, March 28th, the renowned American literature scholar J. Gerald Kennedy spoke on “Patriotic Anti-Nationalism in the European Travel Narratives of Brown, Cooper, and Fuller.” Both events were sponsored by the English department.

Stuart Dybek is the author of three books of fiction, including *I Sailed with Magellan* and *The Coast of Chicago*, and two collections of poems. He has won

numerous awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and four O. Henry awards. His work has been featured in both *Best American Fiction* and *Best American Poetry* and *I Sailed with Magellan* was a *New York Times* notable book for 2004. He currently teaches creative writing at Western Michigan University.

J. Gerald Kennedy is the William A. Read Professor of English at LSU. He is the author of numerous books and articles, including *Poe, Death, and the Life of Writing*, *Imagining Paris: Exile Writing and American Identity*, and *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race*. Professor Kennedy’s lecture drew on his current book project.

# News Shorts

## Cardiff, Gilson Earn Tenure

Last May, Gladys Cardiff and Annie Gilson were each promoted to the rank of Associate Professor. Please join us in congratulating Gladys and Annie on their outstanding records of teaching, scholarship, creative writing, and service to the department and the university

## Three English Faculty Awarded Research Fellowships

The University Research Committee has awarded three of its research fellowships for Spring/Summer '06 to English department faculty: Rob Anderson, Niels Herold, and Kathy Pfeiffer. For the titles of their research projects, see sidebar (bottom right).

## Connery, Students in Ireland

This Winter Break, Brian Connery traveled with more than a dozen students to Ireland. Their itinerary included walking tours of Dublin, a "Yeats Dinner," and (of course) a pub crawl. The trip took place just as the current issue was being prepared, so look for photos and a full report in the next issue of *The English Channel*.

## Pfeiffer Wins Faculty Development Grant

Kathy Pfeiffer has been awarded a Professional Development Research Leave for fall '06. The grant will allow her to pursue her interest in biography studies. Biography, Prof. Pfeiffer suggests, "poses fascinating questions about the relationship between individual lives and historical movements, between fact and fiction; biography asks whether the self can ever be captured in writing."

The research leave will allow Prof. Pfeiffer to develop undergraduate and graduate level courses in biography that will contribute to the English dept. curriculum. Congrats, Kathy!

## Cole to Return from MALS

Effective June 1st of this year, Natalie Cole will resign her post as Director of the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program. Under Prof. Cole's leadership since January '03, MALS has grown from 2 to 45 students. In December, the program awarded its first two degrees and two more students will graduate in May. Also, six MALS students have presented research at regional, national, and international conferences.

While MALS will miss Prof. Cole's leadership, the English department is delighted to welcome her back. Prof. Cole said, "The English Dept. has a great talent pool of graduate and undergraduate students and I'm looking forward to teaching and working with them on research projects in the future."

## Hawkins, Aiello Honored for University Service

In January, Associate Professor Susan Hawkins and English department Secretary Rosemary Aiello were recognized by the university for their professional service. Join us in congratulating Rosemary for 10 years and Susan for 20 years of outstanding service.

## American Studies on the Web

Kathy Pfeiffer, coordinator of the American Studies concentration, reports that the AS website is up and running at [www2.oakland.edu/americanstudies/](http://www2.oakland.edu/americanstudies/). The link is also on the English department page. Kathy also reports that this semester's "Topics in American Culture" (AMS 300) course, called "American Crime Stories," was taught by Dr. Matthew Watson and received high praise from students.

## Eberwein Nominated for Award

Congratulations are due to Distinguished Professor Jane Eberwein, who was nominated for this year's Phyllis Googasian Award for leadership among women at OU.

## Course Development Grants Awarded to English Faculty

Special Instructor Rachel Smydra and Associate Professor Nancy Joseph have each been awarded grants for course development. Professor Joseph's project will take a "student-centered approach" to teaching "English 100: Masterpieces of World Literature." Smydra's project, "Exploring Ethics through Non-fiction Literature" will explore ethical dilemmas many authors have posed in literary texts such as essays and autobiographies

## 8th Annual Bash a Smash

On tax day, Monday April 17, more than fifty students, faculty, and poetry lovers gathered at the Oakland Center to let off some IRS steam. The 8th Annual Poetry Bash was our most successful ever, featuring readings by poets ranging from Walt Whitman and Galway Kinnell to Eavan Boland and even Goethe-- in German!

## 2006 URC Fellowships

### rob anderson



"Godwin's Romanticism" will study William Godwin's diverse writings and his influence on the major writers of his time.

### niels herold



"Shakespeare and the Performance of Rehabilitation" will study performances of Shakespeare's plays by prison acting companies

### kathy pfeiffer



"Biography of Waldo Frank" is the start of research for a complete literary biography of the modernist author.

## ESSAY

“Somewhere in between”: Life as a T.A. *by Lisa Czapski*

This first year of graduate school and my teaching assistantship, so far, has led to one identity crisis after another. The first semester introduced me to theory, which begins a process of dismantling assumptions that quite naturally carries over into my own habits. This tendency is heightened, for me, because I am entirely immersed in academia. Between school and work, I spend nearly all my energy thinking about literature and learning: reading, writing, grading, thinking, attending classes, talking with professors, wondering whether I'll ever successfully be a professor. The fifth floor of Wilson Hall has become comfortably familiar. I see professors and classmates more frequently than family members and longtime friends. This situation is full of opportunities and insight, but it is also profoundly taxing.



Just before the semester began, I had a small, informal orientation to TA-ing. I was told that, in addition to my tasks as a student and TA, I would be responsible for determining how to navigate my odd in-between position. For instance, I was told I could join the professors in the lounge at lunch, but I was not told how to summon the confidence to walk into a room full of professors eating and relaxing, presumably away from students. In such situations, am I a part of the “us” or the “them”? The department has been overwhelmingly hospitable toward me, and yet being around all these experienced professors leaves me constantly aware of how

much I have yet to learn. My professors hold generous expectations.

At one point in the semester I recognized that I was extraordinarily moody. One moment I was exhilarated with how much I was enjoying life. The next I was in despair, certain that I would fail. Not until recently did I consider that perhaps this, too, was a result of my position somewhere in between where I am and where I want to be. My current existence is an odd combination of the strange and the familiar. I thrive on books and classes, and I'll read, ***Am I a part of the “us” or the “them”?*** analyze, and discuss anything placed before me. The reason I so enjoy what I do—the reason it hardly feels like work and yet feels like so much more than work—is that I am doing what I would do anyway, only in a more structured and productive way.

For these reasons, I am sure I am exactly where I belong. However, the thought of choosing this as a profession still strikes me as preposterous. I wasn't exactly raised with sights set on being an academic, and none of my personal mentors were academics—yet another reason the terrain is unfamiliar, and I am naive and uncertain. Confidence is the lesson I am slowly learning in the midst of all these new experiences, the very one I needed. Just as I am both a student and a teacher, I am also something of my past and something of my future, striving to inhabit the present with all I have and enjoying every minute of it.

*Lisa Czapski is in her first year of the Master's program. She is the T.A. for Rob Anderson's Modern Literature course.*

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## Alumni Corner *news and notes from OU English alumnae*

**James R. Tomlinson** (BA, '88) had his latest short story published in the Spring 2005 Issue of the *Pebble Lake Review*. He is also a frequent contributor to *The Furnace*.

**Shayla A. Hawkins** (BA '98) has much to report: the French literary journal *Paris/Atlantic* published a total of seven of her poems in its 1999 and 2000 issues. *Poets & Writers Magazine* published a five-page article she wrote in its March/April 2001 issue. In September 2002, Shayla was invited (and PAID!) to read at the Dodge Poetry Festival in Waterloo, NJ. In September 2003, she was invited to read at the Library of Congress as part of its Poets at Noon series. And this year, her poem “La Bellezza Eterna” (Italian for “The Eternal Beauty”) was

published in *Mona Poetica*, an anthology of poems about or inspired by DaVinci's “Mona Lisa” painting. Shayla writes, “I'm extremely excited about this, because among other literary luminaries, William Blake is in *Mona Poetica*, too!”

On the grad school front, **Jenny Toms** (MA '05) has been accepted to the Ph.D. program in English at Michigan State University and **Amber Feltner** (BA, '05) has been accepted to the Master's program at the U of California at Irvine.

**In future issues, we hope to expand the Alumni Corner considerably. Please help! Send your news to Kevin Grimm at: [grimm@oakland.edu](mailto:grimm@oakland.edu)**

# AUTHORS EXPLAINED...LORD BYRON *by Rob Anderson.*

In this 1807 George Sanders painting, Byron is shown auditioning for the lead in the upcoming biopic of Hugh Grant. (Grant would later return the favor by playing Byron in *Rowing with the Wind* in 1989).

Byron's pose here suggests he is also auditioning for the part of Childe Harold, whose pilgrimage Byron would detail in verse. While Harold's travels recall Byron's own travels in Europe, Byron denied that connection. Of course, Byron's popularity (he was arguably the most widely read poet of the 19th century) was in large part a product of a carefully crafted campaign to insinuate that connection.

Byron's face and pose also embody the enormous appeal he had for both readers and admirers. The open stance and the slightly twisting torso set against the ragged European cliffs reveal a man of action and thought. His personal charm, scandalous life, and portraits of brooding, alienated heroes riveted readers, and influenced writers like Herman Melville, L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, as well as films like Jeremy Leven's *Don Juan de Marco* and plays such as Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*.

Perhaps the starkly contrasting figures of Rushton and Byron, set off by the difference in both color and posture, are meant to suggest Byron's daughter, Ada Augusta Byron. Ada Byron was later associated with Charles Babbage, inventor of two precursors to the computer: the difference engine and the analytical engine. Ada Byron is now known for having completed the first computer program in 1843.

The sagging sail on Byron's ship perhaps points to his simultaneously romantic and anticlimactic death. After inspiring European support for the cause of Greek independence, Byron went to Greece to take part in the struggle himself. On February 15, he caught a cold, and died of fever on April 19, 1824. Byron is still celebrated as a hero in Greece today.

In *Don Juan*, after Juan is discovered with a married woman (Byron's Juan is always seduced, never a seducer), he leaves Spain for good. Graceful humor and an ironic tone typify Byron's best work: "I can't but say it is an awkward sight/ To see one's native land receding through/ The growing waters; it unmans one quite,/ Especially one life is rather new;/ I recollect Great Britain's coast looks white,/ But almost every other country's blue,/ When gazing on them, mystified by distance,/ We enter our nautical existence."

The waves splashing at the bow of the boat suggest the many travels Byron wrote about. Here he is stepping on shore in search of new adventures, but Byron was more famous for his departures. In 1816, after his wife Augusta left him with their daughter Ada in the wake of rumors of an affair with his half-sister, he left England permanently. He writes in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*: "Once more upon the waters! yet once more!/ And the waves bound beneath me as a steed / That knows his rider. Welcome, to their roar!/ Swift be their guidance, whereso'er it lead!"



Robert Rushton, Byron's "page," is shown holding Byron's rope, standing in the water and looking longingly up at Byron's windswept face.

Nothing is known about the origin of the fabric used to make the clothes Byron and Rushton are wearing. On February 27, 1812, Byron made his first and only speech to the House of Lords, in defense of the luddites. Luddites were skilled artisan weavers who conducted organized night-time raids on the machine looms which were transforming them into factory "hands." Parliament was considering a Frame Breaking Bill to make loom-breaking a capital offense.

## ESSAY

Bombs and Seeds *by Kathy Pfeiffer*

I received an email last month from a former student named Melissa—it came from out of the blue, completely—and she told me that she really enjoyed my class and that I had challenged her to open up her mind. It was my “African American Literature” course from the winter of 2002. I was floored. I had to look up my grade sheet to be sure she wasn’t making a mistake because I didn’t recognize the name. She wasn’t even an English major!

One of my goals as a teacher is to plant seeds that will blossom as the semester unfolds; I point to Walt Whitman’s bold proclamation about national identity in “I hear America singing” and hope that students will remember this celebratory poem when they read Langston Hughes, writing 50 years later, “I, too, sing America.” Of course, on any given day—particularly in our general education courses, which tend to be populated by business and engineering students, people who hope never to take another English class again—that gardening metaphor might shift as my perception alters. In those classes, where the work of teaching is so much a battle, I try to plant time bombs that will explode in the years ahead.

The idea behind these metaphors is the same, the belief that education is a lifelong enterprise, valuable for its own sake. (“The life of the mind is its own reward,” I tell my friend Anna, a big corporate muckety-muck. “Maybe so,” she responds, “but I’m never letting my kids major in art history. I mean, what kind of job can you get with that?”) We in the liberal arts believe that knowledge contains its own intrinsic rewards, apart from any professional or technical or vocational skill it might

***“It can never be satisfied, the mind, never,” writes Wallace Stevens***

instill. “It can never be satisfied, the mind, never” writes Wallace Stevens. Sometimes it takes a few years to understand what’s really going on in “The Beast in the Jungle.” Or what Toni Morrison means when she writes there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. Like Frieda and Claudia in *The Bluest Eye*, the seeds we teachers plant sometimes fall on sterile ground.

Of course I wrote back to Melissa immediately with effusive thanks and asked her what she’s doing now, and how she views her undergraduate education from the perspective of her work experience. We had a lovely exchange. It was a productive exchange too, since she wrote that her liberal arts education has been very valuable to her postbaccalaureate work experience. I shared these positive comments with Ron Sudol, the acting

Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, because I figured it would provide him with ammunition in his ongoing battle with other Deans for limited resources. There’s that military imagery again. It is a real fight, however, and it’s tough to argue for the value of English professors in a University located in “Automotion Alley.”

Still, I’m hopeful that some day I’ll receive an email someday from an engineer who suddenly “gets” Edith Wharton (I suspect that this will happen after marriage). Or an accountant who begins to understand *Bartleby*. In the meantime, where are you in this metaphor? How long have you been away from an English class? Has anything blossomed yet? Anything exploded?

*Kathy Pfeiffer is currently teaching a seminar on American Literary Realism.*

## Flash Fiction Contest Winners

The winners of the 2006 Flash Fiction Contest were announced in March. George Dila, editor of the literary journal *Driftwood*, selected the three winning stories from our 10 finalists. First Place went to Kim Haas for her story, “Almost More Beautiful Broken Than Whole.” Charlie Wondolowski came in Second Place for his story “Eight Ball Hero,” while Luise Bolleber’s story “Alfredo” earned Third Place honors. Congratulations to our winners and thank you to all who participated!

## INVITATION TO STEP GRADUATES

All STEP graduates are invited to a Buffet Dinner on **Wednesday, May 10 2006, from 4-6 pm in Lake Huron/ Lake Superior Room B** of the OC. where new teachers can talk about their classroom experiences. Please join us to connect with STEP friends and share your stories! The seminar will include presentations on Exploring Media Literacy, Teaching Technical Reading and Writing, and Making Literature and Writing Relevant. This event is sponsored by the English Dept. and hosted by Dr. Nancy Joseph, Coordinator of English Secondary Education. If you plan to attend, please RSVP by email to [joseph@oakland.edu](mailto:joseph@oakland.edu)

## POEM

*Gogi, the warm season* by Gladys Cardiff

In another time, the Sun was angry with the people.  
This was long ago, in the memory of the people,

when the sky was a vault of solid rock  
and swung like a pendulum above the people,

and the Sun lived on the other side.  
The Sun threw down her sultry beams, and the people

sickened. Who knows why? She was jealous  
of her brother the Moon, some say, how the people

admired him for his milder rays. Or, maybe, forgetfulness.  
A time when haughty priests ruled the people

assuming her healing power as their own. Each dawn  
the sky door opened. She climbed the sky arch. But the people

averted their eyes. Each day, hotter. The snakes came out.  
They basked, undisturbed by the drums of the people.

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*Professor Cardiff's most recent collection of poems is A Bare Unpainted Table.*

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## Maurice D. Brown Poet Selected

Poet Vijay Seshadri will be on campus in Fall '06 for the annual Maurice D. Brown poetry reading. This event is typically one of the most successful of the year and Mr. Seshadri continues in the tradition of outstanding poets who have preceded him.

Seshadri's collections of poems include the James Laughlin Award winning *The Long Meadow* (Graywolf Press, 2004) and *Wild Kingdom* (1996). Of Mr. Seshadri's latest book, *Publisher's Weekly*, writes, "Following the emotional subtlety and lyrical intensity of his widely-acclaimed debut, *Wild Kingdom*, Seshadri's new work engages forms of fable and popular characterization. In poems imbued with nursery rhyme, fantasy, fairy tale and cartoon, Seshadri takes on well-worn cultural icons: the Wicked Witch, the Three Little Pigs and Superman, to name a few."

You can expect details and a full announcement of this event in the next issue of *The English Channel* or check our website for in the future for more information on this exciting event!

### **FILL UP THE ALUMNI CORNER! SEND US YOUR NEWS**

*The English Channel* aims to keep you informed of the latest happening up on the fifth floor of Wilson Hall. Now it's your turn. We'd like to hear about our alumni:

**what you're reading | promotions at work |  
new careers | writing you've published  
marriages | birth announcements | relocations  
| exciting adventures | teaching experiences |  
anything else you'd like to share**

Or, just use *The English Channel* to reconnect with old friends. The Alumni Corner is for you!

**Please send your submissions to:  
grimm@oakland.edu**

## MOVIE REVIEW

The Discouraging Word is Love *by Susan Hawkins*

Ang Lee's film *Brokeback Mountain* has garnered numerous awards (and Academy Award nominations), a disproportionate amount of critical attention, and an avalanche of buzz. Do not let the buzz prevent you from giving this film a chance. *Brokeback Mountain* is visually and emotionally stunning in its portrayal of two hardscrabble cowboys, the love between them, and the violence of American culture that ultimately defeats them.

Working from Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana's sublime adaptation of Annie Proulx' 1997 *New Yorker* story, the film faithfully traces the lives of Ennis Del Mar (Heath Ledger) and Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhall) over the course of their twenty-year relationship. They first meet in the summer of 1963, hired by Joe Aguirre (played with squint-eyed, stinging malice by Randy Quaid) to tend his sheep on the remote, high range of Brokeback Mountain, Wyoming. What begins as friendship turns into desire, consummated during a rough, non-verbal

**The forces arrayed against Lee's contemporary cowboys are not physical, but social and cultural.**

tussle in Jack's tent one drunken night. Desire turns into love, an emotion which Jack can freely accept and express but which Ennis too often denies and literally fights with his fists. Proulx's irony, which Lee so painfully dramatizes, is clear. Jack isn't the twisted one; Ennis, filled with homophobic fear and anger, is.

What Lee's film can do that Proulx's fiction cannot is show us the scale of the landscape—the snowy peaks and ragged ranges of the Rocky Mountains (shot in Alberta, Canada)—and the vulnerability, in a brilliant long shot, of the two men on horseback as they herd the sheep along the mountain's edge. For unlike the traditional classic western in which the hero is threatened in physical terms, whether by bad guys or survival in the natural world, Even in this remote locale, their relationship is vulnerable to surveillance, first figured in Aguirre's spying on them with his binoculars, an image echoed later in the reunion scene when Ennis's wife, Alma (Michelle Williams), first by accident and then with intent, watches from the apartment door as the two men passionately embrace below her on the stairs.

A four-year gap elapses between their first summer and that reunion, and despite Ennis's realization that his feelings for Jack are profoundly true, he is totally unprepared for such feelings and incapable of acting on

them. He refuses Jack's vision of a place of their own, and so, over the course of the next sixteen years, Ennis sets the terms for the emotional rhythm of their lives. Several times a year they meet for "fishing trips," camping in remote, scenic locations reminiscent of Brokeback Mountain, but they never return to that place. Lee beautifully crosscuts these escapes into the wilderness with the men's "real" lives elsewhere—Jack's in Texas, married to Lureen (Anne Hathaway) and father to one son; Ennis's in Wyoming, with Alma and their two daughters.

**"These cowboys use words as weapons."**

But the real catches up with them. The suffocating destruction of living in the closet plays itself out in their lives. The costs of such secrecy are stunningly rendered in a scene late in the film. It's 1983. Jack, the one to compromise and make the greatest emotional sacrifices, starts to argue when Ennis announces, at the end of a blustery, chilly week in May, that he can't get the time off in August for an extended trip. Jack's bitter disappointment, the years of regret and frustration over what he perceives as Ennis's refusal, leads to a terrible confrontation, a final showdown. These cowboys use words as weapons--yelling, threatening, cursing. Finally, at the dead-end of his anger, Jack turns his back and says, "You're too much for me, Ennis . . . I wish I knew how to quit you."

Gyllenhall gets it perfectly right, his shoulders slightly slumped, his tone filled with years of futile love. Ennis's response to this is, as always, visceral; what he feels turns him inside out. Proulx writes it this way, "Ennis stood as if heart-shot, face grey and deep-lined, grimacing, eyes screwed shut, fists clenched, legs caving, hit the ground on his knees." Heath Ledger's equally perfect Ennis does precisely this, crumpling to the ground, a heap of emotional wreckage. And Jack, who cannot bear to see Ennis's suffering, takes him in his arms and comforts him like a child. Twenty years of love and disappointment, anger and frustrated desire are distilled into a tableau of heartbreak.

As Jack says to Ennis at the end of their first reunion, "This ain't no little thing that's happenin' here." This movie will break your heart too, if you let it.

*Professor Hawkins is currently teaching a graduate course on the American Western in literature, television, and film called "Home on the Range."*

# Student News

## OU English Major Earns National Recognition

You may have read the news on our website: last fall, OU English major **Rachel Banner** won the prestigious Norton Scholar's Prize for her essay, "The Communal Space Between: Reconciliation in Emerson's 'Experience'." Sponsored by the publisher W.W. Norton, the Norton Scholar's Prize is a national competition for "an outstanding undergraduate essay on a literary topic." Each year, a panel of distinguished judges selects a winner from over 200 student essays nominated by faculty members at colleges and universities across the country.

Professor Jeffrey Insko nominated Rachel's essay, which was originally written for his "American Literature 1820-65" course. Announcing the award, the contest's judges praised Rachel's work as "insightful, well-written, and so sensitive... an excellent representative of the W.W. Norton Undergraduate Essay program,"

As the Norton Scholar, Rachel received a cash award of \$2500. Professor Insko received travel to the 2005 Modern Language Association convention in Washington D.C.

## Students Produce New Literary Journal

Last year, the student writer's group introduced their first issue of a new literary journal *Swallow the Moon* with help from Maureen Dunphy. The second issue of *Swallow the Moon*, which features the winners of this year's "Flash for Cash" writing contest (see announcement on page 7) is now available for purchase. Contact the English department for information.



*Rachel Fellows, Jen McQuillan, and Susan Brown at the MMLA in Milwaukee*

## Graduate Students Hit Conference Circuit

This year, several graduate students presented their work at scholarly conferences. At the Midwest Modern Language Association annual convention in Milwaukee in February, grad students **Jennifer McQuillan**, **Rachel Fellows** (M.A. '05), and MALS student **Susan Brown** (M.A. '00) took part in a panel entitled "Re-Imagining the American Family: Old Romances and New Histories." Their papers were originally developed in courses with Professors Susan Hawkins and Jeffrey Insko. Insko served as moderator of the session, which was well-received by those scholars who attended. OU was well represented by Jen's, Rachel's and Susan's excellent work.

Along with **Melinda Booth**, Jen McQuillan also attended the Sixth Annual New Voices Graduate Conference at Georgie State University in October. Jen presented on "Edward Christopher Williams: His Response to the 'Talented Tenth' in *When Washington Was in Vogue*." Mindy's paper was titled, "Charlotte Osgood Mason: Politics of Misrepresentation." Also, a revised version of Mindy's paper has just been published in the *Oakland Journal*, under the title, "Did Charlotte Mason Help or Hinder Black Writers."

## Students Present Research at Michigan Academy

On March 3, OU hosted the annual conference of the Michigan Academy of Arts & Sciences. The English department was well represented. Three students will presented papers. Graduate student **Jane Asher's** paper was titled, "Thrust Aside in Order to Live: The Foggy Borders of Abjection in Bleak House" Another graduate student, **Michelle Moser** presented "Chain Letter: A Derridian Poetics." And undergraduate **Rachel Banner** delivered a paper called, "Necessary Difference: Pursuing the Merge in Whitman's 'The Sleepers.'"

## Sigma Tau Delta Hosts Events

On March 14, Sigma hosted a colloquium, "**Intersecting Nature(s): Thinking, Literature, and Ecology.**" Panel participants included Professors Rob Anderson, Jeff Insko, and Gladys Cardiff along with students **Sarah Coletta** and Rachel Banner. Sigma Vice President **Jianna Hair** served as moderator. On, March 21, Sigma hosted a second colloquium on Creative Writing, featuring panelists Maureen Dunphy, Ed Hoepfner, and Wayne State's M.L. Liebler.

## Scholarship Opportunities

The English Department will sponsor up to four OU students who want to participate in the Far Field Retreat for Writers, May 18 – 21, 2006. Scholarship winners will assist the Retreat Director and the OU English Department in hosting the event. Student Assistants will be awarded full scholarships which include registration fees, housing, dining, writing workshops, craft lectures, and readings by retreat faculty and participants. The deadline for applications is April 29, 2006. For more information,, visit the Far Field website:

[www2.oakland.edu/english/farfield](http://www2.oakland.edu/english/farfield)

# Faculty Notes

## IN PRINT

In *The War Film* (Rutgers UP, 2004), Distinguished Professor **Bob Eberwein** brings together essays by scholars to explore this enduringly popular film genre. Contributors examine the narrative and aesthetic elements of war films, including *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *The Thin Red Line*, *Glory*, *Rambo*, and *Saving Private Ryan*. In addition, Eberwein's essay, "The IFC and Sundance: Channeling Independence," was published in *Contemporary American Independent Film: From the Margins to the Mainstream* (Routledge, 2005).

**Susan Hawkins** published "All in the Family: Kathy Acker's Blood and Guts in High School" in the Winter '04 issue of the journal *Contemporary Literature*. Prof. Hawkins's essay, "Innovation/History/Politics: Reading Christine Brooke-Rose's *Amalgamemnon*," was recently reprinted in *Contemporary Critical Theory*.

**Annie Gilson's** review of Kristin Bluemel's *George Orwell and the Radical Eccentrics* will appear in the Spring 2006 issue of *Modern Fiction Studies*. And we are all eagerly awaiting the publication of her debut novel, *New Light*, due out from Black Heron Press later this Spring.

**Natalie Cole** published "Dickens and the Act of Gardening," in the Winter 2005 issue of *Dickens Quarterly*. Prof. Cole also has an essay forthcoming titled, "'Along the London-Road': the City, Travel and the Road in Film Adaptations of *Great Expectations*." The book on Dickens's *Great Expectations* is a collection of essays by an international group of scholars and will be published by the Center for Victorian and Edwardian Studies.

The Winter '05 issue of *Victorian Poetry* includes **Jude Nixon's** essay, "'Goldengrove unleaving': Hopkins's

'Spring and Fall,' Christina Rossetti's 'Mirrors of Life and Death,' and the Politics of Inclusion,"

Distinguished Professor **Jane Eberwein** published "'Where -- Omnipresence -- fly?': Calvinism as Impetus to Spiritual Amplitude" in the Winter '05 issue of the *Emily Dickinson Journal*.

The current issue (Jan. 2006) of *Modernism/Modernity* includes **Kathy Pfeiffer's** review of *Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life* by William L. Van Deburg. Her review of Thadious Davis's *Games of Property* is forthcoming in the journal *Studies in the Novel*.

**Rachel Smydra** has published "Ethics Under Attack" in the Winter '06 issue of the *Oakland Journal*. Another essay, "Ethical Deviations in Regards to Cheating and the Use of Intellectual Property" is due out this spring as part of the published conference proceedings from "Originality, Imitation, and Plagiarism: A Cross-Disciplinary Conference on Writing," which was held in Ann Arbor last September.

**Nancy Joseph** published "Photo of My Parent: A Creative Writing Assignment for Your Students" in the Fall 2005 issue of *Michigan English Teacher*.

Visiting Professor **Doris Runey** has signed a contract with Mellen Press to publish her book, tentatively titled, *Ionel Teodoreanu's Lorelei: from Novel to Film*. The book is due out later this year. Professor Runey is also completing an essay on Mircea Cartarescu's recent translation into English for the editor of the *Compendium of 20th Century World Novelists and Novels*. It will be published by Facts on File, Inc.

**Brian Connery** has written the introduction to Transaction Press's re-issue of Leonard Feinberg's classic 1963 monograph *The Satirist*, which has just been published. Professor Connery's introduction situates the volume in the intellectual currents in which it was written.

In February, the New Variorum Shakespeare Committee of the Modern Language Association appointed **Niels Herold** as Assistant Editor of the NVS edition of *Coriolanus*. Prof. Herold will be principally responsible for all criticism on the play after 1940, and for the play's performance history. This edition will be one of the first to appear on-line, with the capability of amendment ad infinitum, thus reversing the liability of all book-bound variorum editions--instant obsolescence upon publication



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## AT THE PODIUM

In April 2005, **Distinguished Professor Bob Eberwein** chaired a panel titled "*Love and War* (1899): Genre and Masculinity" at the annual meeting of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies in London. At this March's meeting of the Society in Vancouver, he presented his paper, "Masculinity at Risk: Symbolic Male Rape in *Full Metal Jacket* and *Saving Private Ryan*."

In March, **Brian Connery** lectured at Catholic University of America in D.C. on March 23, 2006, on "Swift and the Art of Silencing."

Also in March, **Annie Gilson** presented a paper on "The Alchemy of History: Hilary Mantel's *Fludd* and the Dangers of Instability" at the conference for the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts.

In August 2005, **Rob Anderson** presented "Formal Churching: The Critique of Marriage in Godwin's *Fleetwood* and Wollstonecraft's *Maria*" at the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism in Montreal.

**Jeffrey Insko** presented "Concealment and Disclosure: Douglass, Melville, and Antebellum Privacy" at the Frederick Douglass-Herman Melville Sesquicentennial Celebration held in New Bedford, Massachusetts in June 2005. In December, he spoke on "The Prehistory of Posthistoricism" at the Modern Language Association annual convention in Washington D.C. And in February '06, he gave a public lecture on, "The Logic of Left Alone: James Fenimore Cooper and the Origins of American Privacy" at Eastern Illinois University.

Last May, **Distinguished Professor Jane Eberwein** presided over a panel on "Cross-Texting and Cross-Dressing," sponsored by the Society of Early Americanists at the American Literature Association annual meeting in Boston. And in October she lectured on "Emily Dickinson's Religious Environment." at an event sponsored by the Emily Dickinson Museum and the Amherst College English Department. Prof. Eberwein was also the Luncheon speaker at the Michigan Academy conference. She spoke on "Libraries, Laboratories, Love and Legacy."

**Susan Hawkins's** paper for the Cormac McCarthy panel at the American Literature Association annual conference in May 2005 was titled, "'Out of the Preterite World': Crossing Into the Cold War." In April, Prof. Hawkins and **Gladys Cardiff** attended the Native

American Literature Symposium in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

In September, **Niels Herold** gave two presentations at the second biannual meeting of the recently formed British Shakespeare Association, in Newcastle. His talks were titled "Shakespeare, Ecology, and the (failed) Poetics of Husbandry" and "Shakespeare and the Question of Distance Learning." In July, Prof. Herold will present "Advice and Dissent in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" at the International Medieval Conference in Leeds and he also presented a preliminary version of his OU Faculty Research Fellowship (see page 3) in a seminar (entitled Big House Shakespeare) at the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America (in Philadelphia).

This year's prize for the most travel in one month goes to **Natalie Cole**. In October of '05, she presented "'Make 'em your models'" Twisting the Dodger in Jacob Tierney's *Twist*" at the Dickens Symposium in Springfield, Mass.; and "Detroit, London, Casablanca: Creating a Course on the City at Oakland University" at the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs Conference in Minneapolis (along with MALS graduate students Teri Albright, Dan Brown, and Jane Hellmann) and she also chaired a panel, "Inside Outside: Victorian Fashion Statements," at the North American Victorian Studies Assoc. in Charlottesville, VA -- all this within two weeks!

In October, **Kathy Pfeiffer** attended a conference on "Modernist Literary Biography" at Yale University. In February, she participated in "Liberty and Responsibility in Faulkner's Snopes Trilogy" an interdisciplinary colloquium, by invitation only, in Tucson AZ.

Visiting Professor **Susan Beckwith** delivered her paper, "Eminent Domains: Victorian Readership and Scholarly Recognition: Ellen Wood" at the Midwest Victorian Studies Association annual conference, held this year at Wayne State in April.

**Nancy Joseph** presented "Enjoy or Endure? Thrive or Survive? Making the Most of Your Student Teaching Experience" at the Michigan Council of Teachers of English Conference, Lansing, Michigan, in October 2005. She also delivered "Avoiding Plagiarism and Citing Sources" at the Transition Workshop for New Student Programs, at OU in January and presented "Metacognitive Thinking in Advanced Composition: Strategies for Helping Students Become Self-Reflective Writers" at the College English Association, in San Antonio, in April.

# New Year, New Faces, New Look



*Rob Anderson gets a new look at the 2005 Detroit Festival of the Arts.*

Changes are afoot in the English department in 2006. Among other things, next fall will bring new faces to the ranks of the faculty, as we welcome two new faculty members (see story, page 1). So we thought it

might also be a time for a new look for *The English Channel*. Not only have we changed our look. We've also added lots of new content, including what we hope will be some regular features. Inside this issue, you'll also find plenty of news and announcements designed to keep you apprised of the many happenings up on the fifth floor of Wilson Hall. We've included the latest news from the department as well as updates on faculty research and honors, exciting upcoming cultural events, and ruminations on matters both playful and profound. With your help, future issues of *The English Channel* will also feature alumni news and contributions. We hope you like what you see. Either way, we invite you to let us know.

## Also in this issue

### **New Additions**

English faculty set to expand by two

### **Blake Roars**

Scenes from our first-ever read-in

### **In-between**

Lisa Czapski on working as a T.A.

### **The New Western?**

Susan Hawkins on *Brokeback Mountain*

### **Bombs and Seeds**

Kathy Pfeiffer on learning

### **Gogi, the warm season**

A poem by Gladys Cardiff

**and more....**

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