

Friends of English

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

SPRING 2010

Our Year in Review

The big event this year occurred April 8-11 when the department in cooperation with the Center for the Study of Writing had the honor of hosting the 25th annual conference of the International Society for the Study of Narrative. The meeting, which took place at the Renaissance Hotel in downtown Cleveland and on the CWRU campus, brought together more than 400 scholars from 16 countries to share research that interprets narrative texts and builds a common vocabulary for the study of narrative as a significant form of social work. Panel topics ranged from analyses of Victorian fiction ("Hardy and Company") to newer genres of narrative composition ("Graphic Narrative") to provocative theoretical investigations ("Unnatural Narratologies"). Approaches ranged from highly theoretical refinements of specialized narratological language to sophisticated ways of telling stories that have previously gone unnarrated: one panel, titled "Strange Histories of Rock and Roll," revealed E. M. Forster's hitherto unexplored interest in Liberace, and unpacked the collaborative relationship of Warren Zevon and Paul Muldoon. Keynote speakers included Susan Stanford Friedman ("Toward a Planetary Narrative Poetics," on new non-formalist models for thinking about narrative and its features), Rita Charon (on the emerging field of "Narrative Medicine"), and Greil Marcus (on assembling the story of the American people in *A New Literary History of America*).

In order to involve as much of our campus as possible in this exciting event, on-campus forums and workshops were organized to supplement the formal program of the conference, including a number of sessions featuring Friedman, Charon, and Marcus in more intimate settings. Department undergraduates were able to attend events on campus and downtown; many of our graduate students presented papers or chaired sessions; and our lecturers and faculty organized and presented on numerous panels. Kurt Koenigsberger acted as conference director and Gary Stonum chaired the program committee. The organizing committee included Kim Emmons, Megan Swihart Jewell,



The buck is passed. From left: former chair Bill Siebenschuh, new chair Mary Grimm, and witnesses Thrity Umrigar and Narcisz Fejes at the Writing Week awards celebration in the Guilford House dining room. "Sitting in the Chair's chair has been fascinating and rewarding. I was afraid that by the end of the year I'd be worn out, a little crazed, maybe foaming at the mouth. But instead, I find myself looking forward to next year, planning some changes, figuring out how to meet the challenges on the horizon. I have to thank Bill Siebenschuh for suggesting to me that I could do it, and pushing me a little when I demurred."

and Todd Oakley, among faculty, and Wells Addington, Mary Assad, Cassie Freudenrich, and Michael Moss among graduate students.

The hosting of this event continues a long tradition of bringing important national and international figures to the university. In the past decade, the department and its affiliated organizations (chiefly the Society for Critical Exchange) have sponsored major conferences on Randal Jarrell, Elizabeth Bishop, and Robert Lowell; on Globalization and the Image; on Autism and Representation; and on the Con/texts of Invention.

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Friends of English connects alumni, faculty and students

Booked for Lunch

On October 10, a beautiful Saturday in Cleveland's long autumn, Friends of English met in Thwing Center for a buffet lunch catered by Aladdin's Eatery followed by a panel discussion among three local novelists: Sarah Willis, Michael Grant Jaffe, and CWRU's own Thrity Umrigar, who had collaborated with FOE president Shelley Bloomfield to plan the event, inviting WCPN's Dee Perry to moderate.

The event attracted Cleveland-area writers and readers, students and faculty, many of whom were observed taking notes as these fine local novelists discussed a spectrum of intriguing writerly topics, from their own writing processes, to the current woes of the publishing industry, the work that best represents their mature writing style, the role of the creative artist in society, the care and feeding of the literary agent, and what they're presently reading. Jane Kessler of Appletree Books was on hand to provide copies of the panelists' novels, and the lively discussion was followed by a book signing.

An Evening of Buster Keaton

On November 13 the Cleveland Cinematheque hosted Friends of English for an evening of authentic Buster Keaton. Curated and introduced by CWRU's Rob Spadoni, the event featured a selection of Keaton's best short comic films with accompanying piano music by Scott Joplin which was arranged and played by Cleveland Institute of Music doctoral student Shuai Bertalan-Wang. The evening proved a delightful excursion back to a moment in cinema history that few in the large audience, which also included film fans of all ages from the CWRU community and surrounding area, could have experienced firsthand.

Mr. Death and the Redheaded Woman

On February 26 Friends Who Could braved a typical Cleveland snowstorm to get to the River Street Playhouse in Chagrin Falls for FOE president Shelley Costa Bloomfield's (GRS '83) new one-act musical *Mr. Death and the Redheaded Woman*. Shelley worked with songwriter Bill Rowe to adapt Edgar Award winner Helen Eustis's "The Rider on the Pale Horse, a Short Story of the Old West," which first appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1951. The new work, which features thirteen original songs performed by Rowe himself, is a powerful lyrical meditation on life and death that echoes in the memory for days to come. *Mr. Death* is Shelley's second collaboration with Rowe. Their first, the full-length musical, *These People*, was produced at the River Street



Friends of English president Shelley Costa Bloomfield (GRS '83) introduces local novelists Michael Grant Jaffe and Sarah Willis to "Booked for Lunch" guests at Thwing Center.

Playhouse in 2007. A post-performance toast to Shelley -- and to Roger Salomon, who was celebrating a birthday -- had been planned but had to be postponed when the aforementioned snowstorm turned into a blizzard. ■

Join the Friends of English

We hope you will join the Friends of English and help grow our faculty/student/alumni community. To ensure that you are notified about upcoming FOE activities -- and get involved in future planning -- just contact Mary Grimm by email (mary.grimm@case.edu) or by phone (216 368-2355).

Mark your calendar

On Friday, October 22, 2010 we will welcome back alumna Sidonie Smith (GRS '71), who will speak on "'America's Exhibit A': Hillary Rodham Clinton's *Living History* and the Genres of Authenticity." Sidonie, who wrote her dissertation with Roger Salomon, is Martha Guernsey Colby Professor of Women's Studies and English at the University of Michigan, and the 2010 president of the Modern Language Association. The event will be held at 5:30 p.m. in Gund Hall, Room A59.

A Grad Moves On

By Brandy Schillace
(GRS '10)

I received my Ph.D. this May, and in July I will begin as an assistant professor of 18th century British literature at Winona State University. Between these two events – and post the gauntlet we call “the job market” – I find myself waxing nostalgic.

It goes without saying that the economic climate is not very friendly at present, particularly to the newly fledged. That I was able to find a position in this job market is thanks largely to the opportunities offered me at CWRU.

The department enables graduate students to gain substantial administrative and mentoring experience as well as teaching experience. I served as assistant director of composition from 2006 to 2008, and acted as a mentor TA from 2004 to 2008. In these posts I developed pedagogy seminars, worked with new students, and edited the Writing@Case website. A good deal of the work expected of me in my new position requires just such skills, so I feel as though I am beginning a job that is already familiar, which has calmed some of those new-job nerves.

My involvement in CWRU's SAGES program brought me additional unforeseen benefits. I was a writing co-instructor for professor Atwood Gaines of the anthropology department in 2004 and 2005. In 2007 he became editor-in-chief of an international journal, *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, and because of our previous work together he brought me on board as managing editor. The connection not only enhanced my editorial and management skills, it expanded my research perspective. In my dissertation, *“The Alphabet of Sense”: Rediscovering the Rhetoric of Women's Intellectual Liberty*, I was able to include medical rhetoric among the diverse rhetorical strategies I investigated in 18th century fictional and nonfictional advocacy for women's education.



Brandy Schillace (GRS '10) presents from her work at Writing Week's day of creative readings and performances in Guilford House.

Having learned to juggle – sometimes even integrate – so many diverse obligations, I'm moving on with confidence to my new position at Winona State where I will be responsible for four courses per semester as well as my fair share of administrative work and, of course, research and publication. In the archives of the nearby Mayo Clinic and the University of Minnesota library I anticipate finding valuable resources for upcoming research projects – an article on 18th century obstetrics and a book on early Gothic literature in relation to brain trauma theory. ■

Support English at CWRU

Student awards and fellowships, research funding, and important programs and events like the ones covered in this newsletter depend on support from our alumni and friends. We are enormously grateful for your donations in recent years and hope you will continue to help us build on our achievements. If you would like to make a gift to the department, you may use the enclosed envelope or donate online at <http://giving.cwru.edu>.

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As the first conference organized around the regular meeting of a scholarly society, the 25th annual International Conference on Narrative breaks new ground for the department.

Writing Week 2010

Campus interest in writing has continued to grow since CWRU's first annual celebration of writing across the disciplines a year ago. This year's Writing Week activities consumed several weeks, and they spanned an even richer spectrum thanks in part to the simultaneous convergence of scholars in town to attend the annual conference of the International Society for the Study of Narrative. Creative resource sharing between the ISSN and Writing Week organizers in the University's Center for the Study of Writing (CSW) brought several conference plenary speakers to campus. Susan Stanford Friedman and Greil Marcus kicked off Writing Week with campus workshops, targeted especially at students and faculty in the Women's Studies Program and the Music Department, before addressing conferees downtown; and ISSN conferees travelled to campus for Rita Charon's plenary lecture on "The Novelization of the Body, or How Medicine and Stories Need One Another," held in the Ford Auditorium of the Allen Memorial Medical Library. The campus venue facilitated wide CWRU community attendance, which neared 300, while giving conferees an opportunity to explore the campus and nearby University Circle institutions. Charon's lecture was supported by Edward S. Sadar (ADL '64, SOM '68) and Melinda Melton Sadar (FSM '66), whose generosity funds an annual CSW lecture in writing in the disciplines.



Business lunch of the 25th annual meeting of the International Society for the Study of Narrative at the Renaissance Hotel in downtown Cleveland.



From left: Cara Byrne asks ESL students Terry Chen, Wenyu Cheng, and Tracy Chen about their project at the Adelbert Gym showcase of student research and writing across the CWRU disciplines.

Noteworthy among the many other campus Writing Week events was a poetry reading featuring visiting poets Melissa Kwasny and Dick Miles, and CWRU Assistant Professor of English Sarah Gridley.

Student participation in Writing Week took a variety of forms. The campus community was treated to a full day of student creative readings and performances in Guilford House, and a daylong showcase of student research and writing across the CWRU disciplines could be browsed in the old Adelbert Gym. Here posters detailing research projects in the sciences and social sciences were most abundant, but projects stemming from English courses and the many SAGES seminars our lecturers and

graduate students teach also figured prominently again this year. Especially memorable were a "Great Wall" of poetry and an investigation by students in one of Jessica Gerard's ESL courses of the impediments to foreign student assimilation in undergraduate life at CWRU. The latter presentation drew visitors into lively dialogue with the exhibitors about possible solutions. Also featured at the showcase was the Writing Resource Center's second annual Writing Idol contest, returning on popular demand to give visitors several hours of comic relief.

Writing Week concluded with an awards celebration at which Dean of Arts & Sciences Cyrus Taylor toasted the many faculty and graduate students who this year worked to enhance the writing skills of over 2,750 CWRU undergraduates. Among those singled out for special recognition was Associate Professor of History Renee Sentilles, who received the CSW's Jessica Melton Perry Award for Distinguished Teaching in Disciplinary and Professional Writing. Renee designed and regularly teaches an innovative senior seminar aimed at helping *students* of history become practicing *historians*. The capstone seminar that the English department is presently developing for its majors is modeled on her course. The SAGES Writing Instruction Award, funded this year by a generous grant from Jackson McHenry (ADL '52), recognized the outstanding service of English Department Writing Lecturer Susan Dominguez. And the Writing Resource Center Excellence in Consulting Award went to Tracey Hallman. Visit www.cwru.edu/writingweek for more details and photos of Writing Week activities.



Associate Professor of History Renee Sentilles (second from left) is honored by (from left) Kenny Fountain, College of Arts and Sciences Dean Cyrus Taylor, and Kim Emmons at the Writing Week awards celebration in Guilford House.

Joyce Marathon

On Friday afternoon, March 19, until the wee small hours of Saturday morning two dozen students from Kurt Koenigsberger's spring course on James Joyce and Virginia Woolf were joined by faculty and student fans from across the university for a marathon reading of representative selections of Joyce's landmark 1922 novel *Ulysses*. Sustained only by Chinese carryout, they took turns reading from episodes such as "Nausikaa" (so scandalous it resulted in the banning of *Ulysses* for decades in the U.S.) and "Penelope," with Molly Bloom's famous long, unpunctuated soliloquy. In addition to this biannual event Kurt has been directing an informal reading group on *Finnegans Wake* for nearly a decade. Alumni and friends of English are welcome at both venues, and are invited to contact Kurt (kurt.koenigsberger@case.edu) for more information.

Journalism and Media Lecture Series

Invited speakers in the series, organized again this year by Charles Michener, included: Howard Schneider, former Pulitzer-Prize winning editor of *Newsday* and dean of the School of Journalism at Stony Brook University; Paul Steiger, former managing editor of *The Wall Street Journal* and founding editor of *ProPublica*, the path-breaking, non-profit website for investigative journalism; and Lawrence Wright, author of *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for general non-fiction and is one of the small handful of indispensable books about the origins of Islamic terrorism. Videocasts may be downloaded from You Tube by typing "Journalism and Media Lecture Series: [Name of Speaker]". ■

Faculty Highlights

Mary Grimm stepped forward last spring to chair the department, replacing **Bill Siebenschuh**, whose many years of service were rewarded with a much-deserved sabbatical.

Ted Gup, who held the Shirley Wormser chair in journalism for over a decade, has departed to chair Emerson College's department of journalism.

2009-10 saw the publication of three books by department faculty: **Kimberly Emmons'** *Black Dogs and Blue Words: Depression and Gender in the Age of Self-Care* (Rutgers University Press, 2009);

Sarah Gridley's *Green is the Orator* (University of California Press, 2010); and **Thrity Umrigar's** *The Weight of Heaven* (Harper Collins, 2009).

The department is welcoming a new Americanist this fall. **Michael Clune**, a Johns Hopkins Ph.D., comes to us from the University of South Florida. Michael specializes in post-WWII literature and culture. His book, *American Literature and the Free Market, 1945-2000*, was published this year by Cambridge University Press.

The Society for Critical Exchange at CWRU, 1990-2008

After nearly two decades of English Department sponsorship the Society for Critical Exchange transitioned last year to the University of Houston. The nation's oldest scholarly organization devoted to inquiry and research in criticism and theory, the SCE was lured to CWRU in 1990 by Gary Stonum and Martha Woodmansee, who co-directed it until 1994. Notable early initiatives included the establishment of one of the first email discussion groups in the humanities, the Electronic College of Theory (ECOT), and the inauguration of a series of research projects aimed at fostering sustained collaboration across disciplines in workshops, conferences, and joint publications.

In its first major project at CWRU the SCE brought literary and legal scholars to campus to investigate our modern idea of "authorship" in relation to the evolution of proprietary rights in ideas. This 1991 initiative is widely credited with inspiring a whole generation of exciting research into the complex social, economic and legal institutions of authorship since the Renaissance, even as it instigated broad public debate about the direction of intellectual property, especially copyright policy in the new digital era. More recently, historians of science and technology joined this long-standing scholarly collaboration, convening at CWRU in 2006 to extend critical scrutiny to our modern idea of "invention" in relation especially to the development of patent law. *The Construction of Authorship: Textual Appropriation in Law and Literature* (Duke University Press, 1994) and the forthcoming *Making and Unmaking Intellectual Property* (University of Chicago Press, 2011) are two of the many publications that have issued from this project's workshops and conferences.

Another early initiative aimed at renewing critical exchange between literature and economics also proved pathbreaking. Having germinated in MLA workshops beginning in 1991, this project kicked off at a major CWRU conference in 1994 which by putting the practitioners of a motley of promising post-Marxist approaches to culture into conversation with one another resulted in the delineation of an identifiable "new economic criticism." A volume of conference papers by this title (Routledge, 1999) has inspired a burgeoning body of exciting work by both new and veteran critics, establishing the new economic criticism as one of the most fertile areas of research in literary and cultural studies more generally.

The department's Center for the Study of Writing is rooted in recommendations that emerged from another CWRU-sponsored SCE initiative, its "Cultures of Writing" project, which developed in 1997 to investigate the increasing separation of literary and composition studies into independent programs and even departments. In its commitment to encouraging the study of writing in all of its aspects – its diverse technologies, sites, and economies; its conventions, forms, and pedagogies; and its practices and uses, both contemporary and historical – the CSW seeks to reverse this troubling trend.

As an allied organization of the Modern Language Association, the SCE under department leadership regularly sponsored panels at the annual conventions of the MLA and its many regional affiliates, giving faculty and graduate students at CWRU and from across the nation opportunities to develop collaborative projects, organize panels, present and receive feedback on their work. From 1995 to 2000 alumnus Max Thomas (CWR '88, GRS '89, Law '03), then on the English faculty at the University of Iowa, served as Associate Director of the SCE under Martha Woodmansee. He was succeeded in 2001 by Kurt Koenigsberger who in addition to developing the Society's web presence directed projects on Globalization and the Image and on Autism and Representation. A more comprehensive overview of the SCE's many accomplishments under department leadership may be viewed at www.case.edu/affil/sce. The Society's papers, from its founding in 1975, will go to the University of California-Irvine library's Critical Theory Archive, which includes the papers of notable theorists from René Wellek to Jacques Derrida and Stanley Fish, many of whom were regular participants in SCE activities. ■

Alumni News

Christina Carleton Davis (GRS '06) has founded a burgeoning on-line editing service, *Polish My Paper*.

William Heath (GRS '71) has published a novel based on extensive historical research, *Blacksnake's Path: The True Adventures of William Wells* (Heritage Books, 2008).

Chris Lambert (CWR '09) expects to return to Ohio this summer, having spent a year as a starving artist in Sidney, Australia. He hopes in his next update to be able to report that he's been published.

Susan Streeter Carpenter (CWR '69) has published an historical novel about the radical 1960s, *Riders on the Storm* (Bottom Dog Press, 2010), that is set in Cleveland – indeed, chiefly at CWRU.

Jennifer Swartz (GRS '02), previously on the faculty at Kent State, reported that she has taken a position as Assistant Professor of English and Communication, and Director of the Writing Center at Lake Erie College.

Andrew Willson (CWR '09) has been awarded a full 5-year fellowship to pursue a Ph.D. in English at Yale University. He expects to specialize in Victorian studies.

Share Your News

If you have news you would like to share in a future newsletter, please send it to department chair Mary Grimm (mary.grimm@case.edu).

The department also has a Facebook page growing apace on which several hundred of your classmates and profs are already sharing their news. Just use your Facebook locator to go to the "CWRU English Department" and see what they've been up to. And above all, become a member of the community and post your own news. We want to know. The department will be posting here regularly too – news of Friends of English events, guest lectures, and readings, and links to podcasts thereof.

In Memoriam: Florence Marsh (1916-2009)



Florence Marsh
(1916-2009)

I remember Florence Marsh as a young professor who had recently come from Yale. We knew she had written a book on Wordsworth's imagery, and that really impressed us; we soon found out how scholarly and exacting she was, but how many of us realized just how groundbreaking her career? Admitted to Yale's Ph.D. program, she was one of the earliest women to earn a Ph.D. in English – or even to be admitted to Yale, where she was awarded both a University and a Junior Sterling Fellowship. Her B.A. (Phi Beta Kappa) was from Mount Holyoke College, one M.A. from Columbia Teacher's College, another from Tennessee. In 1972 she became the first woman chair of the CWRU English department, and at that time had to have been one of the first woman chairs at a research university anywhere in the country. Invited to address a newly forming CWRU women's faculty group, she told us that when she came to teach at Western Reserve in 1950 it was made quite clear to her that, as a woman, she could never rise above the rank of assistant professor. Well, she was promoted to Associate Professor in 1960, and Professor in 1966. In 1985, she was granted Professor Emerita status.

Besides her monograph titled *Wordsworth's Imagery: A Study in Poetic Vision* in the Yale Studies in English series, she published essays mainly—though not exclusively—on subjects related to romanticism in journals like *Studies in Romanticism*, *Essays in Criticism*, and *Modern Language Notes*, all highly respected journals in our discipline at that time. She received a Ford Foundation grant for the improvement of teaching, and because of it was able to spend a year (1954-55) in residence at Cambridge University in the U.K. She also served as a consultant to prestigious journals like *Studies in Romanticism*, *Genre*, and the *Publications of the Modern Language Association*.

Florence – Professor Marsh, rather – was my freshman English instructor, and from her I learned what it meant not only to quote sources and to punctuate footnotes properly, but how to organize a paper; above all, I learned that to write a paper, one was actually supposed to say something. One learned a lot from and for Florence. And we appreciated that. Yes, she could be highly critical about abuses of the semi-colon, but she modeled thorough research, passion for literature and teaching, and she showed appreciation of our efforts and accomplishments. Florence could seem distant, reserved, private. Those who got to know her, though, realized how loyal she was to her school, her department, her discipline, and her students. If you were serious about your studies, you learned how helpful and encouraging she really could be. I learned this when I returned in 1970, more than a little apprehensive about pursuing an M.A., and she welcomed me warmly. As I was finishing my M.A., Florence encouraged me to continue, offering me a fellowship to go ahead for the Ph.D. – and to see ahead toward an academic career. This encouragement meant even more coming from a woman – and a woman with such high standards and high goals for her graduate students. ■

– Judith Link Oster (GRS '79)

English Department Faculty

Kimberly Emmons, associate professor
Outgoing director of composition, rhetoric and composition, medical rhetoric

Christopher Flint, associate professor
Director of graduate studies, 18th century literature, history of the novel

T. Kenny Fountain, assistant professor
Scientific and technical communication, visual rhetoric

Jessica Gerard, instructor
Coordinator of ESL, literacy studies, applied linguistics

Sarah Gridley, assistant professor
Creative writing, poetry

Mary Grimm, associate professor
Chair, fiction writing

Megan Swihart Jewell, instructor
Director of the Writing Resource Center, 19th century American literature, poetics

Kurt Koenigsberger, associate professor
Incoming director of composition, 19th-20th century British literature, post-colonial literature

James Kuzner, assistant professor
Renaissance literature, Shakespeare

William Marling, professor
American literature, modernism

Marilyn Mobley, professor
American and African-American literature;
University Vice President for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity

Erika Olbricht, instructor
SAGES instructional coordinator, medieval and renaissance literature and theater

John Orlock, professor
Dramatic literature, playwriting and screenwriting

Judith Oster, professor
American literature, poetry

William Siebenschuh, professor
18th century British literature, auto/biography

Robert Spadoni, associate professor
Film studies

Gary Stonum, Oviatt professor
American literature, literary theory

Thrity Umrigar, associate professor
Fiction writing, journalism

Athena Vrettos, associate professor
Victorian literature, history of medicine

Martha Woodmansee, professor of English & Law
18th – 19th century literature, intellectual property law

Lecturers and associated faculty:

Barbara Burgess-Van Aken, Eric Chilton, Bryan Conn, Katherine Clark, Susan Dominguez, Hazel Emery, Narcisz Fejes, Kristine Kelly, Eve McPherson, Daniel Melnick, Terri Mester, Todd Oakley, Annie Pecastaings, Mark Pedretti, Brad Ricca, Judit Simo, Christopher Strathman, Derek Thiess, Penny Tucker, Raymond Watkins, Mary Beth Wetli



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