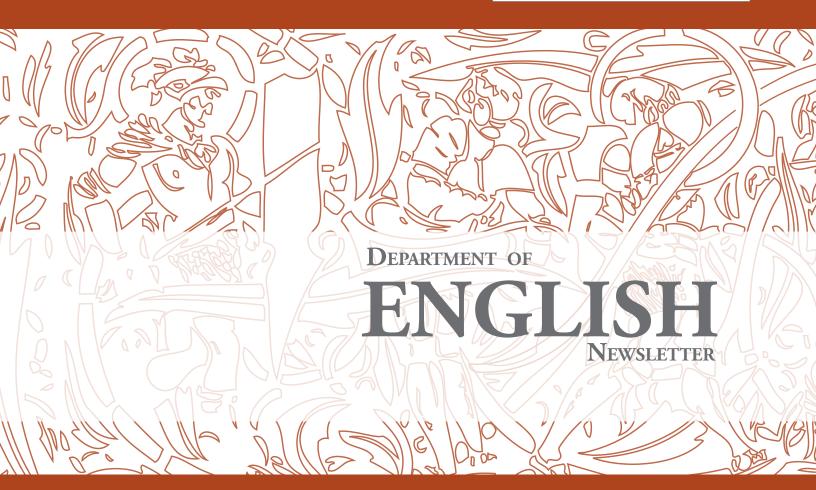
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FALL 2012



NOTE FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Alumni and Alumnae,

After a whirlwind spring semester, we are off to a busy start in the new academic year—as the following pages attest. In particular, I hope that those of you in the Western New York area will be able to join us in welcoming famous Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko to Buffalo (see page 6). This is an extraordinary opportunity for poetry lovers to hear the voice of one of the great writers of the twentieth century. He will also discuss his film work, at the screening of one of his films.

The Department also invites you to attend an informal presentation free and open to the public hosted by Talking Leaves Bookstore (3158 Main Street) on Friday October 26 at 7:00 p.m. The riverrun Foundation has generously given three fellowships to the English Department to support graduate student accomplishment and research—one for the best course design and syllabus and two for graduate student travel to do archival research. The October presentation will feature the first winners of these new teaching and research fellowships.

As the political debate focuses increasingly on economic issues in this election year, it is heartwarming to hear repeatedly from alums and to read occasionally in major periodicals that the skills and accomplishments encouraged by the study of "English" are still valued. We have recently written a mission statement for the English Major to reaffirm those values: "The mission of the English Department is to educate our majors in literary and critical study by providing courses in a broad range of time periods, genres, approaches, and cultural contexts—including film, and traditional and popular culture. Our courses teach students to conduct original research and to develop skills in analytical and creative reading, thinking, writing, and speaking that will prepare them for success in a variety of professions as well as for general cultural literacy and active citizenship. Further, we foster in students the kind of aesthetic appreciation that will lead to lifelong pleasures in reading and writing." We have also developed this mission statement into particular "learning outcome" goals (as administrators say), namely, to

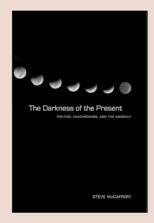
- think, read, speak, and above all write critically and creatively
- · read in detail and in cultural context
- · understand critical methods and theoretical concepts
- · gain knowledge of periods and genres
- · develop ability to articulate an idea lucidly and persuasively in writing
- develop skills for doing research and deploying evidence appropriately
- · appreciate aesthetic experience

We hope that these goals continue the Department's tradition of excellence I know you remember from your own days at UB.

As always, we'd love to hear from you—stories of your life or your accomplishments.

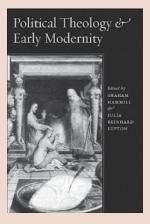
Cordially, Cristanne Miller

NEW BOOKS



David Gray Chair of Poetry and Letters Steve McCaffery's The Darkness of the Present:

The Darkness of the Present: Poetics, Anachronisms, and the Anomaly (University of Alabama Press, 2012) includes new and revised essays that collectively investigate the roles of anomaly and anachronism as they work to unsettle commonplace notions of the "contemporary" in the field of poetics.



Professor Graham Hammill coedited Political Theology & Early Modernity with Julia Reinhard Lupton (Universtiy of Chicago Press, 2012). In this book the co-editors assemble essays by established and emerging scholars in early modern studies to examine the role played by sixteenth- and seventeenthcentury literature and thought in modern conceptions of political theology.



Associate Professor Arabella Lyon co-edited Human Rights Rhetoric: Traditions of Testifying and Witnessing with Lester Olson (Routledge, 2012). This collection's essays initiate interdisciplinary conversations within human rights rhetoric concerning the construction of rights knowledge, the role of advocacy, and politics of representation during acts of witnessing.

New Faculty



David Alff comes to the UB English Department by way of the University of Pennsylvania, where he earned his PhD. He has taught courses at Penn, the Community College of Philadelphia, and Georgetown University. His dissertation, "British Writing and the Culture of Projection," investigates the eighteenth-century popular and controversial activity of proposing projects to improve society. He argues that the

writings of project authors, known as "projectors," shared political motivations and linguistic properties with contemporaneous poetry, fiction, and drama. Reading these expired plans for the future can provide unique perspective on British history, while sensitizing us to a cultural concept so embedded in modern society as to seem invisible. Dave first grew interested in projects while working at an information technology consulting firm, where he wrote contract proposals employing the same forms of persuasive rhetoric and representations of human enterprise that his graduate research would interrogate.

This fall he is teaching two courses on eighteenth-century British literature: "Eighteenth-Century Fiction" will examine the historical emergence of the novel, challenging students to refine their understandings of this immensely popular and seemingly-familiar mode of literary expression. "Eighteenth-Century Poetry" will survey works of verse from the 1700s, both as self-conscious aesthetic objects featuring certain formal attributes, and as vehicles for public expression. In the spring he will lead an upper-level undergraduate seminar called "Highways, Sewers, Ports: Building Modern Britain 1660—1820." This course asks what British writers had to say about the urgent infrastructural problems of their day, from the contamination of drinking water to the flammability of cities to the navigability of waterways, and assess the role of public works (printed texts and construction projects) in the development of British literary imaginations.

Outside of class, Dave looks forward to exploring Buffalo and its own complex narratives of public works and improvement. He is interested in finding some good running routes in the city, possibly dusting off his high school ice hockey pads, and rooting for the suddenly-but-hopefully-only-temporarily-abysmal Philadelphia Phillies.



Judith Goldman joins the Poetics Program at UB after teaching in the creative writing program and in the inter-arts humanities core at the University of Chicago and teaching a poetry and performance workshop at UC Berkeley as the Holloway Lecturer in the Practice of Poetry.

This fall, Judith is

teaching "Poetry Movements," which takes up three current constellations of poetry: contemporary African American poetries; contemporary documentary and research poetries; and Language and post-Language feminist poetries. Students will make connections and trace differences among these movements' conceptions and treatment of language. She is also teaching a new course for the undergraduate Creative Writing focus called "Language, Practice, and Writing" that involves reading-like-a-writer across disciplines. This version of the course is called "Riddles, Riddling, and Reading" and looks at cultural objects and arts across media that "riddle," including literal riddles, paintings, and texts by Poe, Marx, and Freud.

Judith's scholarship takes up twenty-first-century poetry and poetics with an eye to its correspondences with historical works. Over the summer, she wrote a chapter for the forthcoming critical anthology *Active Romanticism* that makes connections between temporal disordering in Romanticism and the post-9/11 work of the late poet Stacy Doris. She also published an article in *Postmodern Culture* on the contemporary literary formation called "conceptual poetry." This essay forms part of a larger critical project called "Medium Envy" that thinks through the difference medium continues to make in this era of new media and social networking.

These critical concerns are reflected in Goldman's recent book of poetry *l.b.; or, catenaries* (Krupskaya, 2011), which enacts the uneasy affective ecology that circulates in our immersive digital environment. Very recently, she has had poems and sound pieces published in *Fence, Berkeley Poetry Review, the claudius app,* and *text/sound.* She is currently working on a transgenre book called *Civilian Border Patrol, A tragi-comic border novel-policy on bio-piracy,* commissioned by Atelos Press, and a chapbook called "Blank Mount" (after Shelley's "Mont Blanc"), commissioned by Little Red Leaves.

Judith is excited about the wealth of reading series in Buffalo, the Albright-Knox museum, and Tifft Nature Reserve. She has also been enjoying kayaking up Elevator Alley from the Buffalo waterfront and hiking in the Finger Lakes area.

CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN WRITING



UB has Just opened a New Center for Excellence in Writing—although its existence is at the moment more an idea in progress than a physical space. This idea has had a long foreground and we are thrilled that it is finally taking form. In 2008 a group of faculty and staff, including English Department faculty Mili Clark and Arabella Lyon, developed a proposal for a writing center that was unanimously approved by the UB Faculty Senate. Unfortunately, no University action followed that Senate approval. In 2011, Cristanne Miller began to talk with administrators throughout the University about the

need for such a center, eliciting support from the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Vice President for Undergraduate Education, Vice President for Research, and the Dean of the Graduate School, among others. She then worked with Arabella and Alex Reid (Director of Composition) to submit a proposal for a "Center for Excellence in Writing" to the Provost's "3 E" competition, which called for high impact strategic initiatives developing UB priorities in innovative ways that lead to greater "Excellence, Engagement, and Efficiency." Out of the initial 101 proposals submitted, sixteen were awarded funding, including the Center for Excellence in Writing.

The proposal for the CEW described its purpose as to foster excellence in writing and writing instruction across the university by combining and extending existing writing services. The Center will serve as an intellectual foundation for writing research,

teaching, practice, and assessment, and for providing tutorial and workshop assistance to students. In particular, it will

- contribute to a signature General Education program that will attract undergraduates to Buffalo;
- provide peer and professional tutoring, workshops, dissertation completion groups, ESL support, and on-line learning;
- assist faculty who teach writing across UB;
- make more efficient use of UB's existing de-centralized resources dedicated to writing instruction;
- increase undergraduate and graduate student retention;
- help students achieve a four-year time to graduation;
- improve student research productivity, directly impacting research performance

Interim Director of the Center, Arabella Lyon, has called together an Implementation Committee including representatives from across the College of Arts and Sciences, Student Services, and Professional Schools to determine the structure that will best address the writing needs of undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff across the campus. Within the year, the CEW will acquire a space, a permanent director and associate director, and a robust slate of tutors and it will develop dissertation support groups and other programs to bring writing services to the broad academic community. Even at this point, Interim Director Lyon says, "the CEW will still be an idea in progress, for excellence in writing is a skittish ideal varying from writer to writer, discipline to discipline,



Photographs courtesy of the Center for Academic Development Services audience to audience. What will be stable is its commitment to establishing a culture of writing where learning to write is understood as a life-long process," which involves multiple drafts and sharing works-in-progress with attentive readers.

More specifically, during this coming academic year, the Center will survey existing tutoring services across the campus including those offering assistance with legal, technical, and business writing; develop an online writing lab (OWL); begin a high-quality course for preparing undergraduate students to become peer tutors; and develop a training program to prepare graduate and ESL tutors. The CEW has already hired two graduate assistants (including English PhD student Morani **Kornberg-Weiss**) to assist in the surveying of writing services and preparation of student tutors. In Spring 2013 the CEW will offer workshops and consultation to faculty wishing to develop writing intensive courses, a Dissertation Boot Camp during Spring Break, and brown bag lunches for faculty and staff involved in Professional and Technical Communication. As the president of the SUNY Council on Writing, Arabella has arranged for the Council to host its March annual conference at UB, an event that will bring writing specialists from around the Northeast to discuss writing in higher education.

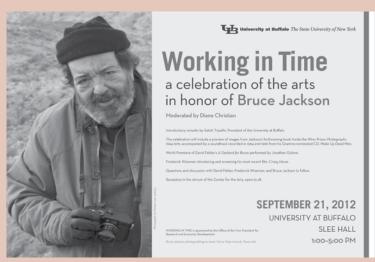
Morani Kornberg-Weiss, Graduate Assistant for the new CEW, says of her new position:

"As a GA at the Center for Excellence in Writing, I hope to share my experiences in and out of the classroom—both in the U.S. and Israel. In Israel, I had the opportunity to teach English as a second language to high school students, train incoming soldiers during my military service, and teach literature and writing at Tel Aviv University; later I taught composition and worked as a Teaching Assistant mentor for the UB English Department. Working at the center will allow me to draw on these experiences while interacting with the diverse student population on campus. I am excited to have the opportunity to help develop this unique intellectual space for tutoring students across the curriculum."

In Honor of Bruce Jackson

SUNY Distinguished Professor Bruce Jackson has written and edited over thirty books, directed nine documentary films (six of these co-directed with SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor Diane Christian), has had over twenty solo photography exhibits, was nominated for a Grammy Award, and has been honored by the French government as a Chevalier in two categories: National Order of Merit and Arts and Letters. Having been a member of the English Department faculty for over forty years, Bruce's writing, photography, films and teaching are integral to the department's identity and have contributed significantly to its international repute.

On September 21, UB hosted a celebration of the arts in honor of Bruce's enormous achievements as a scholar, activist and artist, aptly titled "Working in Time." At the event, Bruce previewed images from his forthcoming book *Inside*



the Wire: Prison Photographs 1964-1979, accompanied by a soundtrack from his Grammy-nominated album Wake Up Dead Man. In addition, the celebration included the world premiere of David Felder's "A Garland for Bruce," composed for this celebration, and a screening of Frederick Wiseman's most recent film Crazy Horse, followed by a panel discussion moderated by SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor Diane Christian. Former students of Bruce's offered written tributes to his teaching and mentoring in English, American Studies, ethnography, and Comparative Literature.

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YEVGENY YEVTUSHENKO

In 1960, Yevgeny Yevtushenko was the first Russian poet to break through the Iron Curtain to recite his poetry in the West. The following year, he wrote what would become his most famous poem, "Babi Yar," which critiqued Soviet and international anti-Semitism through its powerful evocation of the Babi Yar ravine in Kiev. The ravine is believed to be the location of the biggest single massacre of the Holocaust, where almost 34,000 Jews were killed in September 1941. Fifty years after having written the poem, Yevtushenko reflected on the occasion of his first seeing Babi Yar: "I met the writer Anatoly Kuznetsov—he was an eyewitness to what happened in Babi Yar. He told me the story, and I asked him to accompany me to the site." Knowing there was no monument but expecting some kind of respects paid, Yevtushenko was horrified to find the ravine buried under a garbage dump. He reflects on the urgency of his reaction: "As soon as I got back to my hotel, I sat down and I began to write—it took probably four or five hours, no more. . . . It was desperation—shame came to dictate this poem." Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich was inspired by this poem to write his thirteenth symphony.

Yevtushenko has said, "Poetry is like a bird, it ignores all frontiers." Like his poetry, Yevtushekno's long career has been one of ignoring frontiers, publishing novels, essays, plays, and screenwriting and directing films in addition to the scores of poetry books. And he has been honored again and again for his fearless and prolific writing, winning awards such as the Order of the Badge of Honor, State Prize of the Russian Federation, International Prize "Golden Lion," Golden Chain of the Commonwealth, the Bocaccio Prize in Italy for the best foreign novel, the American Liberties Medallion of the American Jewish Committee, and the Grinzane Cavour prize "for his ability to convey the eternal themes of the means of literature, especially to the younger generation." He was nominated for a Nobel Prize for Literature in 2007.

Yevtushenko has been involved in multiple aspects of film production, including directing, screenwriting, acting and contributing lyrics to Soviet films. He has also written many articles on film, including on the work of Federico Fellini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Tengiz Abuladze. In 1964 Yevtushenko co-wrote the script for I Am Cuba (Sov Cuba, 1964) with the Cuban director and screenwriter Enrique Pineda Barnet. The film, made by the Russian filmmaker Mikhail Kalatozov, was praised by Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola who were instrumental in its re-release in 1995. Later, Yevtushenko took the role of Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, the father of modern rocket science, in the film Ascent (Vzlyot, 1979) by Savva Kulish. In addition, Yevtushenko directed two of his own films, Kindergarten (Detskiy Sad, 1983) and Stalin's Funeral (Pokhorony Stalina, 1990), both on life in the former Soviet Union. His films are full of poetry (both recited and sung) and poetic by nature: they are imbued with lyrical flourishes and personal visions of history. In Kindergarten, Yevtushenko reflects on his experience as a young boy during the war years in the Soviet Union. In Stalin's Funeral, he reflects on the scene of public mourning and near riot that accompanied the display of Stalin's body in March of 1953.

Yevtushenko divides his time between Russia and the United States, where he is a distinguished visiting professor at the University of Tulsa.

For more information on Yevtushenko, his time in Buffalo, and to read a translation of "Babi Yar," go to www.english.buffalo.edu.

Yevtushenko Events

Wednesday October 31
7:00 screening of Stalin's Funeral

directed by Yevtushenko and starring Vanessa Redgrave, Alexei Batalov, and Yevtushenko himself Followed by Q&A with Mr. Yevtushenko moderated by Dr. Tanya Shilina-Conte

Thursday November 1
7:00 p.m. A reading of his poetry *
Lippes Concert Hall in Slee Hall
UB North Campus
Reception & book signing to follow

4:00-5:00 Open discussion with students All are invited to attend an open Q&A discussion with Mr. Yevtushenko Capen Hall 420, The Poetry Collection

* The reading is free and open to the public but tickets are required. For tickets, contact Slee Hall Box Office (M-F, 9-4), CFA Box Office (M-F, 10-6) or go to www.english.buffalo.edu.



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GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS



Leah Benedict, BA University of Utah '07, is a fifth-year PhD candidate studying eighteenth-century British literature. In the summer of 2012, Leah was awarded a fellowship to conduct research at the Folger Shakespeare Library and attend a year-long seminar with the Folger Institute. There, she will sift through medical tracts, divorce trials, and collections of miscellaneous poetry and ephemera to pursue the topic of her dissertation, "Impotence: the Anatomy of a Passion." This will not be her first experience of archival research: Leah recently

spent two weeks at the National Library of Ireland familiarizing herself with early Irish transcripts of eighteenth-century "criminal conversation" lawsuits, which prosecute sexual improprieties between wives and their unmarried suitors. Leah is also the recipient of the first riverrun Teaching Fellowship, the Gender Institute Dissertation Fellowship, and an Opler and Doubrava support fellowship.

Leah was drawn to the UB English Department's strong scholarship in the study of psychoanalysis and theories of sexuality. This interest led her to organize the Humanities Institute's Workshop for Queer Theory between 2010 and 2012. As head of the workshop, Leah co-coordinated "At the Hip: Conjoining Queerness and Disability" in the spring of 2011, an interdisciplinary symposium dedicated to the uncomfortable intersections between queerness and disability. In addition, she coordinated a 2011-2012 speaker series devoted to historical expressions of pleasure and desire.

FOLGER INSTITUTE

Congratulations to **Leah Benedict** and **Nick Hoffman** for being admitted with full grants-in-aid to the Folger Institute's year-long monthly dissertation seminar on "Researching the Archive."



Since arriving at UB, **David Hadbawnik**'s academic focus has been a little unusual in that he is considered a Poetics student but also studies medieval literature. He has found it to be a fruitful way to approach his studies, with both disciplines informing each other. Lately he has been thinking about translation—working on *The Aeneid* with faculty in the Classics Department—and writing on his dissertation about Chaucer

and Spenser. The faculty in the English Department, he notes, have been "incredibly" supportive of his projects and flexible enough to respond to whatever he proposes.

David says: "One of the advantages of being in Poetics is taking part in the rich tradition of student publications and productions. I've received generous support for such projects, including my journal *kadar koli*, and something I began in collaboration with local poets here, the Buffalo Poets Theater. We began in 2009 with Robert Duncan's play, *The Origins of Old Son*, which Jim Maynard helped me dig out of the archive, and which hadn't been produced since Black Mountain days. In the years since, we've done Eileen Myles's libretto *Hell*, excerpts from Jack Spicer's *Troilus*, and most recently, during

the Modernist Studies Association conference in Buffalo, October 2012, we performed Gertrude Stein's *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*. There's something about *performing* poetry—even poetry as experimental and difficult as the texts we've undertaken—that audiences really respond to, and that kind of connection has been important to all of us."

Last fall, David began a Graduate Assistantship in the Office of the Vice President for Research (VPR). It's a stimulating and informative job, in which he has taken on a number of tasks: everything from collecting materials for a newsletter to editing scientific research proposals to helping craft memos about new patent laws. The VPR office is where people work to connect what's happening in the university with the outside world, and while that mostly involves working with people in medicine and the sciences, it also means publicizing new books from faculty across the disciplines. Also, David feels that he is getting a better sense of how an institution the size of UB operates from an administrative perspective, which will be helpful when it is time to take the next step in his career.



Joey Yearous-Algozin is currently involved in two publishing projects: First, *P-Queue*, a journal of poetry and criticism, which he co-edits with fellow PhD candidate, Holly Melgard. Founded in 2003 by Sarah Campbell, PhD '08, *P-Queue*'s third generation of editors, Joey and Holly, took the journal over from Andrew Rippeon in 2010. Having published issues under the themes of "document" and "volume" respectively, they are in the

process of compiling their third issue of *P-Queue*, before handing the journal over to another Poetics student next year.

Second, along with Chris Sylvester, Divya Victor, and Holly (all English PhD Students), Joey is a member of the collective, TROLL THREAD, a Tumblr-based publishing platform that straddles the line between digital-and print-based publishing. Working within the do-it-yourself aesthetic of PDF and Print on Demand, they are able to put out work that would be economically prohibitive for traditional presses, multi-volume, full color or 700+ page books. Also, this allows the collective to publish a book of poetry more quickly than usual.

The consequence of this increased rate of production is that they don't necessarily have to think of the textual object as a kind of precious or rare thing. Furthermore, this releases the pressure on the poet writing the poem. In this accelerated dissemination of language, the gestural may become is not only a sufficient, but *the* necessary unit of composition. For example, Joey's 911-page book, *9/11 911 Calls in 911 Pt. Font*, enlarges the text of the FDNY 9-1-1 transcripts to such an extent as to render them almost unreadable.

This latter mode of publishing has informed his own work as a scholar of post-war Anglophone American experimental poetry, teaching that the material conditions in which poetry is written, printed, and disseminated play a major role in determining a poem's formal concerns. As much of the work that he is currently researching uses methods of procedure and/or appropriation, he is forced to find techniques for reading the work beyond close reading.

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Undergraduate and Graduate Student News

English Student Association

In the fall of 2011, **Professor Andrew Stott**, then Director of Undergraduate Studies and now Director of the UB Honors College, contacted then senior **Patrick Riedy**, BA '12, about forming a club for undergraduate English majors. At the time, no organization existed for English majors to meet and discuss literature, the Department, courses, or other bookworm matters. Taking Andy's suggestion, Patrick scheduled an interest meeting and students began working out the Student Associate requirements. By the spring semester the English Student Association (ESA) went before the Student Association Senate for club confirmation.



The current ESA board considers last year's activities modest, focused mainly on gaining new members, but the ESA held two successful fundraisers and provided invaluable assistance to the Department chair in putting on the department reunion, especially in helping construct

the alumni book cover collage. This academic year, the group is looking forward to doing much of the same work, helping to plan the holiday party, and holding more fundraisers. The ESA also has some new plans in the works: game and movie nights, paper writing seminars and a group trip in the spring.

Of her experience as a member last year, now ESA Secretary **Farhana Hasan** says, "Last year, there were *Generation* magazine editors, a published author, published poet, a *Spectrum* writer and many other cool people in attendance. For me, this was very inspiring and it encouraged me to get out of my box and become more involved in extracurricular activities."

To UB English alums, ESA Treasurer **Ally Balcerzak** says, "On behalf of ESA I'd like to thank everyone who helped support us by purchasing books and t-shirts at the reunion last April. It's because of your support that we are able to plan more events for this coming school year."

Composition Prizes

Composition Syllabus Prize Winners 2012

The annual Composition Prizes celebrate excellence in course design and undergraduate writing, both resulting from our instructors' full-on commitment to teaching and mentoring. The syllabi prizes recognize course outlines blending intellectual ambition and innovative assignments with attention to the needs and strengths of undergraduate writers.

- 1st Place, \$100: John Hyland (ENG 201, Food Matters)
- 2nd Place (tie), \$75: Rae Muhlstock (ENG 201, Technology and the Cultural Imagination) and Amelia Bitely (ENG 201, The Truth Is Out There)

Composition Essay Prize Winners 2012

Our essay prizes reward undergraduates whose work transcends expectations, often through a writing process involving ongoing exchange between the teacher and the student in the pleasures of joint inquiry.

- 1st Place, \$125: Olivia Gambocarto, "Looking to Women to Counter Climate Change" (Leslie Nickerson, instructor)
- 2nd Place, \$75: Michael Reinhardt, "Advertising's Grasp upon Our Palpable Minds" (Megan Faragher, instructor)
- Honorable Mentions, \$25: Kristen Alcazaren, "Birth Control: Sluts Only... Oh, Really?" (Morani Kornberg-Weiss, instructor) and Theresa (Anderson) Starrantino, "Slut Shaming and Social Justice" (Dustin Parrott, instructor)

Special thanks to **Seth Cosimini** for helping put together this Fall 2012 newsletter.

Dickens Universe

Held every year at the beginning of August on the beautiful UC Santa Cruz campus, the Charles Dickens Universe brings together scholars, graduate students, high school teachers, and members of the general public for a week of study and conviviality focused on the fiction of the beloved novelist Charles Dickens. The program includes formal lectures by distinguished scholars, seminars, small discussion groups, films, performances and exhibits. The Universe provides a unique forum for scholarly discussion and debate, as well as a rare opportunity to engage with non-scholars who share a passion for Victorian literature, in general, and for Charles

Dickens, in particular.

Each summer, the program focuses on a different Dickens novel. This past summer's novel was *Bleak House*. PhD student **Kyle Fetter** comments: "Without going into paragraph after paragraph of enthusiasm saturated detail, I can truly say that the time I spent there was for me eye-opening, invigorating, and perhaps the most important experience I have had yet as an academic. The week has certainly been immensely valuable for me, and I sincerely thank the department for having made this possible. I also hope that the department is able to continue to send students to the conference in the future, as the experience should certainly be mandatory for every student with a Victorian/Dickensian focus."

The Department is looking for support to continue membership in the Dickens Universe.

FEATURED ALUMNA

Elizabeth Willis (PhD '94)

Elizabeth Willis is the Shapiro-Silverberg Professor of Creative Writing and Professor of English at Wesleyan University. Her most recent book, *Address* (Wesleyan University Press, 2011), won the PEN New England / L. L. Winship Prize for Poetry. Her other books of poetry include *Meteoric Flowers* (Wesleyan University Press, 2006), Turneresque (Burning Deck, 2003), *The Human Abstract* (Penguin, 1995), and Second Law (Avenue B, 1993). Her poetry has also been widely published in journals such as *BOMB*, *Boston Review*, *Chicago Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Critical Quarterly*, *Hambone*, *The Nation*, and *A Public Space*, and her work has been translated into French, Dutch, Polish and Slovak.

Elizabeth has received numerous honors for her poetry, most recently a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation to continue work on a new book that touches on the American West and religion and the performance of family. She has also received fellowships from the California Arts Council, and the Howard Foundation. From 1998 to 2002, Elizabeth was Distinguished Writer-in-Residence at Mills College. In 1994, *The Human Abstract* was selected for the National Poetry Series. In 2007, she was awarded the Boston Review Prize for poetry.

Elizabeth's work builds on a tradition of lyric innovation and open form. Her most recent projects are investigative in spirit, shifting increasingly toward hybrid genres, and explicitly questioning the boundaries of literary representation. *Meteoric Flowers* contains prose poems that mix pastoral romance with a critical engagement in the turbulent and heavily metaphorical language of contemporary culture. *Address* explores the collision of poetry, politics, and history in acts of public and private speech.

Alongside her creative work, Elizabeth has written critically about nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetry, focusing on the effects of politics and technology on aesthetic production and the relation of poets to their sources. Recently she edited a volume of essays on Wisconsin poet Lorine Niedecker entitled *Radical Vernacular: Lorine Niedecker and the Poetics of Place* (University of Iowa Press, 2008).

Remembering her time at UB, Elizabeth recounts: "The whole atmosphere was like a big conversation. I arrived with a very idiosyncratic education, and I was starved to have others to talk to. I had worked my way through college, so just having all that time to read and write was a revelation.

"Working with Bob [Creeley] and then later with Charles [Bernstein] and Susan [Howe] really shaped my sense of how poetry can thrive in the context of an academic environment without being confined by it. . . . There were poetry readings almost every night of the week, in bars, at Just Buffalo, in people's living rooms. I also worked with Jack Clarke and with Diane Christian on Blake. And I worked with Bruce Jackson in a course on Fieldwork that dealt with documentary and folk materials. He introduced me to Frederick Wiseman and Emile de Antonio, and to the incredible film resources at the Eastman House. I took a poetry workshop with Carl Dennis, and worked with Nancy Armstrong when she was there as a visiting professor. J. M. Coetzee was there for a semester,

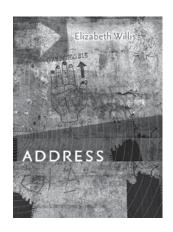
and Michel Serres, I attended everything I could by Slavoj Žižek and Joan Copjec. I think I audited as many courses as I enrolled in just to hear what other people were thinking about.

"I loved the 'second city' feeling of Buffalo—the sense that it didn't have to import its culture, that it was as interesting and productive to be there as it was to be in places like New York or San Francisco.

"One thing I loved about working with Bob and Charles and Susan—as well as others, including most of my peers—was their openness as readers. It wasn't about liking or accepting anything you read—not at all—but it was about allowing yourself to be surprised and allowing your preferences as a reader to be idiosyncratic rather than doctrinaire."

The title poem to Elizabeth's latest book, Address:

I is to they as river is to barge as convert to picket line sinker to steamer The sun belongs to I once, for an instant The window belongs to you leaning on the afternoon They are to you as the suffocating disappointment of the mall is to the magic rustle of the word "come" Turn left toward the mountain Go straight until you see the boat in the driveway A little warmer, a little stickier a little more like spring



"After following Elizabeth Willis's work for many years with excitement and admiration, I have come to consider her to be one of the most gifted poets of her generation, both here and abroad. Her writing crosses disciplines or genre categories and her most recent poetry collection *Address* is, in my opinion, the best book of poetry published in 2011."—SUNY Distinguished Professor Emerita Susan Howe, winner of the Bollingen Prize for Poetry

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ALUMNI NEWS

Charles Baxter, PhD '74, won the highly prestigious Rea Award for the Short Story, a lifetime achievement honor given annually to a Canadian or American author who has made unusually significant contributions to short story fiction. Other Rea Award winners include John Updike, Grace Paley, and Richard Ford. His novel *Feast of Love* was nominated for the National Book Award in 2000, won a Prix St. Valentine Award (in France), and was adapted into a feature film starring Morgan Freeman. Charles is the author of twelve books of fiction and non-fiction and three books of poetry. He is known for writing about the lives of ordinary Midwesterners, to whom accidental and extraordinary things happen.

Terrence Chiusano, MA '00, was a finalist in the 2011 National Poetry Series for his manuscript "On Generation and Corruption." A partial version of this manuscript was published as a chapbook with the same name (Handwritten Press, 2003).

Sean Patrick Hill, BA '94, won a grant from the Elizabeth George Foundation and an Al Smith Fellowship from the Kentucky Arts Council. He is currently an MFA student at the Warren Wilson College Program for Writers.



Virginia Schaefer Horvath, BA '78, was named Fredonia State College's first female president this fall. "Ginny" writes: "I have many great memories of courses in the English Department, including an early morning class on 'Literature and Philosophy.' Carl Dennis was a gifted and patient professor who encouraged me to find my way through Catullus and Horace and Virgil. Anne Payne's lessons in Old English also stayed with me. I'm grateful to Roanne

Steirheim and Susan Bachmann, who as graduate instructors taught me so much about writing in one's own voice."

Debora Ott, BA '71, is back in her home state of New York, splitting her time between family (two daughters with three daughters between them, ages one, two, and five) and capacity building work with literary arts organizations including The Poetry Project, Just Buffalo Literary Center (through LitTAP, the Literary Presenters Technical Assistance Program), and Jewish Heritage.

Zora Devrnja Zimmerman, English BA '67 & Comparative Literature PhD '74, writes, "I completed my undergraduate studies back in 1967, was out in the real world for a couple years traveling and teaching high school English, and then decided to go to graduate school, entering the doctoral program in the UB Department of Comparative Literature. I am very grateful to have studied under so many truly wonderful faculty, both while an undergraduate (1963-1967) and as a doctoral student (1969-1974). Albert Cook was Chair part of that time (1963-1966). I was appointed assistant professor in the Department of English at Iowa State University in 1974, am currently a Professor of English and, for the last two decades, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Instructional Development in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Dan Coffey, BA '94, reminisces:

The early 1990s were a golden age for arts and humanities students at SUNY Buffalo: avant-garde musician and video artist Tony Conrad taught in the Media Study department; highly sought-after pianist Yvar Mikhashoff regularly gave recitals in Slee Hall. But it was English majors who had the most to gain from studying at UB during this period. This was in part because of the terrific faculty in fields



from Old English (Anne Payne) to Joyce (Mark Schechner) but also something new was happening in Clemens Hall: the Poetics Program was being launched. Newly hired professors Charles Bernstein and Susan Howe, along with Robert Creeley, Ray Federman, Dennis Tedlock, and Robert Bertholf, curator of the SUNY Buffalo University Libraries' Poetry and Rare Books Collection created this program with the intention of allowing students to explore theories of writing as well as engaging in creative writing itself. The Poetics Program was housed in the English Department, but it was highly interdisciplinary – students from such departments as American Studies, Philosophy, Classics, and Media Study often participated in its courses.

In 1991, as an undergraduate in English, I had no idea of the level of significance of the Poetics Program; I was too busy having my mind blown by the creative writing and survey courses being taught by Federman, Howe, and Bernstein. To hear Howe hold forth on Emily Dickinson, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne was extraordinary. Likewise, the shift from humor to passion in Bernstein's classes was galvanizing, especially when he discussed poems by Louis Zukofsky or Bernadette Mayer. It made me want to be a poet and a critic, and to go to grad school to study in the Poetics Program.

But I did not go on to grad school in UB's English Department or any other English program. Instead, I eventually obtained my MA in Library Science, and within a year was on my way to lowa, to become the Languages and Literatures Librarian at Iowa State University.

Looking back at the history of the Poetics Program from the perspective of an academic librarian, one thing in particular amazes me: a librarian was one of the founding members. Through Robert Bertholf, UB's Poetry Collection played an integral role in the curriculum of Poetics, and indeed, many of the PhD students enrolled in the program at the time were working in the Poetry Collection. I am writing an essay on the recent history of the UB Poetry Collection and the Poetics Program, paying particular attention to the effect that the inclusion of the former had on the latter. Not only is the Poetics Program unique in its mission, it is perhaps the only graduate English program in the country directly tied to a library at such a fundamental level.

I will be returning to the UB Campus in October, for the first time in many years, to talk with those currently involved with the Poetry Collection and Poetics. I can't wait to get back to Buffalo, to see what's the same and what's different in Clemens Hall, Lockwood Library, see Lake LaSalle again, and of course, to find out if Amy's Place is still serving its legendary shawarma and eggs!

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IN MEMORIAM

Donna Coyle, PhD '99, passed away at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center on 4 May 2012. Donna is survived by her husband, mother, brothers, and sisters.

Marianna Brennan, a close friend of Donna's, writes: "Donna Coyle passed away this spring. She was one of us, part of the English Department community.

"Donna and I were friends and we lived together in an upper flat in a ramshackle Victorian house in Parkside. She was petite with short sandy hair. She had grown up working class in Frederick, Maryland when it was still a rural town where you bought things from catalogues. She was gentle and soft spoken. As a child she had had her jaw realigned and she still spoke with a slight lisp. Donna identified herself as Southern. The entire time she lived in Buffalo she was cold, even in the summer. I don't think she would have survived the Western New York winters without the invention of silk long underwear. Having grown up close to the salt water ocean, when she first stood on the shore of a great lake, she was astonished that it was a not merely a lake, but a freshwater sea. She introduced me to the TV show, Designing Women. The two of us would sit on the couch and watch those sassy, well-mannered Southern decorators, and it would remind her of where she came from.

"Her looks and manner belied her incredible intelligence and her sharp intellectual curiosity. In the early eighties, before it was something that many people did, she studied Chinese and went to live in China for a short time, where she became ill and had to come home. She told stories about the squalor and beauty of China. She came to the graduate program in English in 1984 with a master's degree already in hand. She studied with, among others, John Dings, Leslie Fiedler, and Art Efron. In seminars she could succinctly ask questions that were both complex and right on the money. She could grapple with, and grasp, the thorniest theory. She could also remember all of the names of the characters in Victorian novels like *Middlemarch*. At a time when some graduate students were asking questions like, "Who are we to teach our students anything?" and professors were giving advice like, "You can't hurt them." Donna was a conscientious and well-liked instructor.

Donna was a good friend. She liked fossils, camping, and old black and white movies. Every day we would trot twice around the Delaware Park ring road, and see how fast we could go. We ate Wegmans ham right out of the bag before it ever made it into the refrigerator. She was brave. One spring all of the spiders in the attic hatched on the same day and covered our ceiling. The two of

us walked around with mops held aloft and squished one hundred and eighty three of them. She never flinched. She is gone and I am sad."

Thomas Chyba, Donna's husband, writes: "Our home sits on a ridge in the mountains of New Mexico on the edge of Cibola National Forest. Donna's study in our home has built-in wall-to-wall bookcases on two walls overflowing with the books she loved. She had a second room we named 'the library annex,' with six bookcases holding the overflow books from her study. Yet more books cover the tables, despite the fact we donated eighteen shopping bags of books to the local library last fall. I think they must procreate in a hospitable environment. From her study window you can see her vegetable garden nestled between the pine trees. Above that window hangs her diploma from Buffalo. She struggled a long time to achieve that diploma and cherished her time and companionship with all of you. I would just like to thank you for that gift in her life and know that it will always have meaning to me as it did to her."

Tom has generously donated several of Donna's books on Victorian literature to the English Department, where they will be used by current and future students in the field.



At Rita Lipsitz's summer cottage, Ft. Erie, 1995. Left to right: Kris (PhD '90) and Ewa (PhD '89) Ziarek, Donna Coyle (PhD '99), Pam Beal (PhD '94) and Kitty Creswell (PhD '93).

For more information on ways to support the English Department, please contact the CAS Development Office at casdev@buffalo.edu or 716-645-0850.

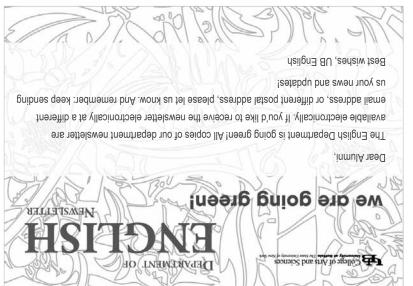
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