

# The Spectator

## SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER *Fall/Winter 2010*

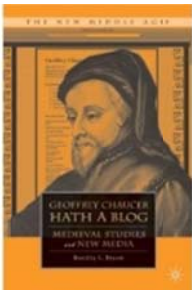
### A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR:



In just my second semester as chair of English, I have been gratified to realize anew what a vibrant, thoughtful, and exciting department we are part of. My colleagues are teaching classes that I would be interested in attending if I had the time, they're producing work and publishing stimulating and important writing, they meet with and mentor students, and they find time to engage themselves in the life of the university and in other arenas beyond our campus. Our students impress me regularly with their interest in their courses and participation in department activities and events: I'm watching with interest as they produce this year's *Zaum*, the consistently spectacular SSU English student literary magazine; they will exceed my expectations again with their passionate questions and focused effort to think better, read more, and hone their craft; their interest in learning how to teach English helps me to renew my own passion for teaching; and I know they will show up in droves when visiting writers come to SSU to read their work. So, despite another dire California state budget year, and the seeming disdain for education played out in the debilitating politics in the state, and at the national and global levels, the English department at SSU finds ways not only to survive, but also to thrive: it's a community about which we all are justifiably proud; it's an important place to be.

-*Professor Thaine Stearns, Chairperson, Department of English, [stearnst@sonoma.edu](mailto:stearnst@sonoma.edu)*

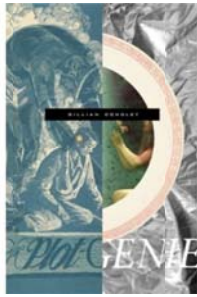
### FACULTY NEWS



**Brantley Bryant** published the book *Geoffrey Chaucer Hath a Blog: Medieval Studies and New Media* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Containing humorous pieces from medieval writer Geoffrey Chaucer's (fictional) on-line diary, along with accompanying essays, the book is part of Palgrave's scholarly series "The New Middle Ages." Brantley claims that this is the number one best-selling creative-scholarly book written mostly in Middle English published in 2010.

**Helen Dunn** has come back from three weeks in Greece over the summer of 2010. On the very first day she climbed the Acropolis, toured the Agora, and visited three museums, including the new, world-class Acropolis museum that houses all the pieces found on the Acropolis that are still in Greece. The rest of the trip was equally thrilling. Mycenaean sites (Mycenae, Tyrins, Pylos), the theater at Epidaurus, Corinth and its canal, Delphi, Byzantine monasteries, the islands of Mykonos and Delos, Crete (pre-Greek Minoan ruins); and more sites (the ancient cemetery, the Roman forum, temple of Zeus) and museums in Athens: Byzantine, Cycladic, Modern Art, the Benaki Museum; plus three ("count 'em, three" Helen says) long days at the National Archaeological Museum. Not being a moderate traveler, Helen took thousands of pictures (literally). It seems appropriate that Helen then taught a summer school class in Greek and Norse myth. Helen's next trip will probably be to Cuba with a group led by Emeritus Professor Tony White in early December; anyone interested should email Tony White [tonwhite@sonic.net](mailto:tonwhite@sonic.net)





**Gillian Conoley's** new book, *The Plot Genie*, was published by Omnidawn Publishing in 2009, and just went into a second printing. Since the book's publication, Gillian has read from *The Plot Genie* at universities, museums, and bookstores across the nation, including: New York University, the Rain Taxi Series in Minneapolis, City Lights Bookstore and the De Young Museum in San Francisco, Poet's House in New York City, California College of the Arts, Loyola University, the University of Southern California, Moe's Books and Pegasus books in Berkeley, U.C. Berkeley, San Francisco, State, the University of Georgia, the Associated Writing Programs Conference in Denver, the University of Colorado at Boulder, Colorado State University, Naropa University, Otis College in Los Angeles, and the University of Richmond in Virginia. Gillian is on leave for Fall 2010 and is on partial leave in Spring 2011, working on a new collection of poems and finishing her translation of Henri Michaux's *Four Hundred Men on the Cross*.

**Anne Goldman** published her essay "Questions of Transport" in the Spring 2010 issue of *Georgia Review*, as well as an essay entitled "Wild Things" in the summer inaugural issue of *THE PEDESTRIAN* (No.1, Empathy). Anne is currently working on a series of essays about our relation to the world that stem from her ability to get lost immediately and anywhere. Anne's piece in the pedestrian, incidentally, quotes from "Native," a poem of Gillian's published in her collection *Profane Halo*. *The Pedestrian* can be found at this link: <http://thepedestrian.org/>



**Emeritus Gerald Haslam's** next book, tentatively titled *In Thought and Action: The Life and Times of S.I. Hayakawa*, is scheduled for publication by University of Nebraska Press in Fall 2011.

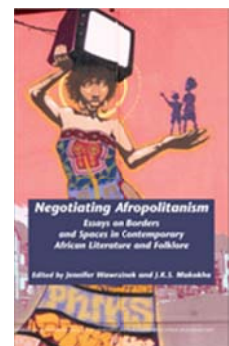


**Kim Hester-Williams** is back on campus after a Spring 2010 sabbatical, during which she completed a draft of the manuscript for her monograph, *Minstrel Acts*. The manuscript is presently under review at the University of Minnesota Press.

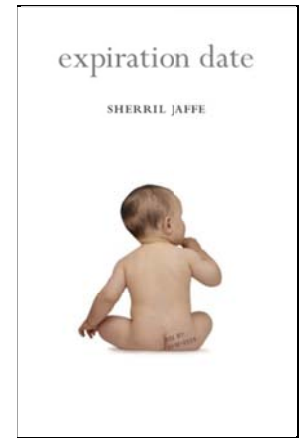


**Mira-Lisa Katz** is on leave for the 2010-2011 school year. While on sabbatical, she is working on a book about embodied and multimodal learning. The edited volume will include chapters on dance, drama, horseback riding, the visual arts, somatics, and music across age groups and educational settings (including community). Dr. Katz is also dancing with SoCoDance Theater, which will be performing at Spreckels Auditorium in Rohnert Park in November 2010.

**Cathy Kroll** had a grant from SSU that allowed her to spend the month of January 2010 at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London examining the South African author Sol T. Plaatje's notebooks. Recent publications include the essay "Domestic Disturbances: African Women's Cultural Production in the Postcolonial Continuum" in *Research in African Literatures* 41.3 (Fall 2010), the book chapter "Dogs and Dissidents at the Border: Narrative Outbreak in Patrice Nganang's *Temps de Chien*" in *Negotiating Afropolitanism: Borders and Spaces in African Literature and Orature*, to be published this Fall, and also the essay "Chroma Harmonia and Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Sentence: Arts Education through Universal Design for Learning," co-authored with Brian Wilson, Music Department. Cathy's current writing project and self-proclaimed "obsession" is "The Tyranny of the Visual: Alex La Guma and the Apartheid-Era Documentary Image."



**Sherril Jaffe** had a five-week fellowship in the summer of 2010 at the MacDowell Colony, an artists' colony in New Hampshire that has been providing artists with time, space, and an inspiring environment since 1907. At the colony, 450 acres of meadows and woods, each artist is given his or her own private and well-appointed studio in which to create. The only rule is that no one may visit anyone else's studio without being invited. Each day a lunch basket is left discretely in the screened porch of each artist's studio. Colonists convene for dinner, to socialize, and to share work in the evenings. Thornton Wilder, Leonard Bernstein, James Baldwin and Michael Chabon are amongst the many artists who have composed major works while in residence. Sequestered in her MacDowell studio, Sherril drafted her new novel *The Reversal*. *The Reversal* is inspired by a news story about two young people in a van accident on the way to college: one is killed and the other gravely injured and in a coma. Their identities are mixed up, and this is not discovered for fifty-five days, when everything is reversed and the grieving and grateful families change roles. *Expiration Date*, Ms. Jaffe's ninth novel, a story that explores questions of determinism and free will, is forthcoming in April 2011



**Noelle Oxenhandler** finished a novel over the summer and co-authored a book with Jack Kornfield, the Director of Spirit Rock Meditation Center, which will be out from Shambhala Press in the Fall of 2010. The book, *The Buddha is Still Teaching*, is an anthology of excerpts from contemporary Buddhist teachers around the world. Noelle's essay "La Bourdonneuse," originally from *The New Yorker*, will be appearing in an anthology of writings by Americans about France. Also, Noelle's memoir *The Wishing Year* (Random House, 2008), came out in new Spanish, Portuguese and Greek translations in 2010.

**Greta Vollmer** received a Fulbright Senior Specialist Grant to return to Argentina in the fall of 2010, where she visited four universities (La Plata, Buenos Aires, Cordoba, and Jujuy) and offered seminars in language teaching and pedagogy to English language teachers. She gave a plenary talk at Cordoba University entitled "My Voice, Our World: Writing The Self in an 'Imagined Community.'" Greta is currently working on an article entitled "The Visual Rhetoric of Everyday Genres" for submission to *English Journal*.



**Chingling Wo** has traveled far and wide in 2010 to give talks at a variety of venues. She presented "No Longer Profitable but Still Alive: Global Capital Flow in the Case of the Apple Snail" at the Crossroads in Cultural Studies conference in Hong Kong, "Early Modern Time-Space Compression in *Oroonoko* and Pu Songling" at the American Comparative Literature Association's Annual Conference in New Orleans, and "'Boy Sees the Wild Rose': The Actual and Symbolic Struggles of Women under Japanese Occupation" at the Asian Studies Association's Annual Conference in Philadelphia. In June 2010, Chingling gave and invited talk at National Chi Nan University in Taiwan on the topic of "Global Vision and Reality in *Cape No. 7*."

## IN MEMORIAM: JERRY ROSEN

by Gerald Haslam, Professor Emeritus

After over a decade of unrelenting battle with leukemia, Jerry Rosen died on August 13, 2010. The novelist had been the soul of SSU's fiction-writing program for 25 years and, to quote author and SSU alum' Robin Beeman, "a really great teacher." Certainly, no one at SSU ever carried high accomplishments more lightly or provided moral lessons with greater humor than Rosen, whose skill with one-liners matched his crystal prose.

Jerry's background was unusual for an English professor but probably ideal for a novelist, since it ranged over wide swathes of human experience: B.S. in electrical engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; MBA from Wharton Business School;

Ph.D. in American literature from the University of Pennsylvania. He also had the profoundly educational experience of commanding a medical company in the U.S. Army in the 1960s, then later becoming a foot-soldier in the peace movement. Those experiences contributed to Rosen's first book, *Blues for a Dying Nation*, which the New York Times called "an honorable attempt at the great American novel."

The six books that followed – ranging from *The Carmen Miranda Memorial Flagpole* to *Cold Eye, Warm Heart: A Novelist's Search for Meaning* – revealed the originality, the zaniness, and the underlying conscience that made Jerry a popular instructor indeed and something of a cult writer. But as fine an author as he was, he was, if anything, an even finer person. SSU was fortunate indeed to have enjoyed his services.

## A Gerald Rosen Bookshelf

*Blues for a Dying Nation*, Dial Press, 1972

*The Carmen Miranda Memorial Flagpole: A Novel*, 1977

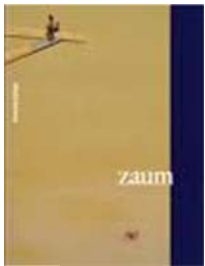
*Dr. Ebenezer's Book and Liquor Store*, St. Martin's Press, 1980

*Growing Up Bronx: A Novel*, North Atlantic Books, 1984

*Mahatma Gandhi in a Cadillac: A Novel*, Frog, 1995

*Cold Eye, Warm Heart: A Novelist's Search for Meaning*, Calm Unity Press, 2009

## ZAUM



*Zaum* is Sonoma State's student-run, nationally recognized literary magazine. Check out *Zaum*'s fabulous new website at [zaumpress.net](http://zaumpress.net), and join *Zaum*'s facebook page to learn of all the great new goings-on: a new blog, open mics, and more. You can also find out about their submission policies and send in your work.

The *Zaum* staff for this year includes **Michaela Spangenburg**, Senior Editor; **Amber Nelson**, Poetry Editor; **Kyle Britto**, Prose Editor; **Caroline Raffanti**, Managing editor; **Gini Rhoda**, Art Editor and Production Manager, and **Rachel Levine**, Publicity Manager.

## SSU ENGLISH GRADUATES

**Kristi Castleberry** (B.A., 2004; M.A., 2006) is in her fifth year of the Ph.D. in English at the University of Rochester. In the Spring of 2010 she presented papers on medieval drama at the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender & Women's Studies Conference and at the International Congress on Medieval Studies. In Fall of 2010, Kristi created an exhibit for the Rossell Hope Robbins Library about Joan of Arc, "Joan of Arc's Brief Life and Long Afterlife," and also gave a paper at the New York College English Association Conference. Kristi's work for the on-line database of Arthurian Studies, the Camelot project, and for the on-line Crusades Project, can be found at the following links:

<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/elanmenu.htm>

<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/crusadesproject/title.htm>

**Rose Gubele** (M.A., 2003) is Director of Basic Writing and Assistant Professor of English at Central Michigan University, where she teaches courses in basic writing and rhetoric, as well as an alternative rhetorics course at the graduate level. She also teaches courses in the American Indian Studies minor. She will be chairing a featured panel at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in Atlanta in April, 2011.

**Inese Heinzel** (M.A., 2005) is currently teaching a course for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute on the SSU Campus.

**Paula Koneazny's** (M.A., 1998) review of Ammiel Alcalay's *Islanders* is now available in *Rain Taxi's* online magazine.

**Seth Landman** is pursuing a Ph.D. in Creative Writing at University of Denver. He has new poems forthcoming in the next issues of *Volt* and *Canary*. His poetry journal/chapbook series, *Invisible Ear*, has created a new venture, *The Divine Magnet Reading Series* ([divinemagnet.blogspot.com](http://divinemagnet.blogspot.com)). *Divine Magnet* is an attempt to bridge the distances between us in the interest of

hearing and seeing poems read aloud. Seth says to check out the video readings on the site from Natalie Lyalin and Lewis Freedman, and to come back every two or three weeks for new videos.

**Caitlyn McDougall** (B.A., 2009) is currently a student in the Masters of Teaching (MAT) Program at USC in the Rossiter School of Education.

**Eva Oliver** (B.A., 2009) is currently a student in the MUSE Program at UC Berkeley, pursuing her teaching credential and an M.A. in Education.

**Andrea Rexilius** (B.A., 2002) is publishing her debut book of poems, *To Be Human is To Be a Conversation*, with Rescue Press. After SSU, Andrea went on to an MFA in Creative Writing and Book Design at the Chicago Art Institute. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Creative Writing at the University of Denver, where she is associate editor of *\*Denver Quarterly\**.

**Sophia Rodriguez** (M.A. 2007) is currently a doctoral student at Loyola University Chicago, where she is pursuing a Ph.D in Cultural and Educational Policy Studies. She has been selected to teach courses in writing and social justice education to pre-service Cuban teachers through Loyola University's School of Education and is also the co-chair of the Foucault and Contemporary Theory Special Interest Group as part of American Educational Research Association (AERA).

**Volt** assistant editor **Marjorie Stein's** poetry book *The Atlas of Lost Causes* was accepted by Kelsey Street Press in Berkeley. For more details, see this link:

<http://www.kelseyst.com/news/2010/04/21/selection-announced-from-ksps-last-open-call/>

**Joshua Jennings Wood** (B.A., 1998) is the Poetry Editor of a new literary magazine coming out of Lake Forest, CA: *dirtcakes*, now in its third issue. The theme for the next issue is "Girls Will Be Women." He has poems forthcoming in *Orange Coast Review*.

**Razzan Zahra** (M.A., 2002) has completed her Ph.D. in education at U.C. Davis this August with a study of children in the "Make a Wish Program." Her sister, **Rim Zahra** (M.A., 2002) is also in the Education Department at Davis and has completed her doctoral dissertation exploring the theoretical grotesque in early Mickey Mouse cartoons.

## SPOTLIGHT: WRITING AND TEACHING

SSU graduates in Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) programs include **Iain Ferreira** (B.A., 2004), **Christopher Hayter** (B.A., 2004; M.A., 2007), and **Joel Gonzales** (B.A., 2010) at San Francisco State University, **Tony King** (B.A., 2005) at Portland State, and **Kate Menzies** (B.A. Minor, 2009) at Mills College,

Graduates of our English Education Single Subject program who are now teaching include **Suzanne Vargas** (B.A., 2008) at San Leandro High; **Jenny Van Peter** (B.A., 2008) at Elsie Allen; and **Kyle Hart** at Rincon Valley Middle School. **Melissa Jewell** (B.A., 2008) is teaching at English and ELD (English Language Development) at César Chávez Middle School in Hayward.

## WRITERS AT SONOMA

The **Writers at Sonoma Series**, organized by SSU's creative writing program and sponsored by SSU's Instructionally Related Activities and the Nadenia Newkirk Funds for Writers, brings writers to campus. Poet Anna Rabinowitz read on October 18<sup>th</sup>. In the Spring, look forward to novelist Jamaica Kincaid (February 17<sup>th</sup>), poet and editor Eric Lorberer (March 3), poets Elizabeth Robinson and John Yau (April 14<sup>th</sup>), and a reading from SSU's own Sherril Jaffe (May 3<sup>rd</sup>). Look for the brochure coming your way soon, or write in to request one in the mail.



## KEEP IN TOUCH:

We're always glad to hear from our alums. Please be in touch with your information and updates. Also, please consider a donation to the English Department. The English Department uses donations to fund and create programs, prizes, and events for our students.

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*This Newsletter was created by the English Department Events and Lectures Committee with the generous assistance and guidance of Professor Greta Vollmer.*