

ENGLISH Matters

Write from the Chair...

Dr. Kristine Blair

I'm very pleased to introduce the most recent edition of the BGSU English Department newsletter, *English Matters*. As you'll see, 2012-2013 has been a busy year for faculty and students, and while the pages of this document cannot do justice to the many accomplishments of faculty, students, alumni, and staff, I hope you will enjoy the updates across programs, including the introduction of new faculty, the recognition of our 2012 Master Teacher, visits by distinguished alumni, scholarship recipients, and a graduate student symposium. I am especially indebted this

year to our newsletter editor, Kerri Hauman, a Rhetoric and Writing doctoral candidate who herself is graduating and moving on to a new faculty position at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. Such achievements are an important reminder to me that I am honored to lead a unit of engaged, talented teacher-scholars and to celebrate the collective successes of our community. As always, please do keep us up to date with your own accomplishments so that we can feature them in a future edition of *English Matters*.

In Memoriam: Jeff Rybak



The English Department is deeply saddened by the loss of Dr. Jeffry Allen Rybak, who died unexpectedly after suffering a major coronary attack on February 10, 2013. Jeff earned his B.A. in English and Spanish from the University of Indianapolis, his M.A. in English from BGSU, and his Ph.D. in technology management from Indiana State University. Jeff worked as a technical writer in Huntsville, Alabama; as a consultant in London, England; in various NASA-related positions; and for ITS and the College of Technology and English Department at BGSU. His wife, Amy (Barber) Rybak, who he married in 1990 at BGSU's Prout Chapel, teaches in the General Studies Writing program at BGSU. Jeff helped his son Nicholas (20) to excel as a college student and swimmer, supported his daughter Erica (17) in golf and track, and bolstered his son Ian's (9) involvement in children's theater and karate. Memorial contributions went to the BGSU Falcon Hockey program.

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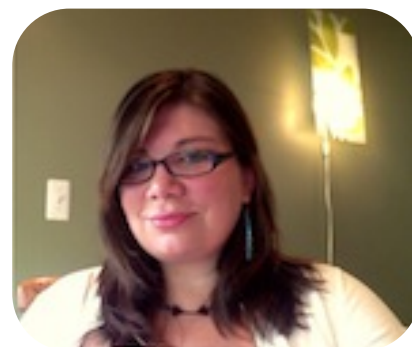
Faculty, Andrea Riley-Mukavetz

New faculty member Andrea Riley-Mukavetz comes to BGSU's Rhetoric and Writing program from the Rhetoric and Writing program at Michigan State University. Andrea grew up in metro Detroit and began her scholarly career with an interest in creative writing. Her first two degrees (B.S. and M.A.) are in creative writing, and she says, "I come from a very diverse background, which has influenced a lot of the work I do."

As Andrea was working on her M.A. degree, she began to see connections between creative writing, rhetoric, and theory. She was taking "Modern rhetorics" at

the same time as "Decolonizing Native Women" and saw herself "bringing things together in really weird, complicated ways" but also flourishing in that liminal space.

In the past, Andrea has taught a range of courses including first-year composition, creative nonfiction, integrated arts and humanities courses, and literature and cultural identity courses. She also taught creative writing in the Lincoln women's prison where she says she learned a lot about discipline; she admits, "that's where I understand Foucault the best."



"I've always carried my background with me, and it's just now that I know how to use it as something more than an anecdote but as a story; I think of stories as theory."

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Graduate student, Luca Zullo



"I started grad school because I thought it would be fun. Now, I'm not sure if it was exactly fun in the way I had imagined, but it was definitely rewarding and memorable."

Before coming to BGSU, Luca Zullo earned dual degrees in English and Spanish from Kent State University. He was particularly drawn to BGSU's M.A. program in Literary and Textual studies "because of its more expansive definition of literature" and because of the proximity of the Pop Culture department and library, which fit well with his interests in new media, emergent narrative forms, and literacy. While at BGSU, Luca also earned a certificate in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and taught in the GSW program.

When Luca describes his time at BGSU, it's clear he's enjoyed many rich experiences. "Some of my most memorable moments," he recalls, "are from my first semester...Perhaps it's because it was the biggest change for me, but that first semester where I had all my classes with my cohort was the best semester." He recalls the first class he took, Shakespearean Adaptations with Dr. Stephannie Gearhart (see "Master Teacher" on p. 3), and admits, "I remember thinking to myself that the last thing I ever wanted to do was take a Shakespeare course. At the end of the course, though, I found that it turned out to be one of my favorite

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"At heart, when I teach Shakespeare and other old literature, that's what I'm thinking about all the time: how do I ask [students] the serious really hard questions and how do I get them to respond thoughtfully but yet enjoy what they're talking about, really be invested in it."

Master Teacher Award Selection Process

1. Students nominate teacher
2. Nominees notified of nomination by email and asked to respond to prompts and write several essays about their teaching
3. Student Alumni Connection (group of undergraduate students) read essays and narrow finalists to 5
4. Finalists submit teaching video
5. Committee watches videos and narrows finalists to 3
6. Finalists meet with committee to answer questions and explain an item they were asked to bring to represent their pedagogy
7. Finalists interview with subcommittee
8. Master Teacher winner announced

Master Teacher 2011-2012: Stephannie Gearhart

In the six years Dr. Stephannie Gearhart has been teaching at BGSU, her students have twice nominated her for the University-wide Master Teacher Award. Stephannie was one of three finalists in 2010-2011, and just one year later, she was nominated again and won.

Going through the lengthy selection process (see sidebar this page) prompted much reflection for Stephannie. She explains, "It's a great honor and I felt very humbled, but at the same time, I think the most beneficial thing has been just being able to process and reflect on what you do, and what you want to do, and what you don't want to do, and how you make those corrections."

Stephannie admits being asked to bring an item representative of her pedagogy was one of the most challenging questions she's ever been asked. The first year, she brought cookies she'd baked and explained she talks to students about Renaissance humanism, "that Renaissance humanists like to sit down and eat together and disagree without being disagreeable," and she

explained her goal is to have a humanist classroom where people can "disagree with one another and be flexible and still get along." The next year, Stephannie brought a yoga mat and used the mat as a metaphor for her classroom and the balance she seeks: "the balance between lots of things but primarily between having a routine and knowing where you're going and having knowledge about things and at the same time being flexible."

When deciding what to record to submit to the committee, Stephannie chose a session of her Shakespearean Adaptation course in which students were asked to have a debate about *King Lear*. Stephannie admits the activity takes a long time to set up: students are grouped to represent different factions in the play, she asks them questions, and they "yell at the other groups to get at some of the conflicts in the play." She candidly acknowledges her assumption that most students aren't interested in taking 16th and 17th century literature courses, so

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Master Teacher (Continued)

she has created this activity to attempt to bring Shakespeare to life, to make the material she studies interesting and accessible to students who are not only resistant to the material but also far removed from Shakespeare's culture and time period. Nevertheless, Stephannie works to retain rigor, and the issues of balance her yoga mat represents surface as she explains, "I mean, they have to do a lot of work, but how do they enjoy the work—how do I get them to enjoy the work?"

Stephannie uses a variety of strategies in her teaching. Yet no matter the strategy, she explains, "I think you have to suggest this is hard and be up front and honest and clear that they'll have to do a lot of work. I model for them how to talk about a text and how to read the text closely, and I create an environment where it's ok to be wrong—there has to be a trusting, safe environment, and you have to show students it's ok to be wrong and that we typically have to be wrong more often than we're right."

In the end, Stephannie says her work is about building safe communities and helping students learn to think more critically and read more closely. She wants students to carry what they learn in her classroom outside the university, to consider: "How do you talk to other people about intellectual topics? Can you disagree without being disagreeable? How do you have compassion for other people and think about their positions? How do you take specific lessons from course content and broaden them out to be responsible citizens?"

Where Are They Now: Riley-Mukavetz (Continued)

In her first year, Andrea taught English 4840: Foundations of Teaching Writing, English 6210: Introduction to Rhetoric and Composition Studies, and English 7800: Cultural Rhetorics, Theories, and Methodologies. Her teaching approaches are based in her background as a mixed native person and in her experiences as a student. She recalls early teachers who discouraged her from continuing in academia as well as other scholars who "made space for me," encouraging her and helping her to "see how the personal and the professional are the same thing." She explains, "I've always carried my background with me, and it's just now that I know how to use it as something more than an anecdote but as a story; I think of stories as theory."

Andrea is currently working on several research projects. She is authoring a series of articles that grow out of her dissertation work gathering stories and building theories with multigenerational native women in Michigan. She is also working on a research project that explores the impact indigenous people have on the field of rhetoric and composition.

Scholarship Recipients

Congratulations to the winners of this year's English department scholarships:

Frank Baldanza Scholarship
in English Studies

Ashley Cox

Paul D. Emery Book
Scholarship

Alexander Elfreich

Gloria S. Swihart English
Award

Christine Hartman

Lowell P. Leland Book
Award

Rebecca Hoevenaar

English Major Book Award

Alicia Wodarski

Kirk Foster Memorial Fund

William A. Wandersee, Jr.



Where Are They Now, Luca Zullo (Continued)

courses I took in graduate school." Luca also recalls his work with Dr. Kim Coates, who he wishes to thank for helping him learn to revise his own work and work through "so many...writing problems." The majority of Luca's coursework was with Dr. Jolie Sheffer, who he says he "cannot thank enough for her willingness to push me....and her willingness to help me through my lack of clarity." Luca also worked with Dr. Erin Labbie and his cohort to organize the symposium, "Novel Media: Emergent Narratives from Domestic Papers to Comic Books" (see "Special Event" on p. 7). In the end, Luca expresses much gratitude and affection for his cohort: "Without my cohort members, I wouldn't have made it through these past two years. Between memories of the six of us sitting in an office talking through all our problems, going out for drinks, to drag shows and karaoke, it would not have been possible without them."

During his time at BGSU, Luca also presented at numerous conferences, including the regional MLA and PCA conferences; attended two of the national meetings of the American Psychoanalytic Association; published book reviews; and is currently working toward publishing his first essay in a journal. His research interests have evolved, particularly his growing interest in working with narrative medicine, which he credits in part to his continued relationship with the Cleveland Psychoanalytic Center (CPC) and his mentor there, who is both an English professor as well as a practicing clinician.

In the future, Luca plans to earn a Master's of Social Work with a specialty in mental health and to continue his work with the CPC in order to learn more about the application of literature in clinical psychoanalysis and work toward a more interdisciplinary approach to Narrative Medicine. Eventually, he'd also like to earn a Ph.D. in English.

Alumnus, Ross Schira

In addition to earning his B.A. in English at BGSU, Ross Schira also minored in both Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies. Ross's senior thesis won the Wymer Award. In his thesis, he used queer and postcolonial theories to read Bran Stoker's *Dracula* "to show how Stoker's attention to colonial narratives of travel, disease, difference, and sexuality illustrates the socially-constructed and interconnected nature of these ideas." His thesis fits into what Ross calls a "stepping stone in the larger project that I intend to devote my professional career to," which is to "stress the importance of reading social inequality in the creation, analysis, and appreciation of literature." Ross wishes to credit his professors, particularly Dr. Dalton Jones (ETHN), Julie Haight (ENG and WS), and Dr. Piya Pal-Lapinski (ENG) who influenced and supported his thesis work.

Ross's thesis grows out of his research interests in rhetorical nation-building, queer transgressive aesthetics, critical analysis of racial ideologies as well as his desire for social justice. Although he entered BGSU thinking he'd eventually teach at the high school level, he admits his plans have since changed. His current plans include "work toward social justice, as an educator and theories," which he admits "is its own complicated discussion." While part of him wants to pursue his research interests further in academia, he is also "very interested in (what is left of) the independent publishing industry."



"Please don't let a text's apparently universal appeal act as an impediment to deeper analysis of the social conditions of the text's production and reception; looking deeper may be a challenge, but it pays off by enriching one's understanding of literature they already love."

2012-2013 Faculty News & Notes: Faculty Accomplishments

Jennifer Chang (Creative Writing) published her article "How to Read a Prophecy," in the *Los Angeles Review of Books* on July 14. Chang was also awarded the Theodore Morrison Fellowship in poetry at the 2012 Bread Loaf Writers' Conference in Middlebury, VT, where she assisted U. S. Poet Laureate and Pulitzer-prize winner Natasha Trethewey in teaching a poetry workshop, teaching a craft class on epistolary poetry, and giving a public reading. She was recently asked to join the judging panel of the Kingsley and Kate Tufts Poetry Awards, based at Claremont Graduate University.

Kimberly Coates (Literature) delivered her paper "Dancing with Freud: Female Sexuality, Modernist Women, and the Intoxication of Movement" in October 2011 at the Modernist Studies Association Conference and her paper "Performing Feminism, Transmitting Affect: Isadora Duncan, Virginia Woolf, and the Politics of Movement" in June 2012 at the 22nd Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf.

Lawrence Coates (Creative Writing) published his third novel, "The Garden of the World" and gave talks and readings over the summer in San Francisco, Reno, Cupertino, and Napa.

Phil Dickinson (Literature) had two reviews (of Erik R. Mortensen's, *Capturing the Beat Moment: Cultural Politics and the Poetics of Presence* and Todd F. Tietchen's, *The Cubalogues: Beat Writers in Revolutionary Havana*), which were first published in the online journal *The Beat Review* in Dec. 2010 & Apr. 2011, selected for inclusion in the inaugural print issue of *The Beat Review*.

Stephannie Gearhart (Literature) received BGSU's 2011-2012 Master Teacher Award. She also published her article "'Only He Would Have the Temerity to Rewrite Shakespeare': Douglas Hickox's *Theatre of Blood* as Adaptation" in *Literature/ Film Quarterly* 39.2 (2011). Her article "*Lear's Daughters*,

Adaptation, and the Calculation of Worth" was published in *Borrowers and Lenders* 7.2 (Fall 2012/Winter 2013). She was also interviewed by Jeff McGinnis of the *Toledo Free Press* about the film *Anonymous*.

Erin Labbie (Literature) published *Beholding Violence in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, co-edited with Allie Terry-Fritsch as well as a chapter in *The Disney Middle Ages: A Fairy-Tale and Fantasy Past*.

Wendell Mayo (Creative Writing) published or has in press eleven works of short fiction, some with titles most strange, including the spine-tingling "Spider Story."

Sharona Muir (Creative Writing) published "The Naturalist Reads a Love Letter, with Plato and a Dog," in *Michigan Quarterly Review*. Her story, "The Antarctic Glass Kraken," was accepted in *Stand* magazine in the UK.

Lee Nickoson (Rhetoric and Writing) published *Writing Studies Research in Practice: Methods and Methodologies*, co-edited with Mary P. Sheridan. She also has a book review of *Rhetorica in Motion*, co-authored with Rhetoric & Writing graduate students, forthcoming in *Feminist Teacher*. She delivered her presentation "Feminist Community Engagement: Participatory Alternatives in an Age of Objective Learning Assessments" at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in March 2012.

Jolie Sheffer (Literature) published *The Romance of Race: Incest, Miscegenation, and Multiculturalism in the United States, 1880-1930*. She also has two book reviews forthcoming, one in *MELUS* and another in *Modern Fiction Studies*.

Sheri Wells-Jensen (Linguistics) gave two international presentations on her work to save the Oroha language, co-presented with colleagues in Canada and Finland and a

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Faculty News & Notes (Continued)

group of BGSU grad students. As a further attempt to assist the Oroha village, Sheri and her research team have made recordings of the a cappella Oroha Village choir and will be assisting them in marketing their music online.

Maisha Wester (Literature) published *African American Gothic: Screams from Shadowed Places*. She also contributed her essay "Toni Morrison's Gothic: Visions of Headless Brides and Haunted Communes" to *A Companion to the American Gothic*. Her essay "Race in the Gothic" is forthcoming in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*.

Theresa Williams (Creative Writing) published several essays, short fiction, and poetry in venues including *Talking Writing*, the *Chattahoochee Review*, *Midwestern Gothic*, and the chapbook *The Galaxy to Ourselves*.

Kimberly Spallinger, Dayna Herrington, Sam Herrington, Amy Cook, and Lucinda Hunter (all ESOL) presented several presentations at Ohio

TESOL in Columbus in November and at TESOL in Philadelphia in March:

- **Sam, Dayna, and Kimberly** presented "Teaching Relevant Speaking and Listening Skills to Non-Teaching International Graduate Students" (Ohio TESOL & TESOL)
- **Amy, Lucinda, Sam, and Dayna** presented "Interactive Games and Activities for Grammar and Vocabulary Instruction" (Ohio TESOL & TESOL)
- **Kimberly, Dayna, and Lucinda** presented "Designing a Field-Specific Writing Curriculum for ESL Graduate Students" (Ohio TESOL)
- **Lucinda, Amy, and Kimberly** presented "Excellence or Academic Dishonesty: How Much Help is Too Much?" (Ohio TESOL)
- **Kimberly, Lucinda, and Amy** presented "Enlisting Student Expertise: Service Learning in Academic ESL Courses" (TESOL)

Schedule of Events

9:30 am

- Symposium begins
- Continental breakfast served to attendees

10:00-11:15 am

- Dr. Peter Coogan presents

11:30-1:00 pm

- Selected talks from graduate students

1:00-2:00 pm

- Lunch

2:00-3:15 pm

- Dr. Vera Camden presents

Special Event: Symposium

On April 6, 2013, the English Department—along with the Cleveland Psychoanalytic Center (CPC), the Institute for Culture and Society, the School of Cultural and Critical studies, and the College of Arts and Sciences—hosted a symposium entitled "Novel Media: Emergent Narratives from Domestic Papers to Comic Books." The interdisciplinary symposium explored emerging narrative forms, their histories, and their cultural evolutions.

Graduate student Luca Zullo, with the help of Dr. Erin Labbie and other graduate students, organized this one-day symposium, which featured two keynote speakers: 1) Dr. Peter Coogan (alumnus of BGSU's Popular Culture Studies program), who is the director of the Institute of Comics Studies at Washington State University and co-founder of the Comic Arts Conference, which runs during the San Diego Comic-Con International, and 2) Dr. Vera J. Camden, who is professor of English at Kent State University, Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Case Western Reserve University, Clinical Professor of Social Work at Rutgers University, and Training and Supervising Analyst at the CPC.

Carolyn Forché Poetry Reading

The English Department was pleased to support poet and BGSU alumna (MFA, 1975) Carolyn Forché's visit to campus on November 1st. Forché read a selection of her poetry in the Bowen-Thompson Student Union Theater.

Forché, who is known as a "poet of witness," is the author of four books of poetry, including *The Angel of History*, which received the Los Angeles Times Book Award. She has earned the Edita and Ira Morris Hiroshima Foundation for Peace and Culture Award for her work on behalf of human rights. In addition to her books of poetry, her work has been published in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The*

Washington Post, *The Nation*, *Esquire*, and *Mother Jones*. During BGSU's 2010 centennial celebration, Forché was named one of the 100 most prominent alumni.

Forché has taught at several universities, including BGSU, Michigan State University, the University of Virginia, Skidmore College, Columbia University, San Diego State University, and George Mason University. She is currently the Director of the Lannan Center for Poetry and Poetics and holds the Lannan Chair in Poetry at Georgetown University.



Poet and BGSU alumna, Carolyn Forché

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Send a check and a note with your name, address, and email to:

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Bowling Green, OH 43403

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