We are proud to announce that Barry V. Qualls, Professor of English and the Dean of Humanities, has been appointed to a new role. Professor Qualls will serve as Interim Vice President for Undergraduate Education at Rutgers–New Brunswick/Piscataway, an important new position in the academic restructuring of the University for the future.

“Undergraduate education has been my central concern since I first came to Rutgers,” he said, “and I think it’s wonderful that we now have the opportunity to make undergraduate education a real priority at a world-class research institution.” He looks forward to the transformation, and noted, “This is the first time in a generation that we’ve been able to rethink education here. It’s very exciting.”

The main priorities of the reorganization are to strengthen the connections between students and faculty, and to make the best opportunities of this state and research university more widely available to all students. As the first Vice President for Undergraduate Education in the new structure, Qualls is charged with instituting a single school-wide honors program, creating a scholarship office for students seeking national scholarships like the Rhodes or Fulbright, improving undergraduate involvement with research, and developing programs that increase faculty-student interaction. “We’re talking about changing the faculty culture,” he said, “but also changing the student culture, helping them see the excitement of learning in a high-caliber research environment and the benefits of getting to know the faculty who teach them.”

The reorganization will unite parts of Rutgers that previously were separate, helping the University run more smoothly overall. Students are often frustrated by Rutgers’ complicated bureaucracy, and will benefit from a more centrally organized administration with clearer connections to faculty. “For a research university, Rutgers already has a remarkably high level of academic excellence, but we’re going to change the way we present it to students and their parents,” Qualls said.

The reorganization is only one part of the University’s future. “As the future comes into view, we’re now thinking of the next century. We’re taking the new role of the University, that of a great research university, and we’re thinking about the best way to break free of the bureaucratic thickets that constrict us.”
Dear Friends,

Momentous changes are afoot for Rutgers. This spring, the Board of Governors approved a plan to reorganize the university’s administrative structure and improve the quality of undergraduate education on the New Brunswick/Piscataway campus, rethinking everything from admissions standards to the core curriculum to the honors program to the quality of life for students on and off campus. Our own Barry Qualls, who chaired the committee to draft the plan, has accepted the position of Interim Vice President of Undergraduate Education (the “interim” is at his insistence; for the rest of the Rutgers community, it is impossible to think of anyone better qualified to fill this role), and is already hard at work setting these changes in motion. He will be assisted by administrators, staff, and faculty from across the university, including the tireless Cheryl Wall, who is serving as the Co-Chair of the Implementation Committee. With such significant changes afoot, we’re proud to have Barry and Cheryl leading the way.

Big organizations carry a lot of momentum – it’s tough to get them to change course, but when they do they can really get somewhere. For the last twenty years or so, Rutgers has been concentrating on becoming a top-tier research institution serving a well-educated and technology-focused state. Everyone knows Rutgers is a leader in scientific and agricultural research. The less tangible benefits, however, come from having a state university that’s also a leader in humanities research and artistic creation: philosophy, history, the study of other cultures, the fine arts, music, and of course, English. By re-dedicating itself to undergraduate liberal arts education, Rutgers is committing itself to educating a young generation for whom all things can connect, for whom the study of how to make a living and how to best remake the world are joined. Rutgers English is proud to play its part in this ambitious mission.

With New Jersey currently in a state of financial crisis, some might be tempted to see these ideals of education as a luxury we cannot afford. I do not, nor do thousands of alumni, nor do the current students, who may be asked to bear the brunt of that crisis. I think it’s fair to say that Rutgers has never faced the level of budgetary cuts that are currently being entertained in Trenton. Whatever number gets settled on, the University is in for some challenging times. I have no doubt that we will survive this round of cuts, but I also know that Rutgers English will need help to keep building on our own momentum.

So, if you’ve enjoyed the newsletter and what you’ve seen here about our dedication as a department, please consider making a contribution to support Friends of Rutgers English, and to help us continue developing new opportunities for students and new resources for excellence in teaching. And, if you value the work of the Department and of higher education more generally, please consider writing to your NJ state representatives or to Governor Corzine, and sharing your thoughts. Now is the time to speak out for the future of education, and for the humanities.

Keep in touch,

Richard E. Miller

Derek Attridge Departs

Rutgers English bid farewell to Professor Derek Attridge this spring, when he finished his tenure as a Distinguished Visiting Professor. Professor Attridge has taught at Rutgers since 1984, and was the Director of the Graduate Program from 1994 to 1998. He has supervised the work of many Ph.D. students, both as a full-time Rutgers professor and since, as a frequent visitor. He is currently a Leverhulme Research Professor at the University of York in the UK, a position he has held since 1998.

Although his Ph.D. thesis at Cambridge University was on poetic meter in Elizabethan verse, his interests since then have ranged broadly through theoretical and philosophical questions about what qualities make language literary, and what responsibilities literary language entails. Along the way, he has published influential essays and books on James Joyce, on the philosopher of ethics Emmanuel Levinas, on the philosopher Jacques Derrida (whose writings he has also edited), and on the Nobel Prize winning South African author J. M. Coetzee. His last official visit to Rutgers was to present new work at a symposium on Coetzee, held in Professor Attridge’s honor in April.

As a scholar, a mentor, and a warm and friendly colleague, Professor Attridge will be greatly missed by Rutgers English. We wish him all the best.

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Editor: Vic Tulli

Professor Derek Attridge

Friends of Rutgers English
of teaching, along with excellent mentoring programs for various groups of students within the colleges,” Vice President Qualls explained. “Now we need to work on extending those kinds of resources to all students.”

The biggest step of the reorganization is also one of the most controversial: uniting Rutgers’ separate colleges. Although the faculty is already unified and students are allowed to take courses on all campuses, the undergraduate college system (including Douglass, Livingston, Rutgers, and University College) has led to different requirements for admissions and graduation, and different sets of available opportunities.

Under the new model, a student’s choice of campus will no longer determine academic requirements, and all students will receive their degree from a unified Rutgers. Instead, the separate campuses will be living areas designed to support students academically, occupied by learning communities with different emphases. For example, Douglass will become Douglass Residential College, a community for women who want an education in the arts and sciences that includes a curricular and co-curricular focus on women’s issues and women’s leadership.

As part of the planning process, Vice President Qualls participated in dozens of community-wide discussion groups, soliciting feedback about how to preserve the best Rutgers traditions while instituting improvements. “The discussions about the future have lead to many important changes in the plan,” he acknowledged, “though they’ve never challenged the fundamental principle of greater faculty involvement with undergraduate education, which is something everyone wants.”

The future of Douglass College was and is one of the most contested issues, for Vice President Qualls as much as anyone. “I’ve been a strong supporter of Douglass and of women’s education at Rutgers for many years,” he said, “and I believe that the Douglass Residential College will help us advance even more opportunities for women’s leadership, while continuing Douglass’s history and traditions.”

Vice President Qualls has a long record of exceptional service to the University. In 1971 he began as an Assistant Professor, specializing in Victorian literature. His popularity earned him the prestigious Warren I. Susman Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1985, the first year it was created. His administrative role grew as he served as Director of the Graduate English Program and then as Chair of Rutgers English. Since then, he has been the Dean of Humanities in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), Rutgers’ largest academic unit. FAS oversees 75% of all undergraduate instruction on the New Brunswick/Piscataway campus, so the challenge of being an FAS Dean has well prepared him for his role as Vice President.

Such dedication and experience made it the natural choice for President Richard L. McCormick to appoint him as the first Vice President for Undergraduate Education. “Professor and Dean Barry Qualls is one of Rutgers’ most respected faculty members and among the university’s most vocal champions of undergraduate education,” said President McCormick in his 2005 annual address to the University community. “Well, because I never say no to anything, I knew that if they offered me the position I would take it,” Vice President Qualls joked. “But I still intend to teach, every semester. I’m not giving up teaching Victorian novels.”

With all of his experience, Vice President Qualls knows the road to reorganization will not be easy. “The challenge is in creating something new, in making the vision into something concrete,” he said. We here at Rutgers English wish him the best of luck, and feel confident with the future of undergraduate education in such good hands.

Tip of the Iceberg

By Vic Tulli

The articles you can read in this newsletter, researched and written by the Rutgers English intern staff, are really just the tip of this semester’s iceberg. The interns discussed and debated the contents of the newsletter, researched and drafted articles we didn’t have space to print, interviewed alumni authors for our Alumni Book Corner, and collaborated to help each other edit and revise like no group before them. If you think, as I do, that the amount of Rutgers English news we’re able to bring you each semester is remarkable, you should see the rest of the work generated by these dedicated English majors. You’d be amazed.

My thanks goes to (pictured from left to right) Sarah David, Elizabeth Heisler, Monica Barr, Lauren N. Vitale, Rebecca Hu, and Jie He, for everything they accomplished and everything they taught me this semester.
John McClure Wins Susman Award

By Monica Barr

Rutgers English would like to congratulate Professor John McClure on receiving the 2006 Warren I. Susman Award for Excellence in Teaching, which is given for outstanding work in promoting the intellectual development of students. Professor McClure has been an innovator throughout his twenty-nine years as a professor, constantly expanding the definition of what it means to study literature at Rutgers.

Students often recall Professor McClure's courses as life-changing experiences, an in-depth, semester-long exploration of a particular topic that led to new intellectual discoveries. In comments, students praise not only the engaging and accessible way he teaches, but also the fascinating material he chooses to present. Professor McClure was the first to bring colonial and post-colonial literary studies to Rutgers by giving courses on “Anglophone literature” (books written in English in countries where English is not the native language). Literary studies overall has eventually caught up with Professor McClure’s interests, and Anglophone literature has become one of the most important new fields within English studies worldwide. Many students get their first introduction to global literature under his guidance, and he has opened students’ eyes to the writing of important African, Indian, and Caribbean authors.

Professor McClure strives to make English interdisciplinary as well as multicultural. His current book in progress, The Postsecular Imagination: Religion and Politics in Contemporary American Fiction, suggests another of his interests in the intersection of religion and literature in today’s society. Students from his undergraduate course “The Bible as Literature” praise Professor McClure’s sensitivity in dealing with religious topics even while he focuses classroom discussions on complex and contentious issues.

His graduate seminar “Postmodern / Postsecular” studies the idea of spirituality from several different cultural perspectives. This popular course is over-enrolled almost every semester.

What many of his students might not know is Professor McClure’s behind-the-scenes work for Rutgers English and for the University on the whole. Every English major has to take Principles of Literary Study 220, an introduction to the techniques of reading fiction. Approximately 400 students a year take the course, which includes both large lectures and small discussion sections.

Regina Masiello Wins Graduate Teaching Award

The English Department is known for great teaching, with a record number of award winning professors. So it is no surprise that the Department is also a training ground for excellent teachers. We are happy to announce that Rutgers English graduate student Regina Masiello won the 2006 FAS Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education by a Graduate Student.

Ms. Masiello has taught sections of Expository Writing, Introduction to Poetry, and an upper-level course on Renaissance Literature. She has also been the Writing Coordinator for the summer EOF program at Rutgers. In every course, her student evaluations have been extremely high, and her students praise her especially for encouraging them to learn more than they expected, and for helping them feel more confident in their approaches to literature and writing.

As a student in the Graduate Program working on a Ph.D., Ms. Masiello is studying the sixteenth-century prison poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt, Henry Howard (the Earl of Surrey), and Sir Walter Raleigh. This summer, she won a dissertation research fellowship to study their original manuscripts at the Folger Library in Washington, DC. She'll also be teaching for the EOF program again, and preparing to teach an innovative online business writing course in the fall.

“She is the English scholar that I would like to be someday,” wrote one student, “brilliant, eloquent, secure. My instructor is a great inspiration.” Rutgers English congratulates Ms. Masiello for winning this award, and thanks her for her extraordinary talent and dedication as a teacher.

Instructor Regina Masiello
The research center for undergraduates is trying to change those assumptions. Launched in the fall of 2005, their Sophomore Research Assistant Program brings students and faculty together to work on advanced projects, humanities research included. Rutgers English Professors Richard Koszarski, Mary P. Sheridan-Rabideau, William Vesterman, and Carolyn Williams mentored students in endeavors ranging from scholarly investigations to curriculum development to learning classification and organization. The students, in return, contributed to each professor’s work while expanding their ideas of research.

Jeff Kessler, a double major in English and philosophy, worked with Professor Williams to reshape the curriculum for Principles of Literary Study 219, the introduction to poetry required for all English majors. He helped gather resources and background materials for the course, but also calls the research an avenue for “self-discovery” that gave his previous interest in poetry a chance to solidify. Julia Newman, an English major, admitted that she did not know what to expect when she signed up for the same project, and she was pleasantly surprised when Professor Williams allowed her to shape her own research topic. Ms. Newman’s interest in the experimental poetry of William Burroughs soon emerged as the focus of her work. She now plans to continue the research on her own, possibly with a senior honors thesis.

Maisa Chiang, an art history and marketing double major, took on a project that involved organizing a library rather than researching in one. Under the guidance of Professor Koszarski, Ms. Chiang worked with a collection of films recently donated to the English Department by Daryl Chin, a playwright, critic, and film teacher at The New School for Social Research and the School of Visual Arts. Her job, classifying and cross-referencing more than 2000 films, required more hands-on experimentation with various software programs than reading and writing. “It complemented my usual course work,” Ms. Chiang says, “and let me put my technological skills to use.” She hopes that future film scholars will make use of her system to explore the new library.

Sometimes, the mentoring relationship is as important as the results. Alyse Albaum, a journalism and psychology double major, worked with Professor Sheridan-Rabideau on her research on activism, feminism, and education. “We talk a lot,” Ms. Albaum said, “which is different from working on assignments for classes, where you just hand things in when you’re done.” Niti Bagchi, a classics and English double major who hopes to be a professor herself one day, says that working with Professor Vesterman demystified her image of English scholarship. “Professor Vesterman took my ideas seriously and made me feel like I was contributing to the project,” Ms. Bagchi says. “I had always thought of a career in academia as teaching and research, but in a general sense. The Aresty Assistantship clarified my understanding about what it takes to prepare an article for scholarly publication.”

The Aresty Research Center was established in 2004 by an endowment from Jerome and Lorraine Aresty. The Sophomore RA Program, just one of their initiatives, encourages students to learn advanced research skills early in their college careers, while working with scholars in a variety of disciplines. Rutgers English is proud to participate in this valuable program.

Professor McClure helped develop the course in its current format, and as the course coordinator helped orient other professors and graduate students who have taught it over the years. Many of his former graduate students, now professors at other schools, say that his guidance for this course helped shape their approach as English teachers.

Professor McClure has even changed how some students think about English beyond the United States. He founded and directed the Rutgers Summer Study and Service Program in Limón, Costa Rica, along with Dr. Susan Crane. In Limón, Rutgers students work in the classroom to help local children learn to speak English, and in their spare time have the opportunity to study Central American and Afro-Caribbean culture at its source. Rutgers Study Abroad now offers the program every summer as a way for students not just to study globalization, but actively participate in its positive effects.

We here at Rutgers English congratulate Professor McClure on his Warren I. Susman Award for Excellence in Teaching, and commend his history of dedication and innovation as a teacher. He is invaluable as a professor who always finds successful ways to challenge students and himself, and we look forward to the new horizons he will open in the future.
George Levine Retires

By Lauren N. Vitale

Professor George L. Levine already has plans for after his retirement. “There are three things in my life, outside of family and outside of academia, that have obsessed me over the past few years,” he says. “One is birding, one is the Italian language and Italy, and one is writing.” After he retires, Professor Levine explains, “those three passions are going to keep me busy.”

Having plenty of time for his enthusiasms will be a welcome change for Professor Levine. He has been at Rutgers since 1968, when he was hired to chair, and set-up, the English Department at Livingston College, which first opened to students in 1969. When the separate departments merged in 1981, he became the first chair of Rutgers English for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. In addition, he became the successor as chair of CSPAD, a committee founded by Professor Daniel Gorenstein to evaluate and assist in the improvement of all graduate programs at Rutgers. For three years, he was the Associate Provost for the Humanities in New Brunswick. In 1986, he became co-founder and Director of the Center for the Critical Analysis of Contemporary Culture (now renamed as CCA, the Center for Cultural Analysis), an ambitious project that focuses on making intellectual connections, especially between the humanities and the sciences.

Although Professor Levine’s primary scholarly interest has always been in Victorian literature and culture, his work has also been consistently interdisciplinary. He is a well-known scholar of literature and science, with a particular focus on the work of Charles Darwin and its impact on nineteenth-century culture. It was a surprising focus for his work, even for him. “My major interest when I went to graduate school was poetry,” he says, “yet the natural development of my work kept pushing me to think about the relations between science and humanistic study.” Although he considers himself first and foremost to be a literary critic, “I kept thinking, way back then, that literary critics were too dismissive of science as a way of knowing the world. The biggest irony is that though I am fascinated by science and its achievements, I’m very unscientific myself.”

After getting a master’s degree from the University of Minnesota, Professor Levine spent two years in the army, and at the time of his discharge had a tough time deciding what to do next. “I discovered when I came out that I hadn’t had to make a single decision for two years,” he jokes. The army, which had seemed so tough as he lived it, turned out to be easier than civilian life. But his interest in writing and reading led him back to Minnesota for his doctorate, where he and fellow graduate students soon began publishing their own journal. “What we were trying to do,” he says, “was inject the study of literature with a sense of moral passion, which we thought was lacking in the institution at the time.” He credits his fellow student John Fraser for guiding the group toward a “more socially conscious, engaged form of criticism. This became an important intellectual influence on all my future work, and on my life.”

In 1959, Professor Levine earned his Ph.D., and left Minnesota to teach at Indiana University, which had a strong program in Victorian literature. There he immediately joined the founders of Victorian Studies, the influential journal that helped create the modern movement of interdisciplinary study of nineteenth-century literature and culture. By that time, after completing his dissertation on George Eliot, he had moved away from his initial primary interest in poetry, and toward the study of the novel and of nonfiction. After extensive research in England, Professor Levine put together a collection of materials called The Emergence of Victorian Consciousness, and co-edited a collection of essays, with William Madden, called The Art of Victorian Prose.

This pursuit culminated in his influential first book, The Boundaries of Fiction, which looks at the works of great Victorian essayists Carlyle, Macaulay, and Newman. After coming to Rutgers, he concentrated on teaching at Livingston and chairing the department for more than ten years, but continued to publish important articles on Victorian literature and culture. In 1981, Professor Levine published his second full book of criticism, The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley. This study became central to discussions of Victorian fiction, and solidified his reputation as one of the pre-eminent Victorianists in the world.

Ideas that arose in the writing of his first two books then pushed Levine to a full and careful reading of Charles Darwin’s writing. His next book, Darwin and the Novelists, examined how scientific thought – particularly Darwin’s – helped shape the ways writers could imagine character and society, but also the ways scientific thought could be recognized as a deeply imaginative enterprise. That book brought together all the various strands of his earlier work, on science, fiction, and nonfiction. Since then, Professor Levine has found in Darwin’s writings an ongoing source of scholarly inspiration.

His most recent book, Dying to Know, further explores Victorian ideals of science and knowledge, and puts them in the context both of narrative and of contemporary philosophical debates about whether objectivity is actually possible. He has also written the introduction to the reissue of Darwin’s seminal work, The Origin of Species. His next book, due out in September, will be...
Richard Miller as Scholar-Teacher

By Elizabeth Heisler

A t a research university like Rutgers, professors are expected to combine solid teaching with scholarly research and publication. The Scholar-Teacher Award honors those faculty members who form a vital link between their research and their work in the classroom, inspiring students to work at the edges of current understanding.

We are proud to announce that Rutgers English Department Chair Richard E. Miller received the Faculty Scholar-Teacher Award for 2006, making him the second Rutgers English professor to receive this honor since its inception in 2000. Professor Miller has achieved a national reputation for his work in the fields of pedagogy and composition studies, and for his critical work bridging personal experience and academic labor. He is also a past recipient of the FAS Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education, and the co-chair of the Task Force on Undergraduate Education’s Core Curriculum Committee. He is known throughout the Rutgers community for his longstanding commitment to intellectual rigor, and for pedagogical innovation in both graduate and undergraduate courses.

In As If Learning Mattered, his first book, Professor Miller explores the dynamics of reform in higher education, paying particular attention to the gap between official statements of educational commitments and actual classroom practices. With The New Humanities Reader, now in its second edition, Professor Miller and his co-editor, fellow Rutgers English Professor Kurt Spellmeyer, give entry-level students a selection of some of the most vibrant and compelling current nonfiction writing on a wide range of contemporary topics in many different fields. Over the past five years, The New Humanities Reader has become a standard text in first-year writing courses across the nation.

In his most recent book, Writing at the End of the World, Professor Miller considers the future of higher education and the allure of apocalypticism. Professor Miller unites discussions of current events with personal recollections, interpretations of literary texts, and responses to educational theory, all to explore the questions “Why go on writing in a world where no one reads? Why go on reading in a world awash with violence?” Writing at the End of the World reveals Professor Miller’s thoughts about the important role the humanities should play, providing both the intellectual tools and the resources for hope required to remain committed to building a better world.

In the classroom, Professor Miller’s confidence and ability to step back from his authoritative position create a learning environment where students always feel comfortable participating. Through a pedagogy based on “questioning and connecting,” Professor Miller combines the academic with the personal, encouraging students to develop their own intellectual values and commitments. Whether he is teaching the first-year writing course or a dissertation writing seminar for advanced graduate students, Professor Miller’s goal is to get students to write and to think at the edge, making it possible for students to transform their sense of themselves in the process.

The Faculty Scholar-Teacher Award is a testament to Professor Miller’s ability to bridge the intellectual gap between scholars and students, between academic professionals working to make the humanities matter and students who are trying to do the same thing, on a personal level, through their education. As he describes it in the conclusion to Writing at the End of the World: “The practice of the humanities, so defined, is not about admiration or greatness or appreciation or depth of knowledge or scholarly achievement; it’s about the movement between worlds, arms out, balancing; it’s about making the connections that count.”

George Levine (continued from page 6)

provocative Darwin Loves You: Natural Selection and the Reenchantment of the World. In it, Professor Levine argues that “faith” in evolution is not the same as pessimism, and that a fresh and literary reading of Darwin’s writings can lead us back to the feeling of enchantment with the natural world that many twentieth-century theorists argue has been lost because of the dominance of science.

Professor Levine’s own sense of enchantment with the world is especially evident when he writes about birds. Lifebirds, his essayistic memoir, describes how his passion for seeking out and identifying different species of birds connects with the other meaningful parts of his life. He has recently completed The Masked Duck: Reflections on Life and the Experience of Birding, another collection of autobiographical essays. “Birding is a big part of my life,” he says, “and I suspect I’ll find ways to enjoy it, and write about it, no matter what else I’m doing.”

After years of dedication to Rutgers, to the English Department, and to the CCA, Professor Levine is not worried that retirement will mean the end of his working career. “I’ve got writing commitments that will keep me busy for quite a while,” he says, and he has already planned a tour of Italian universities for next spring. “I’m going to go give lectures in various places,” he says. “I can combine learning more about the Italian language with my scholarship. And if I can bring some birding into it, well, that would be good too.”
Martin Gliserman Wins Teaching Award

By Vic Tulli

When it comes to teaching, some professors are never satisfied to rest on their laurels. Even though they’ve been teaching successful courses to students who admire and respect them, they keep experimenting with new topics and new approaches. What’s more, they raise the level of the other professors around them, by developing programs to promote teaching excellence in all departments.

Rutgers English Professor Martin Gliserman is one of those professors. A practicing psychoanalyst, he teaches English courses on literature and psychology, psychoanalytic theory, and lately, on a new linguistic approach to literary texts. As Director of the Livingston College Writing Program from 1977 to 1984, he pioneered new approaches to writing courses there, and as Director of the Livingston Honors Program from 1987 to 1994, he greatly expanded the scope and range of honors options for students. He also serves on the University Faculty Teaching Committee, and since 1996, he has been the driving force behind organizing the Undergraduate Teaching Conference, a full day of presentations and discussions for all professors at Rutgers. Professor Gliserman was honored for his work with the FAS Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education for 2006, the highest teaching award given to Rutgers faculty holding the rank of Associate Professor.

Professor Gliserman is also part of a wider community of scholars trying to bring literary and therapeutic approaches together. From 1987 to 2002 he was Editor in Chief of American Imago, the distinguished journal founded in 1939 by Sigmund Freud, which focuses on making connections between psychoanalysis and culture. He recently developed and taught a course on “Literature and Trauma” at the Cancer Institute of New Jersey, as a pilot for a statewide program of literary studies designed to help health care professionals in their work.

At Rutgers, Professor Gliserman has a reputation as an engaging and challenging teacher. Student evaluations for Professor Gliserman’s courses are extremely positive, describing him as “awesome,” “fantastic,” “refreshing,” “fabulous,” “very kind,” and even, “perfect.” One of his usual assignments involves asking students to keep a log of the course – detailed written responses to the readings, submitted at least once a week – then using log entries as a basis for discussions in class. What’s more, they raise the level of the other professors around them, by developing programs to promote teaching excellence in all departments.

William Walling Retires

By Vic Tulli

Students making their schedules for next semester were perplexed when they could not find Professor William A. Walling in the course listings. Eventually, he broke the news: after teaching at Rutgers for more than forty years, Professor Walling quietly retired this spring.

As a young man, he was a voracious reader. Though he immersed himself in the classics of literature, he didn’t yet imagine himself as a professor. He began college later in life than many, taking night classes at Brooklyn College and eventually earning a degree in History. He then worked for the Social Security office and later Proctor and Gamble, often traveling for business. Reading the works of Proust while traveling the country inspired him to study literature as a profession, and soon after he attended N.Y.U. for graduate school, where he specialized in English Romanticism and William Wordsworth.

The English Department of University College at Rutgers hired him to teach in 1965, and he chaired that department from 1972 to 1977, also chairing the Division of the Humanities for UC from 1975 to 1977. After the separate English departments merged in 1981, Professor Walling routinely served on several important committees for the unified Rutgers English. Many of his junior colleagues remember him as a generous and encouraging mentor, a learned and welcoming presence within a large and busy department.

Professor Walling has published articles in diverse fields, including Romantic poetry and prose but also world cinema, jazz, painting, and the popular fiction of John le Carre, and he co-edited an influential volume of essays on literature and art called Images of Romanticism: Verbal and Visual Affinities. In book form, he published a guide to the life and works of Mary Shelley as a starting point for both scholars and teachers. He is currently working on two new books, one a literary and cultural analysis of self-definition in the Romantic era, and the other a novel.

As a teacher, Professor Walling was always experimenting and creating new courses. “I wanted to see students come alive in response to the material,” he says, an approach that led him to be the first to introduce Film Studies into the English curriculum, but also led him to teach courses on the complex twentieth-century poet Wallace Stevens, and on Shakespeare. Students often took several courses with him as undergraduates and signed up for whatever he was teaching, trusting in his ability to convey the joy of discovering an author through reading.

Professor Walling has a great talent for sharing his love of literature with those around him, from his teaching to his engaging and literate conversational style to his generous habit of giving away books he has enjoyed so others can read them. We wish him all the best for his retirement: abundant time to write, fascinating books to read, and good company to keep.
Cheryl Wall Wins Research Award

By Jie He

Congratulations to Professor Cheryl A. Wall, who won the 2006 Board of Trustees Award for Excellence in Research. A lover of blues music, Professor Wall injects her lectures with recordings and anecdotes from the history of blues to give her students a fuller picture of African American literature. In her research, she shows that putting the history and the artistic conventions of black literature and music together can lead to new insights. Professor Wall’s scholarship has helped establish the importance of African American literature to twentieth-century writing in general. With two books, six edited volumes, and several influential essays, Professor Wall has become an inspiration to young scholars in her field.

Professor Wall’s first edited work, Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory, and Writing by Black Women, was groundbreaking. Together, this collection of essays makes the case that black women writers – Audre Lorde, Paule Marshall, Toni Morrison, Ntozake Shange, and Alice Walker, to name a few – are among the most vital and interesting authors of the twentieth century. Her 1995 book Women of the Harlem Renaissance continues this assertion by revealing the significant contributions by women writers to the black artistic movement of the first half of the century. The book traces the literary journeys of novelists Nella Larsen, Jessie Redmon Fauset, and Zora Neale Hurston, focusing on their writing, their lives, and their interactions with other writers. Professor Wall also highlights the popular culture scene occupied by Josephine Baker and Bessie Smith. In bringing together the women performance artists of Harlem and the women writers moving away from Harlem, she argues that the usual list of male authors and artists were not the only forces driving this important creative period in America.

Her newest work is the 2005 book Worrying the Line: Black Women Writers, Lineage, and Literary Tradition. In it, Professor Wall furthers her exploration of contemporary black women writers and their influence on others. The central metaphor of the title refers to the way blues singers “worry” a line of a song, breaking it up in new ways to draw extra attention to particular words or themes. Professor Wall shows how writings by black women writers use a similar technique, “worrying” ideas like genealogy, the literary tradition, and the continuing personal and historical effects of slavery. Critics call her book a major accomplishment in establishing the ways black women writers have challenged and extended the contemporary literary canon, “worrying the line” of literary history itself.

Professor Wall has even more research and writing in progress. She recently completed editing Savoring the Salt: The Legacy of Toni Cade Bambara with independent scholar Linda J. Holmes, a book that highlights previously unexamined aspects of Bambara’s activism, writing, teaching, and filmmaking through the analysis of well-known critics and scholars. Even with a prominent and well-studied author such as Toni Morrison, Professor Wall seeks to break new ground. In her upcoming book, Toni Morrison, Editor, Professor Wall examines the famous novelist in her little-studied period as senior editor at Random House from 1970 to 1988.

Her other work-in-progress, On Freedom and the Will to Adorn: The African American Essay, focuses on the nonfiction work of W.E.B. Du Bois, James Baldwin, Alice Walker, and Ralph Ellison, among others. On Freedom situates these prominent black writers within the long tradition of American essayists, and shows how their words helped to shape the most important aesthetic and social debates of their times.

The Board of Trustees Award for Excellence in Research honors scholars who have achieved high distinction in their academic fields. Professor Wall also received the Warren I. Susman Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1997, making her the second Rutgers English professor to receive the University’s highest honors for both her teaching and her research. Rutgers English is happy to join the Board of Trustees in congratulating Professor Wall on her accomplishments.

Martin Gliserman (continued from page 8)

basis for further discussion and writing. In fact, he once taught an innovative course at Livingston that required students to complete a journal entry once a week for a full four years, which fifteen students completed. His current teaching and his current scholarly work focus on “corpus linguistics,” an approach to literature that includes statistical analysis of the frequency with which categories of words appear. By using computers to map patterns of particular words in texts, corpus linguistics can help literary scholars look for new connections in literature that are often subtle and insightful. Students have already participated in a course on the nineteenth-century novel using this approach, and called it “eye-opening” and “mind-blowing.”

It wouldn’t take a computer, though, to connect the terms “outstanding,” “innovative,” and “community-minded” to “Professor Martin Gliserman.” Rutgers English congratulates him on earning this well-deserved award.
Wheeler: An Artful Reading

By Elizabeth Heisler

Ekphrasis is the literary term for the representation of visual art through words. Poet Susan Wheeler demonstrated the power and range of this poetic device during her reading for Writers at Rutgers last February. With a graduate degree in art history and a highly regarded list of poetic awards and distinctions, she seemed right at home addressing the packed audience in the Zimmerli Art Museum and reading from her latest book of poetry, Ledger. By showing slides of paintings to complement her poetry, Ms. Wheeler entertainingly demonstrated how an interest in the visual arts can join with a passion for poetic language.

Literally, a ledger is a record of financial transactions. Ledger, Ms. Wheeler’s third book of poetry, explores the multiple meanings of credit and debt, moving between monetary principals and moral principles. She has described debt as “a trail, linking the past with the present,” and Ledger shares this narrative theme. By suggesting the metaphorical connections behind commerce and exchange, Ms. Wheeler’s poetry explores what it means to live in our highly commercialized society.

The highlight of the reading was the long poem “The Debtor in the Convex Mirror,” an ekphrastic poem that explores the issues and ideologies of finance. Ms. Wheeler based the poem on “The Banker and His Wife,” a painting by the sixteenth-century painter Quentin Massys. The painting takes place in Antwerp, a European financial center at that time, and depicts a successful banker counting money while his wife sits next to him and watches. A convex mirror in the foreground of the painting reflects the face of the debtor who just paid him. Joking about “art in the dark” slides in art history classes, Ms. Wheeler projected the Massys painting on a screen behind her, allowing the audience to view the painting as she read.

The poem jumps around in time and space, from the banker’s home in Renaissance Antwerp to a contemporary shoplifting scene narrated in the first person, changing form and structure while connecting the themes of art, finance and identity. It begins with a depiction of the painting, then travels back-and-forth through time, evoking centuries of owning and owing, through the play of language:

[. . ] The merchant
moneylender leans to the obsolescence of his coins—
the paper
debts he trades more in leave gold to the unconjoined, sole

debtor's like this painter worrying his paper text. Livre tournois,
the French would call them, units of money valued at a Roman
pound, and livre, book: not the first time the two're confused.

The poem ends by returning to this confusion of language between money and books, evoking the “value” of both currency and books of poetry: “The paper suffices for sugar and salt.”

Ms. Wheeler’s interest in the visual arts influences all of her work. In the question and answer session at the reading, she expressed her love for the silver screen, and aligned her poetry with visual concepts in film. Noting how a director is concerned with issues of space, of foreground and background, when setting up a shot, Ms. Wheeler said that she tries to achieve a similar sense of depth with words, by layering various voices and languages and meanings into a poem. She described poetry as an “engagement with language,” and cited the artistic possibilities of language as the driving force of her writing.

Ms. Wheeler teaches creative writing at Princeton University and The New School. Along with Ledger, which won the Iowa Poetry prize, she has published three other books of poetry: Bag’O’Diamonds (for which she won the Norma Farber First Book Award), Smokes, and Source Codes. Her work is frequently selected for the “Best American Poetry” series. She recently ventured into prose fiction, and her first novel, Record Palace, received praise from such writers as Toni Morrison and E.L. Doctorow. Ms. Wheeler is currently involved in several collaborative works on various topics, including music and photography. One project combines images and text to depict an industrial site outside of Rahway, something she is working on with her stepson, filmmaker and photographer Jonathan Furmanski.

It was especially fitting to have Ms. Wheeler visit and read. Years ago, she taught at Rutgers and directed the Writers at Rutgers Series, bringing notable authors to campus and building an audience for these literary events. This year, she contributed to Writers at Rutgers again by returning as a celebrated guest. For that, we are in her debt.

Writers at Rutgers, 2006-2007

Mark your calendars now for Writers at Rutgers events next fall! See page 19 for the schedule. Call Friends of Rutgers English at 732-932-9896 for more details about attending the readings.
Franzen: Warming to the Subject

By Rebecca Hu

Jonathan Franzen rose to the literary spotlight in 2001 when his third novel, *The Corrections*, won the National Book Award. The book describes the drama of family members learning to deal with each other’s flaws, while capturing contemporary America’s obsession with self-improvement. With its detailed portraits and its dark humor, *The Corrections* was both a bestseller and a critical success, making Mr. Franzen one of the most well-known living American novelists. Hundreds of fans filled the room at the Rutgers Student Center on March 29 to hear the famous novelist read from his newest work, a memoir called *The Discomfort Zone*.

Mr. Franzen’s writing style has gone through major transformations. His first novel, *The Twenty-Seventh City*, is a plot-driven dark comedy about a quiet city disrupted by political conspiracy. *Strong Motion*, his second book, is a novel with elements of a thriller, centered upon one man’s strange encounters in Boston. Although both *The Twenty-Seventh City* and *Strong Motion* received praise from critics and readers, Mr. Franzen’s third novel took an unexpected turn in style toward an elaborate, informative mode of storytelling. “This book is not plot-driven,” Mr. Franzen has said, “but I think it’s full of story, and that’s a distinction that’s come to matter more to me.” *The Corrections* explores both the present trials and the emotional history of the Lambert family, the five main characters of the book.

His growing interest in elaboration brought him to attempt yet another different kind of writing, the memoir. At the Rutgers reading, Mr. Franzen joked about resisting the idea of writing a memoir because he always felt his life was not interesting enough. His upcoming book, *The Discomfort Zone* (available in September), is a collection of personal stories that combines retellings of events in his life with larger reflections on contemporary culture. Part autobiography and part expository essay, *The Discomfort Zone* offers readers a glimpse of contemporary issues in America as seen through the lens of Mr. Franzen’s individual experiences.

For Writers at Rutgers, Mr. Franzen read an excerpt titled “My Bird Problem,” first published in *The New Yorker*. This essay connects the writer’s concern about global warming with his birdwatching hobby. He describes attending Al Gore’s speech on global warming, mostly with the intention of poking fun at the former Vice President. Instead, he finds himself surprisingly compelled by the issue. Even though he wants to ignore the potential disaster of climate change, his love of birds brings him around:

*Human beings could probably adapt to future changes, we were famously creative at averting disasters and at making up great stories when we couldn’t, but birds didn’t have our variety of options. Birds needed help. And this, I realized, was the true disaster for a comfortable modern New Yorker. This was the scenario I’d been at pains to avert for many years: not the world’s falling apart in the future, but my feeling inconveniently obliged to care about it in the present. This was my bird problem.*

But Mr. Franzen’s “bird problem” turns out to be just one example of the narrator’s many worries, “something to be anxious about,” as a friend says to him in the essay, “if you want to be anxious about something.” The narrative takes many turns, starting with the breakup of the narrator’s marriage and his obsession with environmentalism, through the 1980s and 90s. Mr. Franzen’s writing shows how social and personal issues intertwine in our emotions and our memories:

*To worry about the Kleenexes and paper towels I was wasting and the water I was letting run while I shaved and the sections of the Sunday Times I was throwing away unread and the pollutants I was helping to fill the sky with every time I took an airplane came naturally to me. [...] Every time I washed out a peanut-butter jar, I tried to calculate whether less petroleum might be used in manufacturing a new jar than in heating the dishwasher and transporting the old jar to a recycling center.*

*My wife moved out in December 1990. A friend had invited her to come and live in Colorado Springs, and she was ready to escape the pollution of her living space by me.*

“My Bird Problem” continues to move between topics and approaches, merging a discussion of the politics of environmentalism with recollections of the writer’s now deceased mother, his relationships after his divorce, and finally, a fuller description of his growing passion for birding. In wandering through so many different subjects, Mr. Franzen brings the detail, background, and humor familiar from his fiction to this memoir.

In a long question and answer session following the reading, Mr. Franzen discussed his thoughts about writing fiction and memoirs at greater length. Rutgers English Professor Kate Flint noted how funny the essay seemed when he read it aloud, and asked whether he thought readers would understand the humorous nuances in print. Mr. Franzen responded that he used to do fewer public readings, feeling like the words of a text should stand on their own. However, he had lately realized that reading his work to an audience helps them hear it more like the way he imagines it when he writes, deepening their understanding of the piece and of his work in general. “Also,” he added, “it’s a lot of fun.”

The audience agreed, asking questions until Mr. Franzen nearly lost his voice, then enjoying the reception and book-signing until late in the evening. Jonathan Franzen’s visit was a great finale to an amazing year for the Writers at Rutgers Reading Series.

Author Jonathan Franzen with Professor Carolyn Williams, Director of Writers at Rutgers
Part 6: Redefining Academics

In the 1950s, Rutgers University faced many challenges. The United States was experiencing economic prosperity, but the Communist hysteria of the early part of the decade penetrated into higher education. All sorts of anxieties over new cultural and political ideas seeped into the Rutgers community, reshaping it.

Rutgers started 1951 with a new president, Dr. Lewis Webster Jones. An economist by profession, Jones had served on the founding faculty and been president of the progressive Bennington College. He had later been president of the University of Arkansas, distinguishing himself there as a member of the President’s Commission on Higher Education. When he took office, Jones advocated academic freedom but also made it clear that Rutgers would not harbor any Communists. A dilemma arose in 1952 when the Board of Trustees dismissed Newark Professors Moses Finley and Simon Heimlich for invoking the Fifth Amendment when questioned about their Communist affiliations. President Jones stood by the Trustees’ decision, despite a committee of faculty, staff, and students who urged him to reconsider. In response, national higher education associations censured Rutgers.

With the University embroiled in a heated debate over academic freedom, the Department of English struggled to deal with a theoretical dilemma of its own. Emerging in response to biographical criticism that defined art in relation to the artist’s life, an approach called the New Criticism had become the leading trend in literary studies. In its purest form, the New Criticism treated literature as an expression independent of the author’s intent or of the historical period of its inception. The New Critics emphasized “close reading,” paying careful attention to the interrelated structure, style, and imagery of a work. In contrast, scholars like J. Milton French, Chair of the Department, had devoted their life’s work to more historical and biographical approaches.

For the better part of the decade, the Department of English in the College of Arts and Sciences did not embrace the New Criticism. Instead, English majors continued to take courses that focused on the social and political backgrounds of literary writers, and their periods. Nationwide, similar tensions were visible. Advocates of the New Criticism argued that focusing on the text itself was the only proper starting point for any literary understanding, while detractors noted that the New Criticism’s often vehement rejection of extra-textual sources overlooked the brilliant scholarship of its non-adherents.

Even while the Department of English remained hesitant about the merits of the New Criticism, it staunchly supported undergraduate research. Beginning in the academic year 1950-1951, the College of Arts and Sciences introduced the Henry Rutgers Scholars Program to prepare graduate-school bound students. Academically successful English majors could now complete honors theses, allowing them to explore their literary interests at greater length and with greater sophistication. Even this undergraduate work displayed the wide range of approaches at the time: George Zirnite completed his thesis on “Shifting Patterns of Literary Patronage in Eighteenth Century England and Germany” in 1951, while two years later, Edward Hufschmid received honors for “Poetry and Its Techniques: A Psychoanalytic Approach.”

The focus on research was part of a wider trend in English studies, and had an impact even on departments traditionally focused on teaching. The renaming of the New Jersey College for Women marked a new stage of cooperation with the College of Arts and Sciences, including greater collaboration between the separate Departments of English. In 1955, NJC officially became Douglass College in honor of its first dean, Mabel Smith Douglas. That same year, it also gained a new dean, Mary I. Bunting, who encouraged female enrollment in post-graduate studies and thus initiated greater faculty interaction with the graduate studies division at the men’s college.

With growing graduate programs in several fields, the need for a better humanities research library became clear. Between 1948 and 1950, French had vigorously lobbied the administration for a new facility. The construction of University Library (later dedicated as the Archibald Stevens Alexander Library) began in 1953 and was completed in 1956. French noted that “the voice of the Department was undoubtedly one of the forces bringing about success in this effort.”

Another notable tension was around developing the field of creative writing, which most professors felt was not a proper part of the English Department. However, French advocated sponsoring the University’s first Poet in Residence, famed poet and critic John Ciardi, who joined the faculty in 1953. Ciardi breathed new life into the curriculum. Starting as mentor for students, Ciardi made a meteoric rise to full professorship and built a creative writing program. In the early fifties, the Department had offered only one creative writing course, vaguely titled “Literary Practice.”

What’s in a Name?

It’s possible that no university in the history of the U.S. has had such a confusing array of units, and names, as the school we know as Rutgers. The traditional college chartered in 1766 was named Queen’s College, for the Queen Consort of King George III. In 1825, the name was changed to Rutgers College to honor Colonel Henry Rutgers, an elder in the Dutch Church that controlled the school.

The “College of Arts and Sciences” described in this article was the official name for what had been Rutgers College before the trustees renamed the whole school Rutgers University in 1925. After Rutgers became “Rutgers, The State University” in 1956, the liberal arts College of Arts and Sciences was again renamed Rutgers College in 1969, making it a named unit comparable to Douglass College (established in 1918 as the New Jersey College for Women), University College (founded in 1935), and Livingston College (founded in 1968).

We’re not done yet: more name changes are coming with the new plan to revitalize undergraduate education at Rutgers. For more about the complicated history – and the future – of Rutgers names, see our online newsletter.
Starting in 1954, Ciardi introduced eight creative writing classes, including a writing seminar and three writing workshops, all to promote creative prose and poetry “as a form for speaking of human experience.” He also represented the Department at the Graduate School of Education, where he imparted his reading and writing methods to future teachers. In 1961, Ciardi left both Rutgers and academia to pursue a more lucrative career in radio and television. Nevertheless, he left a lasting mark by nurturing creative writing here.

While Ciardi was proving that student demand could reshape the English curriculum in successful ways, student interest in the New Criticism finally had its effect. As Department Chair, French secured a grant from the Fund for the Advancement of Education to develop two new courses in 1957: “Readings in the Novel” and “Readings in Drama.” These courses focused on literary devices such as setting, symbolism, and point of view, important parts of a close-reading method. Moreover, it was the first time that the Department of English experimented with a new class structure, where one professor lectured to a large audience that also separated into smaller discussion sections taught by graduate assistants. French’s report to the Fund admitted that these courses were not immediately successful, but they were an important first attempt.

At that point, a young Assistant Professor named Paul Fussell, Jr., best known for his later studies of the poetry of the Great War, started introducing New Critical approaches to the English curriculum in more advanced forms. Fussell wrote that his course on “Metaphysical Poets” would focus on “a close reading of the poetry for its own sake, and also as the occasion of modern critical controversy.” By the end of the decade, the Department had added three new upper-level seminars on contemporary trends in literary criticism, and descriptions of existing courses began to place less emphasis on history and biography and more on literary techniques and themes.

The governing structure of the University was undergoing a major overhaul as well. In the aftermath of the Fifth Amendment controversy and censure, New Jersey state law instituted a Board of Governors as the controlling body in 1956, putting the Board of Trustees in an advisory role. Reflecting this change, Rutgers officially became “Rutgers, The State University.” One of the Governors’ first tasks was to clarify the provisions on academic freedom, making it illegal for the University to dismiss professors solely for their political affiliations. Although they did not reverse the dismissals of 1952, the Board of Governors condemned them, signaling their intention to move forward.

As the decade ended, Rutgers was poised for change and hopeful about the future. In 1959, Mason Welch Gross replaced Jones as the President of the University. Gross, who held philosophy degrees from Harvard and Cambridge University, had come to Rutgers in 1946 after having served in World War II. With his experience as University Provost (the chief academic administrator) throughout the 1950s, he was both familiar with Rutgers and respected university-wide.

Also at the end of the decade, the Department of English bid goodbye to J. Milton French, who retired after having been Chair for twenty years. In a book celebrating his career, one colleague called him the “best listener and the least assertive talker,” praising both his leadership and his modesty. French’s quiet assertiveness had transformed the Department into a top-ranked research faculty, and English stood ready to benefit when Rutgers entered an era of unprecedented expansion in the sixties. As President Gross wrote to a vacationing French in 1961: “When you return this summer, you had better bring a tranquilizer with you because, as they say, ‘You ain’t seen nothing yet.’”

To be continued next issue...

Research for this article relied on Richard P. McCormick’s book Rutgers: A Bicentennial History (1966), and on materials in the Rutgers University Archives. Photo credit: F.J. Higgins for Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Archives. Many thanks to the staff of the Archives for their help in researching this series, with special thanks to Erika Gorder and Thomas Frusciano. For a full list of sources consulted and for earlier installments, see our online newsletter at http://english.rutgers.edu/alumni/newsletter/
Professor Horace E. Hamilton

Professor Emeritus Horace Ernst Hamilton passed away at the age of 94 on January 2, 2006. He is remembered by Rutgers English for being a dedicated professor during the many decades he taught here. He helped foster reading and creative writing at Rutgers, as a teacher and as faculty advisor to the Literature Club and The Anthologist, then in his retirement by faithfully supporting a creative writing award for students. Professor Hamilton was both a scholar of poetry and a poet himself; he published his first book of poems, *Through the Moongate*, in 1947, and he continued writing and publishing poetry for the rest of his life.

Professor Hamilton, “Ham” to his friends, was born in 1911 as the son of medical missionaries. He spent most of his childhood in China, until political troubles in 1927 forced his family to evacuate. He finished high school in Madison, Indiana, earned his B.A. at The College of Wooster in Ohio, then earned his Ph.D. at Yale, specializing in the work of eighteenth-century poet and playwright James Thomson. In 1941 he married Evelyn Arenhold. He served in the Navy from 1943 to 1946, then took up his post at Rutgers College after he returned to civilian life. Professor Hamilton taught at Rutgers English for more than thirty-five years, retiring in the early-1980s.

He greatly enjoyed teaching here. Although he was a scholar and teacher trained in the “old school,” Professor Hamilton was particularly interested in encouraging student participation and discussion. He published many articles of literary criticism, but his scholarly book is something different: a student guide to reading and understanding poetry called *The Cage of Form: Likeness and Difference in Poetry* that was used as a textbook in many courses.

In Memoriam

Professor Horace E. Hamilton meeting with students in the Literature Club. (Photo credit: F.J. Higgins for Rutgers University)

Through the years, Evelyn was a loving wife and helpful first reader of his work. When she died in 1980, he commemorated her with the Evelyn Hamilton Award in Creative Writing, an annual writing prize that recognized the best student writers at Rutgers for twenty-five years.

Professor Hamilton loved Lake Champlain, and spent many family vacations there. He often said that if he hadn’t been a teacher, he would have wanted to be an architect, and even built his own cottage on the lake. He loved music and singing, and often hosted colleagues and visiting poets at his home. “Ham” will be fondly remembered by his family, his colleagues and students, and by lovers of poetry everywhere who read his works.

Peggy Friedman

Peggy Friedman, a teacher at Rutgers University and a community activist, died in February 2006 after a long illness. She was 56 years old. The wife of Rutgers History Professor Allen Howard, Ms. Friedman was a familiar face around Rutgers English, having taught Writing Program courses for a decade. She also taught courses in Comparative Literature, the department where she was earning her Ph.D. at Rutgers.

Colleagues remember Ms. Friedman as an approachable but challenging teacher, one who would give students a tremendous amount of individual attention but always maintained high expectations. She was a skilled teacher of “098: Composition Skills” and “100: Basic Composition,” two introductory writing courses for students who are underprepared for college writing requirements. According to Ms. Darcy Gioia, Coordinator for 098, “it takes a talented and patient person to teach these courses well. Peggy always managed to raise the bar for her students, getting them to respond to challenging assignments. She was great at transforming students, giving them the confidence and the skills they’d need to move on at Rutgers.”

In her teaching, Ms. Friedman drew upon a worldly background and a deep commitment to social justice. She had lived in the Netherlands and Belgium growing up, and taught English in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Germany as an adult. She spoke five languages fluently, and had received the prestigious Charlotte Newcombe Fellowship for her Comparative Literature dissertation in progress. She was a social activist for both global and local issues; she had participated in anti-war movements since the late sixties, and also helped found Citizen Advocates for Piscataway Education, a group that successfully fought against privatizing the local public schools. As a dedicated member of the Piscataway Board of Education, she had been publicly honored by the Board for “service and personal dedication to the children of Piscataway.”

Ms. Friedman’s students and colleagues will remember her always for her classroom rigor, tempered by her great warmth and her devotion to helping students succeed.
Student Awards and Achievements

Every year, Rutgers English distributes awards for everything from writing to overall academic excellence. Many prizes have been created by Friends, to commemorate their experience here or to honor the memory of someone connected with Rutgers English. Award descriptions are available on the Department website. Congratulations to all of this year’s winners!

Writing Awards
The Mitchell Adelman Memorial Scholarship for Creative Writing
Andrea Cortland; Emma Halpern
The Toni Cade Bambara Prize
Abbey Morgan
The Edna N. Herzberg Prize
Poetry: Rachel Bennett
Fiction: Sharae Allen
The Julia Carrie Prize in Poetry
Rachel Bennett
The Jamima Dingus Qualls Prize
Kellie M. Walsh: “Griselde Inside-Out: Body as Interiority”
The Enid Dame Memorial Poetry Award
Rachel Bennett
The Evelyn Hamilton Award in Creative Writing
Poetry: Rachel Bennett; Tatiana Pastor
Fiction: Debra Miller
The Irving D. Blum Prize
Nick Bujak: “Rethinking William Carlos Williams: European Ambivalence and the Imaginative Hegemony”

Achievement Awards
The G. Stuart Demarest Memorial Award
Jennifer Flynn
The Dr. Jaroslav M. Burian and Grayce Susan Burian Award in English
Emma Halpern

Other Prizes - The Ernest W. Thomas Memorial Prize for Interpretation of Shakespearean Works; The James Suydam Prize in English Composition


The Jordan Lee Flyer Honors Award
(co-winner: Amanda Andrews)

The John and Catherine Kinsella Prize
(to provide research support for a student working on an honors thesis)

Graduate Program Writing Award Winners

The Marius Bewley Prize
Colleen Rosenfeld: “‘Then was I contented, now perplexed’: Epistemology and Style in Wroth’s Urania”

The Catherine Musello Cantalupo Prize
Colleen Rosenfeld: “Piteous Imitation and Spenser’s ‘Afflicted Style’”

The Catherine Moynahan Prize
Hillary Chute: “‘The Shadow of a Past Time’: History and Graphic Representation in Maus”

The Spencer L. Eddy Prize
Alexandra Socarides: “Rethinking the Fascicles: Dickinson’s Writing, Copying, and Binding Practices”
An English Major in England

By Sarah David

In the fall semester of 2005, I studied abroad in England at University College of London (UCL). As an English major, I chose London because of its historical connections to the English language and literature. I was excited by the prospect of studying in the same place where many of my favorite authors lived and worked. While I was there, I encountered a new way of understanding literature. I learned more about myself and about interacting with other cultures. Most of all, I discovered that being a Rutgers English major improved more than just my ability to understand literature.

Great Britain is the most popular destination for Rutgers English majors, even though programs are available in more than twenty countries. But no matter where students go, according to Melanie Andrich, the Associate Director for Rutgers Study Abroad, the experience of studying abroad helps them learn to be more independent and gives them new perspectives on their lives. “Leaving the United States for an extended period of time allows you to immerse yourself in another culture,” says Ms. Andrich, “and it also allows you to see your own culture and your own assumptions from a different angle, something you can’t get from conversations with international peers or from vacations.” Recognizing these benefits, the US Senate designated 2006 as “The Year of Study Abroad,” encouraging schools to expand these opportunities because, “studying abroad exposes students from the United States to valuable global knowledge and cultural understanding and forms an integral part of their education.”

At UCL, I started learning in a whole new way. I had a greater responsibility to study independently, because of a looser classroom structure. There, lectures take place only once a week, and the speakers rotate according to their expertise. Getting used to this extra freedom was the hardest part of acclimating myself to a different system; studying Shakespeare without a lot of class time or guidance was, for me, an intimidating task. Exploring my ideas on my own made me more conscious of what I had learned in previous classes, and broadened the way I think. It took more effort to complete my classes, but ultimately I felt prouder of my work than ever before.

Of course, studying abroad consists of a lot more than just studying. My “global knowledge” and “cultural understanding” also came from spending time with my classmates, and visiting new places. My residence hall was located in the West End, a convenient walk or tube ride from most London sights. One of my favorite places to go was Oxford Street, a main street packed with tourist shops but also with distinctly English retail stores, like Selfridges. I also loved visiting the museums. My favorite was the British Library, which houses one of the earliest published editions of Shakespeare’s plays. In most of the places I visited, I saw how Brits and tourists acted and interacted. I filled an odd role; I was not there as a tourist, but not there permanently either. Instead, I got to see British culture from both an insider’s and an outsider’s point-of-view.

Surprisingly, studying abroad taught me more about Rutgers and my own home as well. For me, Rutgers is no longer just a university in New Jersey. It is a place that has shaped many people’s lives, all over the world. I experienced this sense of connection firsthand when I attended an alumni dinner at the Globe Theater in November, sponsored by the Rutgers Club of London. Alumni, their families, and other study abroad students came together, and it amazed me just how large and diverse the Rutgers community actually is. One couple, Dennis and Carla Imbriglio Reustle (RC ’81 and DC ’83), even invited me to their home for Thanksgiving dinner. Participating in the alumni dinner and meeting the Reustles made me realize that no matter where in the world I happen to be, my experience at Rutgers will be part of me, and something I share with others.

Studying abroad, according to Ms. Andrich, has two main benefits: “a heightened awareness of and sensitivity to other people and other ways of life,” and, “an increased self-awareness and confidence.” My experience in London has given me just that. Even though I was taking part in the daily life of another culture, it renewed my excitement for being an English major at Rutgers, and deepened my appreciation for community connections. Studying abroad has expanded my sense of myself as a Rutgers student, and as an American.

Sarah David posing as a tourist in front of an Oxford Street shop

New: Alumni Book Corner

Our Alumni Book Corner is now online. Visit our website and see a bibliography of books by fellow Rutgers English alumni. You can also read our first feature profiles of four alumni authors: poet Barbara Crooker, celebrity assistant Bonnie Low-Kramen, mystery novelist Annette Meyers, and literary scholar Adam Potkay. Get to it from our website, at http://english.rutgers.edu/alumni/.

If you have a book we can add to our alumni bibliography or if you would be interested in being interviewed for a feature profile, contact us by email at for.english@rutgers.edu. We hope you enjoy our new feature!
A Gift for Research

Rutgers English is pleased to thank Barbara Howard for continuing to support the Daniel Francis Howard Travel Fellowships. These fellowships provide financial assistance for graduate students in English to pursue a month or more of Ph.D. research abroad.

The fellowships are named for Ms. Howard’s late husband Professor Daniel Howard, who joined the faculty in 1960 and became the Rutgers College English Chair in 1966. Professor Howard earned his Ph.D. from Yale, and some of his scholarly work included extensive research on the manuscripts of Samuel Butler in the British Museum in London. A Yorkshire native, Ms. Howard first met him on one of his research trips in 1968. In their years together, she saw at first hand how important traveling to archives for primary research could be. “Dan loved teaching at Rutgers, and conveyed that to everyone around him,” says Ms. Howard. Both of their sons, Matthew and Peter Howard, attended Rutgers, and both majored in English.

Ms. Howard’s new gift to Rutgers English insures that the program will continue for several more years. Howard Fellows have already done research on Victorian feminist theater, Welsh Romantic poetry, the eighteenth-century botanical exchange between England and the colonies, and contemporary London playwrights. The most recent recipient, Kathryn Steele, will spend time reading the unpublished correspondence of Samuel Richardson, who is considered the originator of the novel in English. Ms. Steele plans to study the interpretive debates Richardson carried on with his readers, particularly women readers writing to him about their reactions to his novel Clarissa. These letters are only available in the National Art Library of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Ms. Howard’s generous support will allow future graduate students to do interesting and innovative work with archival primary sources from around the world. Rutgers English is grateful to her for making this wonderful opportunity possible.

New Face at the Plangere Center

This semester, the Plangere Writing Center welcomed Kurtis Watkins as its new Administrative Assistant. The Plangere Writing Center is the busiest tutoring center at Rutgers. Mr. Watkins coordinates the tutoring schedules for more than 1000 students and over 100 tutors each year, and makes sure the Center is running smoothly.

If he has any questions, Mr. Watkins can always ask his predecessor in the position, Jessica Hedges, for advice. She still works for Rutgers English, as Administrative Assistant to the Writing Program.

The Plangere Center’s distinct pedagogy, called “minimalist tutoring,” encourages students to learn to write for themselves rather than relying on a tutor for editing or help with a single assignment. Students commit to five sessions with the same tutor, who can then focus on helping them develop the particular skills they need to be successful college writers.

The most challenging part of his job, Mr. Watkins says, is the large volume of people he sees. With thirty to forty tutoring sessions taking place every day, his office is sometimes flooded by students and tutors with complicated questions but in a hurry to get to their next classes. Mr. Watkins does not mind being so busy, and says that one of the most rewarding aspects of his job is seeing so many students being helped by the work of the Center and by his contribution to it.

The greatest sweetener of human life is Friendship. To raise this to the highest pitch of enjoyment is a secret which but a few discover.

— “Of Friendship” (1774), anonymous
Many thanks to the following Friends, who contributed to the English Department between July 2003 and May 2006. Thanks also to the corporations and foundations that have given matching donations and grants.

If we missed the chance to recognize your contribution, we apologize. Please contact us and we will thank you in future newsletters. We appreciate your support!

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In Memoriam: We are sad to announce that Janet Hickman Mosbacher (NJC '46) passed away in April. A self-proclaimed “compulsive reader,” she was the very first alum to respond to the first issue of this newsletter, with a note of encouragement for Friends of Rutgers English. Since then, she corresponded with us many times, always with insight and humor. She will be missed.
Wanted: Alumni for Events

Last year was a great one for alumni participation in Rutgers English. We had record attendance at Writers at Rutgers readings, and several alumni joined us for our opening lecture and reception in September. We hosted our first Alumni Weekend Event, a Faculty Book Fair featuring eight faculty authors talking about their books, and hope to do it again. Retirement celebrations for Professors George Levine and Alicia Ostriker brought their former students from all over the country. And Friends of Rutgers English has heard from many alumni who are eager to stay in touch, even if they can’t make it back to campus.

Help us keep track of you and invite you to participate in events and English alumni programs. If you haven’t already, sign up at our website at http://english.rutgers.edu/alumni/, or by using the coupon below. Signing up is fast and easy and free! By showing your support and your interest, you help keep Rutgers English strong. We can use your contact information to keep you informed about news and events, and you can help us figure out what you’d most like to see us accomplish as a network. Feel free to contact us by mail, by phone at 732-932-9896, or by email at for.english@rutgers.edu if you have any questions or comments.

It has been a pleasure meeting so many alumni over the last year, and we hope to see more of you in the years to come.

Mark your calendars now for the Writers at Rutgers Reading Series

September 19: Jay Wright, a major figure in African American poetry. Wright has published nine books of poetry beginning with The Homecoming Singer in 1971, and in 2005 was awarded Yale University’s Bollingen Prize for his lifetime of achievement.

October 23: Azar Nafisi, the well-known author of Reading Lolita in Tehran. Her nonfiction account of a group of Iranian women who meet to discuss forbidden works of western literature has been on the bestseller list for more than five years.

November 15: A reading for Katrina Rebuilding Relief, featuring New Orleans poets Selah Satterstrom, Kalamu ya Salaam, and Brenda Marie Osbey, the current Poet Laureate of Louisiana, along with Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Yusef Komunyakaa.

Supporting Friends are invited to reserve seats for the readings. See our website, or call 732-932-9896 for more information.

Friends Indeed

We need your support, now more than ever. With New Jersey in a budget crisis, Rutgers departments are being asked to make due with less. Because the English Department serves so many students and runs so many programs, we make good use of every last dollar.

Donations from Friends go into our English Department fund, and allow us to develop new programs, sponsor academic events, activities, and opportunities for students, and maintain this alumni network. Your contributions can help us through this crucial time.

You can become a supporting Friend of Rutgers English in three ways. You can mail us a check directly using the form on this page. You can use a credit card and donate securely through our Alumni website (address above). Or you can specify the English Department as the recipient of your gift when you pledge to the annual campaign. All donations are tax-deductible.

If you’d like more information about supporting Friends of Rutgers English, give us a call at 732-932-9896, or write us at for.english@rutgers.edu.

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Friends of Rutgers English
It is odd that looking through binoculars is so very private an act. It’s a strange, almost paradoxical business. Binoculars open up the world, reveal its little secrets, bring the distant in close, intensify color and forms, and make you feel that you are much more vividly in touch with the world than you really are. On the other hand, all that life and vividness is locked inside a tunnel, the black walls of which are visible if you choose to shift your attention from the birds to the medium through which you are seeing them. You are enclosed in a very small space that creates the illusion of proximity and of the accessibility of the vast and the distant. And you are trapped inside your own sensations.

Only when I raise my binoculars, knowing that there is someone else by my side, does the privacy of that experience hit me, and the worry begin about whether anyone else has seen what I for a moment have taken as unequivocally out there and not me, and not some Cartesian dream. My friends’ often touching struggles to help me focus on an elusive four-inch bird deep in the foliage of a large oak late in migration season suggests something of how very private seeing through the binoculars may be, and yet how much the experience of birding depends on getting beyond that privacy. Among strangers, I sense that my very credibility is at stake if I claim to be seeing a bird up there that nobody else yet sees, but that’s a small thing compared to the urgency I feel among friends to get them to see what has just excited, sometimes even thrilled me. It is partly a matter of self-trust, even a matter of confirming my own reality; but most of all, it has to do, I’m sure, with my need to make others feel what I am feeling, to be less alone in the world by making certain that the reality of what I feel to my finger tips is not just myself, is also a reality for everyone I care about. The desire to share is intensified by the sharpness of the vision through those binoculars, often a vision so movingly beautiful that the only possibility of making it better lies in my knowing that it is more than mine alone, that it belongs to everyone. Is it possible that, locked inside their own dark-walled chambers dreaming the world, others are having the same vision as I? So birding can be both an act of expansion into the world and a very private, almost solipsistic activity – just you and your visions. One needs – I need – to touch other lives with those same visions.