



The English Update



A newsletter for English majors and faculty at BSC
Ann Brunjes, Editor

Volume VIII

Fall 2005

Dr. Ben Carson Joins English Dept. Faculty

Which writers in your area of specialization interest you the most, and why?

Too many writers interest me! So I'll limit my response to two. While my research on African American novelist/poet Clarence Major is ongoing, the author who interests me most at the moment is the Japanese American writer Ruth Ozeki. I'm teaching her first novel *My Year of Meats* (1998) in English 315: Ethnic American Literature, and my students are responding enthusiastically to it. Not only is *My Year of Meats* learned, thought-provoking, and beautifully written, it also brings together a number of issues that have concerned me over the years such as ethnic hybridity, race, cross-cultural interaction, gender roles, the exploitation of the working class, environmental ethics, and animal rights. I plan to do some writing on Ozeki in the near future.

What literary and/or cultural theorists have influenced you the most?

Richard Rorty's *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* had a profound influence on me in my first years of graduate school; and I'm still trying to reconcile the influence of the American Pragmatist tradition (in its post-structuralist variety) with my interests in Marxism and Anarchism. If I name intellectual heroes, I'll betray entirely the degree to which my intellectual interests are conflicted, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. In the

Junior English Major Cherylynn Silvia Presents Paper at International Conference

"It doesn't look like Mordor," I thought upon approaching Birmingham, England on August 10, 2005. I was heading to Tolkien 2005, the conference commemorating the 50th anniversary of the publication of Tolkien's *The Return of the King*. And I wondered if the committee had even considered that the city of Tolkien's youth, in its industrial heyday, had made such an impression on young Tolkien's mind that it became the model for his land of polluting evil. I had to think of something other than the fact I was presenting at my first conference in three days.



Professor Ben Carson

spirit of McCarthy (Joseph not Cormac), then, I'll name names. Besides Rorty, I have to mention Harold Bloom, Kenneth Burke, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Jean Baudrillard, Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, Ernst Bloch, Emma Goldman, Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, John Dominic Crossan (a former Catholic monk and theologian), and most recently, Soren Kierkegaard. Everything I've written in the last eight years, for better or worse, bears the mark of these thinkers.

Ben Carson, continued p. 2

I walked from the train station to Aston University (forgetting to look right then left before crossing the street, thankfully Birmingham has arrows for stupid international tourists) and found myself lost on campus with a couple from San Diego. After we found registration and our rooms I flopped down on my bed and flipped through the packet of information I had been given. I stopped on Saturday, August 13th and looked somewhat dumbfounded at 10:30. It was something that should have looked incredibly familiar: Cherylynn Silvia – "One Ring to Rule Them All: Power and Surveillance in the film adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings*." Yet, since I had spent all day ignoring my reason for being overseas, I imagined watching some doppelganger present my ideas as I watched from the safety of the audience. After forcing myself to realize that I would be the presenter and then ensuring that I forgot that knowledge for

Cherylynn Silvia, continued p. 4

Scholarship and Award Opportunities

English majors may now apply for all departmental scholarships for which they are eligible using one “Department of English Scholarship Application” form, which is available online on the college’s scholarships database at <http://scholarships.bridgew.edu>.

A tip on searching the scholarships database: if students do a search by English major, the five departmental scholarships — the Coveney, Curley, Ridlon, Prince, and Shoolman Scholarships — will come up, as well as many other scholarships they may be eligible for that are not based on major. They can isolate the individual scholarship by putting part of the title in the keyword field, e.g. Curley.

To apply for scholarships, first please submit a **Transcript Authorization Form** to the Student Affairs Office **by Wednesday, February 15, 2006**. Then submit the Department of English Scholarship Application, a writing sample, and two letters of recommendation from faculty who know you and can assess how you meet the scholarship criteria to Dr. Kathleen Vejvoda, English Department, Tillinghast Hall, **no later than Friday, February 17, 2006**. The writing sample should be a clean copy of an essay submitted for a class or produced independently.

Creative writers should consider participating in the Campus Climate Action Group’s diversity scholarship competition. The literary category includes, but is not limited to, short stories, poetry and journals. Entry forms are on the Affirmative Action website, and are due in the Affirmative Action Office on Friday, February 17, 2006.

Ben Carson Joins English Department

continued from page 1

What is your approach to teaching a 300-level literature course?

I assume from the outset that students in a 300-level literature course are going to be experienced readers and writers, and generally highly motivated. So the reading load is heavy, though certainly not unreasonable. In English 315, for example, we’re reading seven books (a number of novels, a graphic novel, and several plays) and twelve essays; the essays supplement and provide background material useful for understanding the primary works. While students write response journals, a final essay and a final exam, discussion is the engine that drives this course. There can be no substitute for daily discussions, and why should there be? It’s not only terribly edifying, but it’s fun!

What will you teach in 2005-06?

In Spring 2006 I will be teaching two sections of English 253: Non-Western Literature, one section of English 318: African American Literature II, and a graduate seminar in Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Literature (English 570).

What other new courses would you like to develop?

I have already developed syllabi for and would love to teach, at the undergraduate or graduate level, the following courses: Literature of/about the Artist, Asian Literature (in translation), Chicana/o Literature, Marxism and Religion, Anarchism and Literature, Literature and Environmental Ethics, Post-Colonial Literature and Theory, Native American Literature and Theory, Postmodern Ethnic American Literature, World Literature, Literature of Peace and Justice, and Literature of the Sixties and Beat Generation.

What do you like to do after work?

Well, I’m a readaholic, and I’m not looking to be cured. Though it’s true I can only read so much in a day. When the weather is nice, I ride my touring bike or take my mountain bike over to Massasoit State Park. In the evening, if I’m not reading, I enjoy watching great films by great directors, e.g. Ingmar Bergman, Andrei Tarkovsky, Woody Allen, Krzysztof Kieslowski, Lars von Trier, Jim Jarmusch, etc. The truth is I’m terribly boring. Perfectly somniferous. I gave two of my friends narcolepsy, and a third recently reported droopy eyelids. Consider yourselves warned.

Letter from Dr. Evelyn Pezzulich, Department Chair

Dear Majors,

This is going to be a newsy letter because right now there is a good deal going on in the English Department. As mentioned in the spring 2005 issue of *The English Update*, Dr. Tom Curley is enjoying a year off to conduct research on his fourth book as one of the 2004-2005 recipients of the Presidential Fellowship Award. What I did not mention at that time is that Dr. Philip Tabakow is also on a year's leave as a Fulbright scholar in Bahrain. I hope that we can look forward to a poetry reading when he returns, inspired by his sojourn in a foreign culture. Finally, Dr. Bill Smith is on a two year leave to serve as the Interim Dean of Graduate Studies. I hope you have had the opportunity to enjoy the classes of the three excellent professors who are serving as temporary replacements—Dr. John Mulrooney who has a specialty in creative writing with an emphasis on poetry, Dr. Cynthia Ricciardi, an eighteenth century scholar, and Dr. Jim Crowley, a Renaissance specialist.

There will be two other major changes in the English Department on a more permanent basis. First, Dr. Lee Torda will be leaving the department in January to become the Director of Undergraduate Research. We are grateful to her for her many contributions to the department. Although we will miss her, as I'm sure you will as well, she will still be on campus working on students' behalf. This is yet one more incentive to participate in the Undergraduate Research Program at Bridgewater State College. Second, Dr. Julia Stakhnevich will be joining the department in January, and ESL or English as a Second Language courses will be housed in the English rather than the Foreign Language Department. We are very happy to welcome her as a colleague.

Some additional news is that currently we are running three job searches in the English Department and will have hosted a total of seven candidates by the end of the semester. One position is for a Writing Across the Curriculum Coordinator, and the other two are for Rhetoric and Composition specialists to strengthen our Writing Concentration within the major.

Finally, looking toward the future, next year the English Department will begin its program review. At that time, we will actively seek your input to better understand what we are doing successfully, what needs improvement, and what you might like to see added to the English Program. Let me close by wishing you success on your exams and a well deserved rest afterwards.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays,

Evelyn Pezzulich

Cherylynn Silvia Presents at Tolkien Conference (continued from page 1)

the time being, I flipped through the rest of the programme (spelled with an e, in true British fashion) before getting up to wander the Aston vicinity (wondering, among other things, why everything was named Vauxhall and why the Dentists had their own reserved parking spaces).



Birmingham from my window

The next morning, after seeing the relatively empty breakfast room, I was surprised at the number of people at the first presentation. And even more surprised later when I went to a talk by famous philologist and Tolkien scholar Tom Shippey and the rather large room was completely full. In between watching talks, I found the room I was presenting in and practiced my speech. Oddly enough I think I was more nervous then, than when I stood behind that same podium on Saturday morning.

The presentation itself was a blur of words and eye contact with a blurry audience (I am, thankfully in this case, nearsighted) but after my presentation I received numerous commendations from people I did not know, which I took to be a good sign.

The rest of the conference offered more to see than I was capable of attending, particularly since Sunday brought me (exhausted from the celebratory partying the night before) to Tolkien's Oxford. But I saw what I could and I am anxiously awaiting the published proceedings.

After my time in Birmingham I traveled throughout Britain. I saw the picturesque hills of the Lake District and the Abbeys of Tintern and Glastonbury before spending a day sightseeing in London (I do not recommend seeing London in a day, my knees, ankles and feet were quite mad at me that night).



Even though my 21 minutes and 17 seconds of fame was ephemeral, I will forever remember the experience itself and I continue to keep in contact with the friends I made overseas. Which reminds me, I do not suppose there is a chance of getting money to go to Oxenmoot in September if I write another paper... is there?

Cherylynn's trip was financed in part by a travel grant from the Adrian Tinsley Program for Undergraduate Research and the offices of the Provost, Dr. Nancy Kleniewski, and the Dean of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Howard London.

The Writer's Café Features Student Work

On Wednesday, November 17 The Writer's Café, co-sponsored by the BSC Writing Studio and the Academic Achievement Center, hosted four student authors: Angelique Paparella, Sean Janson, Chrissy Smith, and Frank Capitano each read their work to an audience of students and faculty. Angelique and Chrissy read a selection of their short stories. Frank and Sean read their own poetry. Audience members had a chance to ask questions and engage the authors in lively conversation. Snacks and drinks were enjoyed by all.

The Writers' Café is held each semester. Check your email for the date and location of next semester's Café!

English Society Up and Running: Graduate Info Session Planned

After a great deal of paperwork and brainstorming, a group of English majors have founded an English Society – a group for majors to socialize, share good ideas and writing, and eventually plan some special events. This semester, Society officers Nicole Williams (president); Melissa DaCosta (Vice President); Erin Downey (Secretary); John Matson (Treasurer); and Amanda Viana (Student Liaison) organized a series of writing workshops for majors. Next semester, they will hold a graduate studies information night on Feb 23rd at 6:00 – location TBA. The Society is also working with Jumpstart to coordinate a book drive and read to local children. If you are interested in getting involved with the English Society, contact President Nicole Williams at nicoleW58@aol.com.

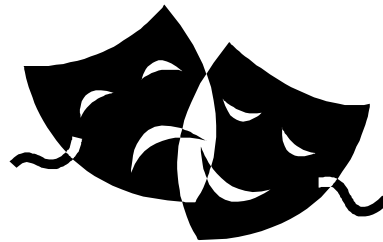
Maxwell Library Notes

Library patrons have a new treat: the Virtual Catalog. Using this tool, people can request books from the U Mass libraries and a number of public libraries. The best thing is: by using the number on the front of their Connect cards, patrons can order their own materials that will be delivered to the Circulation Desk. An e-mail will notify the patrons that their items are available for pick up. Where to find it? The connection to the Virtual Catalog is at the top of the Webster page, accessed via the library home page. Note: This is faster than Document Delivery/ILL. Give it a try.

~Marcia Dinneen

Student News and Notes

English majors **Will Candler** (Theater double major) and **Colleen Farrell** (music minor) were nominated to the regional finals for the Irene Ryan Scholarship. The Scholarship is for state college students interested in pursuing a career in the theater. In **February**, they will be competing for the Massachusetts prize; should they be successful at the state level, they move to the national competition. Both Colleen and Will performed earlier this fall in the BSC Studio Theater Production of Steven Sondheim's musical, *Assassins*. The play, directed by BSC Theater Department professor Henry Shaffer, interprets the lives of such of such historical figures as John Wilkes Booth, Lee Harvey Oswald and John Hinckley, Jr. (among others) through themes of the failure of the American Dream, political and social disenfranchisement and alienation. Will played the role of Charles **Guiteau**, and Colleen **Sara Jane Moore**. The play was held for consideration into the American College theatre Festival, to be held late January.



Dr. Kathleen Vejvoda reports hearing from BSC alumna **Karen Fisher '04**. Karen is currently a first-year law student at Suffolk Law School. Karen is the only mother among her peers, and at 26 is a few years older than the majority of her classmates. Hard as it is, Karen feels really good about being in law school.

Faculty Achievements

Dr. Ben Carson's essay "Spaces of Hope in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and Ana Castillo's *So Far From God*" has been accepted for publication in *The Indian Review of World Literature in English*. He has also been asked recently to sit on the Editorial Advisory Committee of this journal. His entry on Clarence Major is forthcoming in *Writing African American Women: An Encyclopedia of Literature by and about Women of Color*. "The 'Cosmopolitan Consciousness' of Gerald Vizenor and Native American Literary Separatism" will appear in the next issue of *English Studies Forum*. Dr. Carson's essay "Darkness Beyond the Lighthouse: Virginia Woolf, Charles Baudelaire, and Literary Modernism" appears in the latest issue of *Nebula*. Dr. Carson also presented several academic essays at the following conferences this fall: "Clarence Major's *Emergency Exit* and the Critique of 'Racialized Seeing'" at the "Sight Lines" Conference hosted by the New England American Studies Association, in Worcester, MA; "Spaces of Hope in Ana Castillo's *So Far From God* and Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*" at the Utopian Studies Annual Conference, in Memphis, TN; and "The 'Cosmopolitan Consciousness' of Gerald Vizenor and Native American Literary Separatism" at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference, in Atlanta, GA. Of Dr. Carson's work on his novel *Emergency Exit*, Clarence Major writes, "It represents the clearest, most focused thinking about and writing about *Emergency Exit* (and all my work, really) that I have so far seen anywhere. I was truly delighted to have the opportunity to read your paper. I even read every word of the footnotes."

Dr. Greg Chaplin recently presented two essays on John Milton. In June, he delivered "Milton against Servitude: Classical Friendship, Natural Law, and The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates" at the Eighth International Milton Symposium in Grenoble, France; in October, he presented "Milton and the New Heresy" at the 2005 Conference on John Milton in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. This semester, Dr. Chaplin completed work on two projects that he has been working on for several years: Seventeenth-Century British Poetry, 1603-1660: A Norton Critical Edition, co-edited with John Rumrich, and a double issue of Texas Studies in Language and Literature devoted to early modern friendship, for which Dr. Chaplin served as the guest editor. Both will appear this December.



Dr. Evelyn Pezzulich presented a paper entitled "'Money, Money, Money': Enslaved in a False Identity" last May at the XIII Annual Conference on Cross-Currents in Literature, Film, and Visual Arts at University College Cork in Cork, Ireland.

Dr. Lee Torda presented her essay, "This is all that remains of Tillinghast: Student Scrapbooks as Evidence of Embedded Literacy Events" at the SHARP (Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing) conference in Halifax Nova Scotia. Dr. Torda also presented at NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) on a project that involves

BSC '04 graduate Glen dePontbriand (who now teaches English at Bridgewater-Raynham Regional High School). The presentation "What do you mean you can't do that in your classroom?": Dialogues between teachers and the teachers who train them," examined how well ENGL 301 ("Writing and the Teaching of Writing") preps our graduates for teaching writing. Fellow teacher-trainer John Kucich was kind enough to attend.