



Northeastern University

English Department Alumni e-Newsletter

Department of English

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English Department Alumni e-Newsletter : Spring 2010

Northeastern University - Department of English

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English Department *Alumni* e-Newsletter

English Department, 406 Holmes Hall, (617) 373-4540, www.english.neu.edu

A Letter From the Chair



Each semester always seems like the busiest yet, but this Spring has been particularly full of news and changes. As some of you may know, for the past year the College of Arts and Sciences

has been in the process of being restructured into three smaller, independent colleges, and starting in July 2010, the English Department will be located in the new College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH).

As we settle into our new intellectual home, we will maintain existing interdisciplinary curricula, such as the dual majors with Cinema Studies (now in the College of Art, Media and Design) and Linguistics (now in the College of Science); the recently developed Minor in Rhetoric (with Communications Studies, now in the College of Arts, Media and Design); and the Graduate Certificates in Cinema Studies and Women's Studies (now also part of the CSSH) pursued by many of our Master's and doctoral students. I hope the new CSSH will be the site of many fresh collaborations and cross-fertilizations.

English Department faculty also continue to participate in research across departmental and college boundaries, such as Professor **Beth Britt**'s work with the Domestic Violence Institute at Northeastern University School of Law, in which she is investigating how law students at a domestic violence clinic are trained to listen to women and to understand their own roles as advocates. And a number of English department faculty and graduate students have been active, this year and last, in interdisciplinary Working Groups (on topics including Biography and Life Story, Identities, Sexualities, and Performance Arts and Social Engagement) through the university's still-new Humanities Center (<http://www.northeastern.edu/humanities/>), directed by our own Davis Distinguished Professor of American Literature, **Carla Kaplan**. You will find news about other scholarly activities and accomplishments of our faculty on page 7.

This Spring we also concluded a successful search for a new specialist in Shakespeare Studies. We are delighted to welcome **Erika Boeckeler**, PhD Harvard '07, to the department. Please see page 7 for more information about Professor Boeckeler. At the same as we have hired new faculty members, I'm pleased to say that we have had continuing success in creating them; please go to page 9 for news about the new positions taken by our recent PhDs.

Our alumni, both undergraduate and graduate, continue to find new challenges and occupations; I hope you enjoy reading this sampling of alumni achievements and will send us your own news via the e-Newsletter page on our website at <http://www.english.neu.edu/newsletter/>.

Laura Green, Department Chair

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Activism in the Library: *Akunna Eneh*

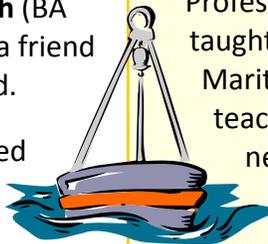
Although we assure our English majors that their versatile degree will open many doors, it's not always easy for a new graduate to know which door to open! **Akunna Eneh** (BA '05) had never thought about being a librarian until a friend brought up the possibility as commencement neared.

Akunna did some research and found that "It sounded like a logical link to what I had spent four years studying—literature, creative writing, music." Becoming a librarian also appealed to her strong ethic of service and activism. As she says, "The thought being a part of institutions that foster independent learning as well as recreation sounded like a positive contribution to society at large, in a small way. I especially wanted to be of service in this way for populations termed in the library world 'underserved'—often teenagers and poor and working class people of color—since that's the kind of environment I grew up in. Lastly, I wanted to work in a place where I'd always be learning."

After graduating from Simmons College with a Master's in Library Science, Akunna found a position as a "teen librarian" at the Dudley Branch of the Boston Public Library. Suddenly, she was deciding

"what materials to buy, what programs to hold to engage teens, how the teen space (which is not really a space, just an aisle) should be used." Being in charge took some getting used to, but now that Akunna has been in the position for over a year, she finds that the biggest challenge is how scarce the resources really are.

"Staffing is often an issue," she explains. "Instead of focusing on projects that can enhance service, you often feel like you're splitting your time between covering other branches, covering the circulation desk, managing community rooms. The limited number of computers means that you feel like you're guarding resources as opposed to facilitating access to them." *Continued on page 3*

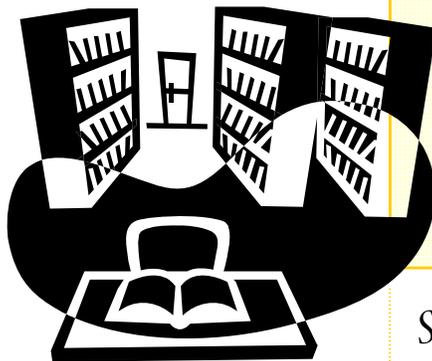


Maritime Adventures:

Kathryn Mudgett

Professor **Kathryn Mudgett** (PhD '01), has taught since 2006 at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, a college dedicated to teaching maritime professionals in engineering, business, marine safety, and environmental protection. Kathryn was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities in 2009.

Kathryn was pleased to find a tenure-track position in commuting distance of her South Shore home in the old shipbuilding town of Norwell. The position suits Kathryn's scholarly interests as well as her nautical surroundings: her Northeastern dissertation was "'Our Craft is a Lie': Dana, Melville, and Justice Story: Writing the Seaman's Tale in Nineteenth-Century Law and Literature." Kathryn also holds a JD, and she has a book on maritime law and literature forthcoming from AMS Press. *Continued on page 8*



Scholar of the Year: *Cory Grewell*

We invited **Cory Grewell** (PhD '08), teaching at Thiel College in Greenville, PA, to share some thoughts on the distinguished faculty award he recently received there. Cory writes:

"I was honored to be chosen for the Presidential Award for Faculty Scholar of the Year this year. The award does not often go to junior faculty, so I was especially proud to get it. When introducing me, the Dean said, 'I'm somewhat partial to this award, having won it myself. The difference is it took me 27 years to win it; it took Dr. Grewell two.'"

Continued on page 8

Undergraduate News

The English department recently approved changes to the undergraduate major curriculum. Based on ideas from students and faculty, the new curriculum will give students more choices when selecting courses, more opportunities for writing, and better preparation for advanced coursework. The new curriculum will take effect for students entering in Fall 2011.

We are especially excited about the new "tranhistorical/transnational" category, which will allow us to offer new courses focusing on topics such as transatlantic print culture, visual rhetoric, and postcolonial literature.

☞ *Contributed by Beth Britt, Head Advisor for Undergraduate Majors*

2010 Peter Burton Hanson Lecture and Writing Awards

In February, Ann Harleman visited as the yearly Hanson Lecturer. Ms. Harleman, author of several novels and short story collections, led a workshop for creative writing students in the department and gave a public reading.



Ann Harleman

In March, the department was pleased to celebrate the Hanson Writing Awards. **Francesca Therese P. Sales** received the prize in scholarly writing for "The Presence of Absent Characters in *The Virgin and The Gypsy* and 'The Dead,'" written for Dr. Bret Keeling in *The Modern Novel*; **Michelle Bilodeau** received the prize in creative writing for "Legends of Tommy the Brave," written for Dr. Barbara Shapiro in Fiction Workshop.

As always, the department thanks Lee and Eunice Hanson for their generosity in memory of their son, **Peter Burton Hanson (BA '91)**.

Activism in the Library

Continued from page 2

But interaction with the library's teen patrons brings its own satisfaction. "It can be difficult to engage teens," Akunna acknowledges, "so I feel lucky when I get to know a teen enough that they come to me with questions or ideas about what the library should do. I've also gotten to know some of the patrons who are not quite teens, but not quite adults, the 18-to-21-year-old folks. They help me a lot with anything from setting a wii to just getting to know what younger people are most interested in."

Akunna also reaches out through political activism, organizing around "pressing issues like housing foreclosures, cuts to public resources (schools and libraries here in Boston), wars that the US is involved in, and LGBT rights. I also organize political discussions through the socialist organization I'm in in order to get more people involved, figure out what solutions are."

Akunna did not always feel that Northeastern, as a school that seemed "very business and career driven," reflected her concern with social justice. But she acknowledges that in addition to taking some great courses, "I met activists for the first time at Northeastern, and that was an experience that helped shape my view of how the world works, where disparities come from, how ordinary people have come together in the past to stop injustice." Akunna expects to keep devoting her efforts to that goal, and whether or not she continues to work as a librarian, she vows, "I'll always be a library user."

☞ *Contributed by Laura Green, Department Chair*





Nicole Frankel (BA '10)

Cooperative Education News

We always assume, in Co-op Land (as one of my students once called it), that co-op experience helps graduates find a good job. Recently, I've been pleased to learn that this assumption is often true, particularly in this difficult economy. Several seniors have let me know that they will be accepting full-time positions with co-op employers post-graduation.

In addition, **Nicole Frankel**, a January 2010 graduate, emailed me to say, "Just wanted to let you know that yesterday I was offered an editorial assistant position working for a medical journal in relation to Brigham and Women's Hospital. There is no way whatsoever that I could've landed this job without my co-op experiences." Nicole completed two co-ops while at NU, one as an Editorial Assistant at Aptara, a publishing company, and the second as an Electronic Publishing & Performance Communications Assistant at MFS Financial Services.

Nicole recommends that job applicants make sure that the employer understands the quantitative and qualitative difference between co-op experiences and the traditional internship. She writes, "I can't imagine having graduated college without any experience, or with only a traditional internship or two under my belt. [E]ven though this position is what most would call my first 'real' job, I don't have a lot of the same anxiety and problems that many people in their first job would have."

She goes on, "I think there are many post-graduation co-op inspired success stories out there. It boils down to the fact that without co-op I would have had no direction whatsoever in what type of job I might want to pursue and no leveraging power or hard facts to demonstrate my abilities during the interviewing process."

If you are a "post-graduation co-op inspired success story", please share! As always, I can be reached at p.goodale@neu.edu. *Contributed by Pam Goodale, Co-Op Advisor*

News from The Writing Center

With nearly 1500 writing consultations per year, it's always busy in Northeastern's Writing Center. But this year is busier than most, thanks to a number of exciting activities and programs, including these:

National Day on Writing: The Writing Center celebrated the National Day on Writing on October 20th by turning 412 Holmes into a "Rumpus Room" in honor of *Where the Wild Things Are* and hosting a day of creative writing activities, including six-word memoirs and group storytelling.

Peer Consultant Program: A grant from the College of Arts & Sciences enabled us to continue our Peer Consultant Program for a second year, employing both undergraduate majors and Master's students as consultants.

Off-Site Consulting: To increase the visibility of Writing Center services, we have been sending consultants over to Stetson East, a freshman residence hall, on Monday evenings.

On-Line Appointment Scheduling: This Spring, we've begun using the online scheduling system "WC Online."

New Look: Finally, we've given the Writing Center a makeover. We've worked with a designer to develop new signs, posters, and flyers for our Holmes Hall and satellite locations. We think this new look reflects the vibrant, exciting place that the Writing Center has become. We look forward to further growth in the future.

Contributed by Chris Gallagher, Director of the Writing Program



Graduate Program Update

In the role of Graduate Coordinator, I'm happy to report that there is much evidence of a thriving intellectual culture and energy among the graduate students in the department. **Kurt Moellering** was a recipient of a competitive dissertation completion fellowship this spring and has now successfully defended his dissertation—a study of the “Green Atlantic” in the work of William Wordsworth and Henry David Thoreau. Both **Jennifer K. Martin** and **Michele Braun** are on the cusp of defending dissertations completed this semester. They will join the ranks of recent graduates **Tiffany Conroy** and **Lauren Kornhiser** who completed their doctoral degrees during the fall semester. For descriptions of their dissertations, please see our dissertation website page: www.english.neu.edu/graduate_studies/dissertations/.

The annual conference organized by the English Graduate Student Association in March was enormously successful, drawing on scholars both from within Northeastern and from the larger Boston community. Outside scholars who participated in the event remarked repeatedly that they were impressed by the energy of the students in the department and by the high level of professionalism, congeniality, and intellectual vitality on display.

As I write this, I am on my way to attend a conference at Brown University on women and archival studies that will feature graduate student **Anne Kingsley** on the program as well as myself and Professor **Marina Leslie**. I'm delighted to work side by side with our graduate students, and to see our students delve into Boston archives, present innovative work at conferences locally and nationally, and apply successfully for fellowships.

Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, Graduate Coordinator

EGSA Conference - On the Map

On March 13 and 14, the English Graduate Student Association (EGSA) hosted its 4th Annual Graduate Student Conference. This year's conference, “The Drawn Map,” focused on the dynamics of mapping and cartography within texts and within fields, genres, and disciplines. The conference featured over 30 papers written by graduate students from Northeastern, area universities, and participants from as far away as UC Davis and the University of London. Of particular note, **Andrew Hyzy** (MA '07) and **Alessandro Braidotti** (MA '06) returned to deliver papers and share in the discourse of the conference.



This year's keynote address was delivered by Martin Bruckner of the University of Delaware. Professor Bruckner spoke on ambulatory maps in eighteenth-century America and the cognitive effects of the circulation of such articles. On Sunday, Professor **Elizabeth Maddock Dillon** gave the faculty talk on scalar distortion in maps of the New World. Events drew to a close Sunday afternoon with a faculty roundtable on “Mapping the Archive” featuring professors from Northeastern, Tufts and UMass Boston discussing methodologies and archival theory.

The whole weekend was a great success, and we hope to make next year's conference even bigger. An extra thank you to all the faculty, students and alumni who helped in every small task. The conference is fast becoming the highlight of the graduate program's academic year, and we encourage all interested alumni to either submit an abstract next year, or come listen and participate in discussions. Full details on this event and all others are available through the Facebook page of the EGSA, and all alumni are welcome to join.

∞ *Contributed by Greg Cass, EGSA President*

In Memoriam: *Robert B. Parker & Paul C. Wermuth*

Robert B. Parker

It's a little dimmer in Boston. A brilliant light is out. A literary light. **Robert B. Parker**, extraordinarily successful author of dozens of books about Boston sleuth Spenser, as well as other novels and young adult stories, died on January 18, 2010 at his writing desk. There isn't a bookstore or airport in the free world

that doesn't have his titles on their shelves. And although he didn't put Boston on the map, he helped keep it there, making this great city accessible to the reading public - its glory and feisty independence, its rich and varied culture, its history and beloved teams. Collectively, his Spenser books are a symphony to this city by the sea.

I knew Bob Parker five years before he became Robert B. Parker. I met him on my first day as an instructor in the Northeastern English Department in September 1969. I was just out of grad school, and he was in his second year of teaching. He was to be one of my office-mates. The first time I saw him, he was standing in running shoes and swinging an invisible baseball bat while reciting a recipe for chocolate mousse to a colleague.

Bob Parker was probably the smartest person I've known and the quickest wit. His observations, never labored, were always incisive and sensible. His writing was brilliant and lean, which in part accounts for his immense popularity. Like his archetypal knight, Spenser, he was a fixer, a corrector. If you needed something, he was there - whether it was advice on children, carpentry, or someone to pick up the other end of a couch.

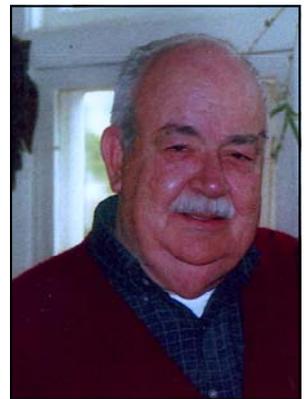
He wrote about the things that were most important to him: love, family, and human decency. Behind the scenes, he lived a quiet, simple, and ordered life, spending most of his days at his writing desk, surrounded by photos of Joan and his sons, his dog Pearl on the couch. It was a life well-composed, just as he had wanted it -

and perhaps his most successful creation. So was his death - in a brilliant flash at his keyboard.

Robert B. Parker taught at NU from 1968-1979. He became a full professor of English in 1976 before pursuing writing full-time in 1979.

≈ Excerpted from Gary Goshgarian's *Boston Globe* tribute, "A man of virtue and wit." A link to the full tribute can be found on our website at <http://www.english.neu.edu/newsletter/>.

Dr. Paul C. Wermuth, Sr., of Swampscott, passed away peacefully on October 26, 2009, at his home in Swampscott, MA. Dr. Wermuth was a noted scholar and author, and was Emeritus Professor of American Literature at Northeastern University, where he taught for 25 years .

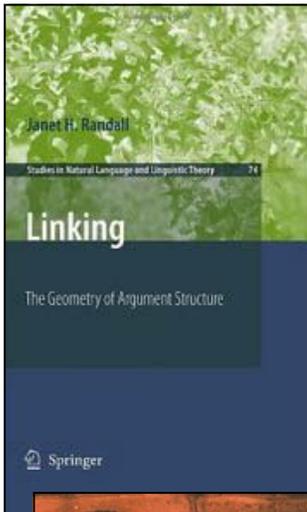


Paul C. Wermuth

Appointed in 1968 to the Chairmanship of the English Department at Northeastern University, Dr. Wermuth led the Department for seven years through a tumultuous era on college campuses. Through his implementation of rigorous academic standards, hiring and administration, he considerably enhanced the continued growth and professionalism of the Department. In 1975, he returned full-time to his first academic love, teaching writing and literature, until he retired in 1993.

A devotee of the intellectual life, Dr. Wermuth relished long debates and discussions on a variety of topics, including current events, literary value, authors, and social trends and issues; he particularly enjoyed being the devil's advocate to stimulate discussion. He also was a lifelong contrarian who was highly suspicious of fads and political correctness in all their forms.

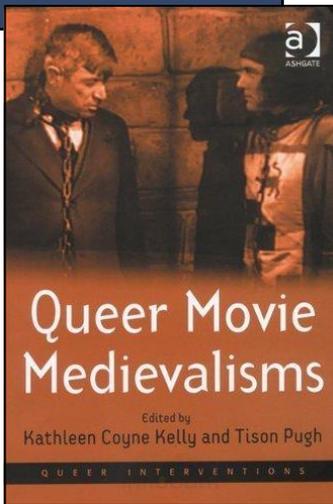
≈ *Contributed by Geoffrey P. Wermuth*



Recent Faculty Books

Professor Janet Randall, *Linking: The Geometry of Argument Structure* (Springer, 2010).

Professor **Kathleen Kelly**, co-editor with Tison Pugh, *Queer Movie Medievalisms* (Ashgate, 2009).



Faculty News in Brief

Professor Samuel Bernstein's musical drama, "Immortal Journey: Ponce de León & the Spring of Life," written with Guillermo Ortiz, received a staged reading at the Kirk Theater in New York this February, directed by Eric P. Vitale.

Professor Michael Booth

will be a fellow this summer at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

Professor Kimberly Juanita Brown will hold a Slavery, Abolition, and Resistance Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Gilder Lehrman Center, Yale University, this summer.

Professor Elizabeth Maddock Dillon will be an American Antiquarian Society-National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow during the 2010-2011 academic year.

Professor Chris Gallagher was the featured speaker at the Spring Writing Workshop of the UNC Charlotte Writing Project, April, 2010.

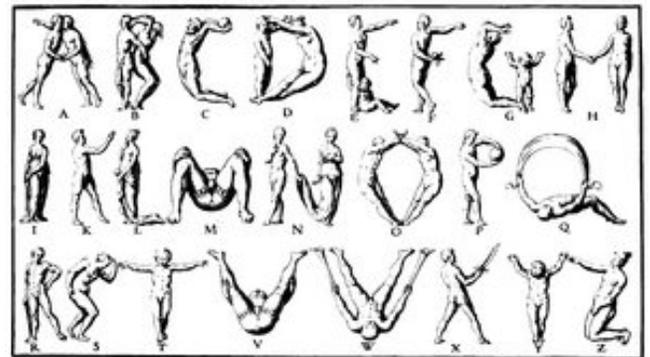
Professor Gary Goshgarian's thriller, *Skin Deep* (2008), has recently appeared in translation in Germany and the Netherlands.

Professor Patrick Mullen's book manuscript, *The Poor Bugger's Tool: Irish Modernism, Queer Labor, and Post-colonial History*, has been accepted for publication by Oxford University.

Erika Boeckeler

The English Department has completed a successful search for a Shakespeare specialist by welcoming new assistant professor **Erika Boeckeler**. Professor Boeckeler received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Harvard University in 2007, and was assistant professor of English at Kenyon College from 2007-2010. Her major fields of research are Early Modern Literature & Cultural Studies, including Shakespeare; history of the book; literacy and orality, and language theory, and her areas of expertise also stretch to sixteenth century German art history and early Slavic print culture. She is currently completing a manuscript, based on her dissertation, entitled "Playful Letters: The Dramatization of the Alphabet in the Renaissance." Professor Boeckeler has held a Folger Shakespeare Library short-term fellowship and while studying at Harvard received the Winthrop Sargent Prize in Shakespeare, the William Harris Arnold and Gertrude Arnold Weld Prize, and a Whiting Dissertation Completion Fellowship. We look forward to Professor Boeckeler's arrival!

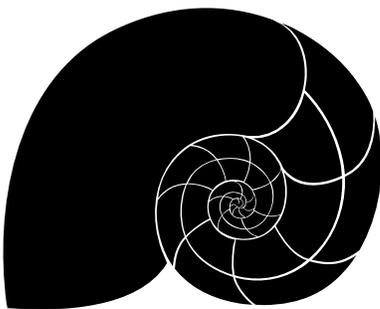
✎ Contributed by Laura Green, Department Chair



Scholar of the Year *Continued from page 2*

"I think that I have to thank the extensive teaching that graduate students do at Northeastern, which we often complain about, for my being able to produce sufficient research to earn the award. The reality is that producing research while carrying the load at a teaching school requires some pretty deft schedule juggling, and I think that the practice I got at Northeastern, balancing teaching responsibilities and the rigorous research practices required towards completion of the dissertation, was essential in forming scholarly habits that enable me to remain active as a scholar while teaching a full load. Teaching a full load, by the way, is its own reward. It is gratifying to be responsible for teaching a niche of the literary canon -- in my case Shakespeare and Literary Criticism -- at an institution. It doesn't take long for the teaching assistant feeling to morph into a professorial feeling, and the change is nice, though the first year of courses is a trial by fire that makes the dissertation process seem relatively relaxed. Having that behind me though, makes me feel like I've progressed to a new level. Teaching at a small liberal arts college, I am the resident expert in my field at the institution, and the respect that goes along with that status is rewarding. It's also nice to have my former mentors at Northeastern treat me like a colleague; they've been customarily gracious throughout."

✎ *Contributed by Cory Grewell*



Maritime Adventures

Continued from page 2

Teaching in a specialized maritime academy offers unique opportunities and challenges.

Although the college does not offer an English major, all students take introductory writing and literature courses, and Kathryn has developed courses in maritime-related fields such as war literature, survival literature, and literature of the sea, as well as teaching composition classes and an American literature survey.

"The students all dress in uniform," she notes. "We'll know it's really spring when they all show up for class in their short-sleeved uniforms by order of the regimental command. This is the only college where I have had a student apologize for being late to class by saying, 'Ma'am, I had to put the engine back together before I could leave the lab.'"

Kathryn has also recently become the founding editor-in-chief of a new scholarly journal based at Mass. Maritime, *The Nautilus: A Maritime Journal of Litera-*

ture, History, and Culture (www.maritime.edu/nautilus). She explains, "There is a real need for a scholarly maritime journal focusing on literature and history, as the premier such journal, the Peabody Essex Museum's *The American Neptune*, ceased publication several years ago." *The Nautilus* was introduced by a conference held in October 2009, with National Book Award winner Nathaniel Philbrick as the keynote speaker, and the first annual issue will appear in June 2010.

Looking back, Kathryn credits the English department with giving her a good grounding in literary theory and adds that "the greatest strength of the program was the faculty, some of whom I am still in contact with nine years after graduating, including Professors **Wayne Franklin** and **Francis Blessington**." Professor Franklin is on the editorial advisory board of *The Nautilus*, and Kathryn has used texts edited by him, and by **Mary Loeffelholz**, in her American literature classes. It's great to see the department's strengths in American literature continued—by land and by sea!

✎ *Contributed by Laura Green, Department Chair*

More Alumni Updates!*Undergraduate Program*

Jamie Cogar (BA Cinema Studies/English '07) has been admitted to the Master's in Film program at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

Margot Crary (BA '09) has been admitted to Boston University's Graduate School of Journalism.

Joshua Cristiano (BA '06) has been admitted to the MAT program at Simmons College.

Peter Franklin (BA '09) has been admitted to the Master's program at University of Toronto's Centre for Comparative Literature.

Erika Keith (BA '08) is Volunteer Coordinator for Planned Parenthood of Northern New England in Wiliston, VT.

Mary Little (BA '09) has been admitted to the Master's program in the Department of English at University of Washington.

Joanne Lynch (BA '78) is currently Assistant Dean of Admission at the University of Rhode Island (Kingston, RI). Joanne is co-leader of the Rhode Island Chapter of the NU Alumni Association.

Graduate Program

Joshua Benson (MA '09) will be teaching AP English and literature at Peak to Peak, a public charter high school in Colorado.

Katie Bercury (MAW '06) is Project Director for a Teaching American History grant, which provides professional development to teachers.

Philip Cavalier (MA '93, PhD State University of New York, Buffalo) was appointed provost and dean of Eureka College.

Tynes Cowan (MA '92, PhD The College of William & Mary) has been granted tenure at Birmingham-Southern College.

Rachel Jylkka (MA '09) has been in Alaska teaching both preschool and developmental English at a community college. She is returning to Massachusetts where she hopes to get secondary English certification and teach in a Boston-area school.

Jennifer Haney (MA '08) has just been accepted to Harvard Law School.

Amy Kaufman (PhD '06) accepted an assistant professor position in the Department of English at University of Tennessee Murfreesboro. Amy's essay, "Guenevere Burning," appears in the Spring 2010 issue of *Arthuriana*.

Benjamin Leubner's (PhD '09) essay, "Bedrock, Erosion, and Form" appears in the Spring 2009 issue of *20th Century Literature*.

Alexander Moffett (PhD '05) accepted an assistant professor position in the Department of English at Providence College, and will be specializing in Modern British and Irish fiction.

Erin Obermueller (MA '99, PhD St. Louis University) is Assistant Professor of English and Director of the Fellows Program at Concordia College-New York. She teaches courses in Irish literature, European Novel, and Victorian Literature. Erin has published an article in *Early Theater* and also in a guide to the British Short Story.

Tony Trigilio (PhD '97) recently published the poetry chapbook *With the Memory, Which is Enormous* (Main Street Rag's Editor's Choice Chapbook Series).

Jeff Westover (MA '92, PhD Boston College) has received tenure and promotion at Boise State University. His essay, "Wallace Stevens' Savage Commonplace," appears in the Fall 2009 issue of *The Wallace Stevens Journal*.



We are always eager for news from those of you out there who haven't yet shared. Please write us and tell us what you are up to!

Drop us a line via the link on the Alumni e-Newsletter website or via our Facebook group page:

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