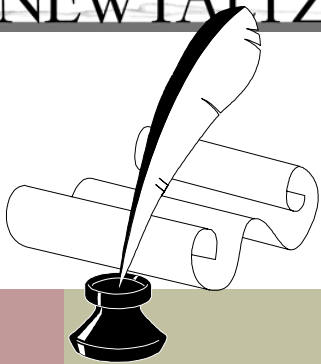


SPRING 2008

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
NEW PALTZ



THE UNIVERSITY WRITING BOARD

Write to Learn

Spring Symposium 2008 Cosmopolitanism: Found in Translation



Presenters Judith Halasz, Anita Gonzalez, and Michelle Woods

On Wednesday evening April 2, the University Writing Board held its spring symposium entitled “Cosmopolitanism: Found in Translation.” Reva Wolf (Art History) moderated the discussion, which addressed, among other questions, “How do we become cosmopolitan citizens and how do we learn from other cultures and traditions?”

Anita Gonzalez (Theatre Arts) opened the panel by reflecting on her experiences while directing the Brazilian play *The Promise Keeper*. She spoke about how student actors, set designers, and crew members discovered that in order to translate the play successfully to the stage they had to be sensitive to nuances of Brazilian culture.

“Translation is more than

words,” Prof. Gonzalez observed. “It means developing insider knowledge of a culture.” In addition to understanding the racial contexts of Brazilian culture, students had to learn about gender roles as well as the central role of the Roman Catholic Church in Brazilian society. The cast and crew found that theatre can be a powerful means of gaining “cosmopolitan understanding” concluded Prof. Gonzalez.

The next panelist, Judith Halasz (Sociology), examined the work of director Jean Luc Godard, focusing on his film *Masculine/Feminine*. In *Masculine/Feminine*, Godard critiques both the gender conventions of the French Left as well as the cinematic conventions of Hollywood and the consumer culture of America.

To Godard, the young people of the 1960s were “the children of Marx and Coca Cola.” Using a scene in which a beauty pageant winner, Miss 19, speaks directly into the camera as she responds to a series of questions put to her by the film’s protagonist, Prof. Halasz discussed Godard’s critical approach in more detail. According to Prof. Halasz, Godard’s use of the long take, in which the camera gazes unflinchingly at Miss 19, is employed by the director to critique not only the empty-headedness of the young woman and the American culture with which she is so enthralled, but also to comment on the sexist male gaze. “When we analyze films from other cultures, we often learn much

Continued on page 11

Celebration of Writing Day 2008

Each spring, the University Writing Board recognizes the effort students have put into course assignments and other writing endeavors by hosting the Celebration of Writing Day. Students from all disciplines submit work from a wide range of genres: creative writing, memoir/autobiography, non-fiction, experimental, and academic. This year, the Writing Board received fifty outstanding submissions from which twelve winners were selected. Excerpts from the winning entries appear in this section of the newsletter.



Jenna Bostock



Chrissy Corrigan



Lorie Grucella

2008 Celebration of Writing Day Winners

ACADEMIC WRITING

Constance Skedgell

Lorie Grucella

CREATIVE WRITING

Jenna Bostock

Shonet Newton

Chrissy Corrigan

Shana Krisiloff

Craig Sarich

MEMOIR/AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Eva Zanio

Jessica Jeffreys

NONFICTION

Kristen Henry

Kate Larson

James Leggate

More photographs appear on page 11



Kate Larson



Shana Krisiloff



James Leggate

JENNA BOSTOCK

THREE KATHARINES, TWO ANN-
NES AND A JANE FOR A WIFE

I loved him first, best.
To my exile I took
A handkerchief he loved.

She was never my woman
My brother's shared first wife

He was mine, entirely.
To my prison Tower he sent
Gilded gold and flowers.

She was never my woman
Her incest-I detest

He adored me, completely.
The baby stopped laughing
I grinned to greet death.

She was never my woman
He was never my son

I repulsed him, thankful.
Catch and release marriage
To my own monarchist.

She was never my woman

He did not love me,
His pet who danced
The way he always knew.

She was never my woman
My little girl, I killed

He craved my comfort
Gluttonous creature.
Anne Boleyn, remembered

They were never my women
I was too Great a man.

KATE LARSON

FATHERS

[...] I. Roger

Justin lives down the block from me and learned what a mid-life crisis entailed the difficult way. His father saw Justin's college savings fund fit to be blown on hardwood floors and marble countertops for the first level of their house. Now Justin is accumulating loans at a state school, and can't wear shoes inside the house at holidays. His dad spent the rest of the family savings on a private plane for himself. Justin could do nothing about the slow breeding of his father's discontent but keep mowing the lawn during summers and coming over to my house afterwards to talk about it.

His father recently went blind in one eye from stress. I received the news in a phone call. Immediately before the call, I had been handling cherry tomatoes straight from the garden. Thumbnail rough housing led to a stream of tomato innards spilt on my shirt, and consequently, a phone call testifying to a burst blood vessel behind his dad's cornea. Despite the apparent incriminations, I refuse to be held responsible. Cherry tomatoes are just sensitive. There is no hope for recovery in his dad's case. An eye patch, maybe.

Last summer, Justin came into my dining room holding a pair of his father's pants. His father was claiming fear of dimes and quarters, convinced that their ridges aimed to wear holes in his pockets. I had never found dimes and quarters to be a threat before, but I examined the pocket holes, and acquiesced. Upon further assessment, I had a few hundred reasons to believe that coins are anything but to blame. I couldn't imagine that his father could avoid the two denominations. Would he force nickels from clerks in exchange? Eschew coins altogether? Justin told me that his father points to the overhanging conspiracy of men's wallets as the culprit. For inexplicable reasons, formal wallets marketed towards men don't have change pouches. I wondered, are zippers not masculine? This must be where the issue of the pocket hole works its way into his father's idiosyncrasies. This is how sewing machines get their use and children get their validation. The pile of gold the Singer Corporation resides upon must have been founded on these ten and twenty-five cent pieces. Soon after, I was going to cut a slit in a tennis ball, fashioning it into a makeshift change purse, and deliver it to his father. It would take quite some time for a quarter to work its way through that. Since the "exploding eye disaster", however, I think it might be misconstrued as mockery, rather than a friendly effort.

II. James

Tracy's father found God right before God found him, and I spent a lot of time at her house while he was still in hospice. His departure came at a terrible time, and was followed by her mother's disintegration. Involved: a covert re-marriage, a complete disregard for paying taxes, and the purchase of many exotic birds. Tracy's home was abandoned soon following, and my basement now houses most of her things. Just before her father got sick, he got really concerned with Tracy making religious confirmation. I went through most of the steps with her,

save being confirmed, and did all the public service. I'm not Catholic, and I'm fairly certain that will never change, but the whole ritual seemed dumbly important to her father, and I was intrigued. In the end, I never really got to know him very well. His passing marked the collapse of most everything in Tracy's life. She's in San Francisco now, soon to be a graduate

of an actual clown college, and pantomiming with the best of them. [...]

III. Fritz

On a roadside in a small town of Maryland in the summer of 1996, my father abandoned my brother and me, ages 13 and 10 respectively. He wanted to hike to the highest point in the state, and promised us to be back within an hour. After three passed, I quickly learned how to flag down locals and cry into their shirts. My brother was slightly better composed. I administered a piece of clothing for search dogs to sniff, signed off on heat-seeking helicopters, and eventually, hours into the night, accepted a reunion in an ambulance; my father's head bloodied, mine bewildered, sniffly, forgiving. We were housed overnight in a cabin of delicate proportions. The next morning we had breakfast at a neighborhood diner where gossip concerning us had already spread. The weekly paper scrawled our story in the days following. Headlines read, "Dumbshit Father and Eloquent Children Bring Unprecedented Excitement to the Tedium of Garrett County", page A-4. Something like that, anyway. [...]

CHRISSY CORRIGAN
IMPLOSION

We watched an implosion
that June, stayed awake until
the old houses and curved brick
corner lots leaned on a muted pink sky
with a newness we drank in gulps,
our 6 am trail following
coffee cups crushed brown
next to dirt rubbed windows
where hospital scrubs hung
lazy, too green and watching.

A cluttered mass, we shared
only eagerness. Squashed
baseball hats and Saturday
shorts dim in the glow of morning,
mingled quiet with tripods dancing
away from eager hands, metal
footsteps frantic on cement.
Hair curled wild around
our pale faces where sleep
hadn't touched.

We pilgrimed towards the end
of the block, where it rose
without grace. Did it know?
Somewhere, just far enough,
it was framed in an unscratched win-
dow
where life dripped in idle plastic
on the other side, bending
away from the rising light
flooding bones without tissue,
hundreds of eyes with no focus.

Minutes ticked, one and then
another, beeping foreign rhythms
and the tapping of our own
rocking feet, toes tipped and
unsteady. We knew not
how to mourn
a cenotaph.

It came from the bottom,
hot measured blasts
that swallowed our ears
and throats. The next seconds
held everything; in instead of out,
it was either the end
or the absence of wind.
We clung to goodness
as we watched the fall,
shock coming like the size
of your own hands
in a photograph.

JAMES LEGGATE
UP THE PUNKS

Going to see a punk show for the first time in a few months, I get off the PATH train at 9th Street and walk east to 2nd Avenue, then down to Rivington, where ABC No Rio is located at number 156.

I get in line on the sidewalk in front of the graffiti-covered building. I'm feeling a bit awkward since I don't know anyone. The charge to see the four bands play is \$6. They stamp my hand, and I walk inside the "collectively-run center for art and activism." It's the kind of place they'd love in Rent.

"Besides the main room for bands and art shows," a girl explains to me, "there is a dark room, print studio, zine library, and even a computer lab. Out back they have a garden where I tripped on shrooms once when Witch Hunt played here. I thought they were really awesome, so I bought both their records."

The garden, which is full of holes, moldy chairs and graffiti, is a social place for everyone before the show and between bands. I join a conversation about *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: Secrets of the Ooze*.

"You know," I tell the three punks, who are all dressed vaguely like Travis Bickle, "the first one's better. They made the second one more family friendly, like when they used all those toys in the first fight instead of their weapons."

"Yeah," one guy agrees, "they couldn't even use the nunchucks much because they had to edit them out for the UK version."

I'm fitting in even though I don't have a spiky belt or a mohawk or anything.

After the first two bands play, I am feeling a bit sick from the heat. I go to get a bottle of water while the headlining band sets up at the end of the room; the third band is stuck in traffic. There is no stage here, just an understanding that no one runs into the band, Pisschrist, on tour from Australia. These guys have toured all over the world: Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, and most of Europe. They even played at Copenhagen's Ungdomshuset autonomous community space before it was demolished by the Faderhuset cult.

The drum begins its steady primal beat. The singer spins his arm, pointing a finger in the air. He shouts into the microphone, but the roar discharging from the guitar and bass makes his voice inaudible. A circle forms in the middle of the crowd, and a few maniacs begin dancing around the circle, violently kicking and jutting elbows to the racing rhythm of the music. The floor is shaking. A short muscled guy, his mohawk and beard dyed the same blood red, runs into me. In my short absence from punk, I'd forgotten how wild shows could get. These animals are out of control.

The singer, shirtless, runs into the crowd and joins the others skanking around the circle, his un-spiked mohawk flopping. He trips over the microphone cable and slams flat on his face. He gets up and proudly holds up his tooth for all to see. Someone picks up this little kid, who can't be more than 12 or 13, and with the kid hanging over his shoulder, begins spinning faster and faster until he loses his footing and crashes into onlookers. Someone picks up the singer and does the same thing. The two whirling horrors collide, scattering bodies all over the floor. It's getting hotter and hotter in the room. I feel like I'm going to vomit or faint. While my head is turned, another lunatic charges and mashes me into the wall.

The band finishes playing and the crowd disperses. I don't care about seeing the other band. I flee into the street, my shirt stained with the singer's blood. [...]

KRISTEN HENRY
IS VIOLENCE THE NEW SEX?

Today's movie theaters are covered in blood. A new wave of horror films, dubbed by critics as "torture porn" or "gorno," has risen to great popularity. People come flocking to the theaters in anticipation of torture, half-naked, screaming women, and lots of blood. These films are so utterly disturbing some have even caused people to faint in screenings around the world.

Torture porn is a new genre, and the films are simply uber-disgusting, cheaply made and wildly successful. The majority have been brought to the public by a group of directors termed the "Splat Pack": Leigh Whannell and James Wan (*Saw*), Alexander Aja (*The Hills Have Eyes*), Eli Roth (*Hostel*, *Cabin Fever*), and Rob Zombie (*The Devil's Rejects*, *Halloween*). Their films, generally made extremely cheap with no-name stars, nevertheless proceed to become blockbusters. [...]

People across the U.S. are condemning these films, claiming that they are using violence as a sexual act, that they are just torture for torture's sake. They present violence in almost a voyeuristic manner, and proceed to eroticize it. Critics like Rob Driscoll point fingers at the Splat Pack, accusing them of "making a mint from producing amoral entertainment for sensation-hungry teenagers, numbing their minds with the films' sick-making voyeuristic violence." This is understandable, considering one particular scene in Roth's latest film *Hostel II*, where a girl is hung naked over a bathtub, while a naked woman lies below, slicing her with a sickle and bathing in her blood. (This is what Roth sentimentally refers to as an "eyegasm" scene.) [...]

Then why are these films so popular, and why are they making these formerly unknown production companies so much money? In an interview with *The Sunday Times*, Craven has the answer, "There's definitely a challenge about it. These movies ask 'How tough are you?' and 'What are you doing in this theater?'" But is it really the challenge of being able to watch the film without shrinking away and covering your eyes? Or are people really "getting off" on the violence and torture they see? Maybe it doesn't matter, but as long as "torture porn" continues to make money, it will surely continue to thrive. And, to quote the genre's pioneer, "Oh yes, there will be blood."

LORIE GRUCELLA
THE ROLE OF FREEDOM IN SOCIETY

Freedom is a word with so many possible meanings: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of petition, the Bill of Rights, America, financial freedom, the ability to make your own choices, moving out from home for the first time, the freedom of doing something you love, and many more. Freedom has been the cause thousands of people have died fighting for, both throughout the history of America and many other countries in North America, Europe, and all around the world. Freedom is more than just a nice word or idea; it is a way of life, one that has defined this country since its very beginnings. As shown in society today, as well as in fictional books like *A Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, freedom is an important aspect of society both as far as how much freedom should be available versus how much authority should be dictated. The quote that there is "more than one kind of freedom... Freedom to and freedom from," represents these two ways freedom can be available in society, either freedom to choose, or freedom from choice (Atwood 24). Just the same, the society in *A Handmaid's Tale* appears to dictate many areas of its people's personal lives, and their idea of "freedom from" is anything but "free."

Governments throughout history have claimed authority over certain freedoms for the good of the whole nation. The idea is that without such authority, there would also be no protection, and people need the security such authority provides, such as providing protection by keeping order, and making natural resources available to everyone. This is also the case in the narrative of *A Handmaid's Tale*, taken to the extreme, where the government's influence and control can be found in almost every aspect of its people's lives on the basis of this "protection." The government, known as the Republic of Gilead, began this control in response to a war and growing infertility problems due to atomic power plant accidents, in order to keep up and maintain the population. Still, one has to wonder if the Republic of Gilead's complete power is beneficial or even necessary, though the Aunts in the book (who represent government authority) constantly emphasize that it is, for the good of the whole nation. [...]

Compared to our society today, with more personal "freedom to" be responsible for our own lives, the Aunt's version of a "freedom from" society might not sound so bad, a care free life with every worry and responsibility cared for. Other societies in the past thought this once too. This is the idea of a utopia, a perfect society, one where there is supposedly no crime, no violence, no suffering. [...] In theory, like any perfect society, the idea of "freedom from" responsibility may sound nice, even attainable (just as the Aunts say it is), but the Aunts only tell the reader half of the story, because how the Handmaids are treated by the Aunts are entirely different than the wonderful life the Aunts say they have. [...]

SHONET L. NEWTON
BLESSED BASTARD

Blessed bastard you were born
in morning, at the first of light.
Around your head a crownless thorn,
within your eyes a ready bite.
Mama lay you in the hay
and prayed in peace that you'd be safe.
She watched and waited through the day.
In her heart a terrible ache
for a man that never came,
but left instead for another land.
Your birth alone was to blame
for her loss of that man.
So cry aloud once you wake,
to a love lost for your sake.

CONSTANCE SKEDGELL
FROM GAUNT THRUSH TO MYSTERIOUS SWANS

Two poets, separated by 16 years, write poems in which a man observes a bird at dusk and is changed by that encounter. Both poems have an elegiac air; both mourn the loss of a sense of aliveness. In style, neither work departs radically from 19th century poetic conventions. Given their surface similarities, how can we teach Thomas Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush" and W. B. Yeats's "The Wild Swans at Coole" so that students achieve an understanding of their deeper differences? [...] To tease out these crucial differences, students will look at how each poem's meaning reflects its cultural context: in the case of "The Darkling Thrush," a sense of universal deadness with the possibility of renewal; in the case of "The Swans at Coole," a loss of vitality and "sore[ness]" of heart for which there is no remedy (14). [...]

Hardy paints a typically Victorian, detailed picture for us, a scene from which we readers are meant to grasp a mood: We see the bleak, "spectre-gray" (2) landscape of

a "desolate" (3) winter twilight. But the picture goes beyond Victorian descriptiveness; The description is etched in acid, with a harshness and sense of disorder and even brokenness that anticipates 20th century attitudes toward the world: "tangled stems scored the sky"—that is, they rip at the sky—"like strings of broken lyres," an

image of senseless destruction, of waste, and suggesting an end to music, here a stand-in for all beauty and tenderness (5-6). Hardy reveals the real meaning of the gloomy setting as he likens the landscape to the previous "Century's corpse outleant" (10). Not only is death upon the land, but this corpse hangs half out of its coffin – a grotesque, Modernist image that conveys things out of their proper places, and suggests that the stench of death intrudes almost obscenely into life. Hardy reflects the fin-de-siècle sense of the world ending as the century ends. But he goes further, anticipating the Modernist sense of sterility as he questions if regeneration of the human spirit is possible in the new century: "The ancient pulse of germ and birth/Was shrunken hard and dry" (13-14). [...]

But at least "Thrush" suggests the possibility of hope for a renewal of the human spirit. Not so Yeats's "Swans." [...] In both works, nature is no longer that infinite reservoir of symbols of the ideal; the very notion of an ideal has been thrown in the cultural wastebin. Hardy's thrush is aged, gaunt and frail – we guess it, too, will soon be a "corpse" like the "Century" (10); while Yeats's swans rise and "...scatter wheeling in great broken rings/Upon their clamorous wings" (11-12). Broken rings...clamour. Nature is "broken" in both poems, reflecting a human world of broken ideals and beliefs. [...] [T]he swans' beauty only pushes the speaker in the Yeats poem into the past and a meditation on a long-ago time when their beauty could lift his view of the world: "All's changed" (15) reflects the speaker in the poem's saddest phrase, "since I, hearing at twilight,/The first time on this shore/...Trode with a lighter tread" (15-16, 18). The speaker's present? It holds only "sore[ness]" of heart (14). [...]

How do these poets' different responses to birds reveal their views of the link between nature and man? In "Thrush," the age-old poetic connection between nature and man still holds: Man can learn something about the human world from the natural world. But nearly a generation later, in "Swans," the man-nature connection grows cold: Nature's beauty provokes merely regret, sadness and recognition of loss. Now man is more powerfully estranged from nature. Describing the drifting swans, Yeats calls them "mysterious" -- nature can no longer be read (26). It is impenetrable. Even the pleasure the poet takes in the swans' beauty – seemingly the only pleasure left him – is ephemeral. In the poem's last lines, he recognizes wearily that he will "awake some day/To find they have flown away..." (29-30). [...]

We end by asking our students to compare the two endings. Hardy closes "Thrush" with a statement, albeit a tentative one:

"That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware" (29-32).

But Yeats ends "Swans" with a question: "Among what rushes will they build,/...Delight men's eyes when I awake some day/To find they have flown away?" (27, 29-30). He doesn't state a truth. He can't. To a Modernist, there are no truths to be stated. There are only questions.

[...] Today, I'm told that I'm going to learn something about Poland. All of my life I've been learning about Poland. Since I don't live there it is a constant topic for me. I need to be caught up on a few thousands of years of history and misery. But, despite my uncle, Poland and I are "ok." I like Poland because she doesn't talk to me and because she doesn't throw books at me. She doesn't need to. Instead, she opens her arms and her robe is made out of interwoven layers of fields that are filled with gold and they change to lilacs and lavender. She has a necklace of berries and birds sit on her robe, butterflies crown her head and when they flap their wings gold dust falls and gets trapped in her eyelashes. The stones in her bracelets are made from a different castle, from a different legacy. Her glow is triumphant but her eyes are sad, sometimes. If you look deep into her pupils during a dark spell it's snowing in them, reminding others of distressing times. She lets me see her and really that's all I want. She's beautiful. No one needs to tell me what she is. I don't need to be taught that there is something mysterious about mist or holy about sunrises. Poland stretches her arms out and I see gold fields and castles that have gold rooftops.

But, today I'm going to learn something about Poland, I'm told. [...]

My uncle drawled on that we were going to the museum of "this" and the fountain of "that" right after we visited his father. "Now, you're going to get a real education" he nodded with the deepest satisfaction. My aunt turned around and asked me a question, using a big word that I didn't know (I refused to inquire for the meaning) about a place that I hadn't been to. When she realized I had no clue of what she was implying she looked worried and used a copious amount of large words, and at a more frantic pace to explain. [...]

When we were inside Dziadek Henya's apartment my uncle left me alone. Henya was his father and he was more Irish looking than Polish. My job was to help carry the tea from the kitchen and set up the table with cakes and deserts. I'm fine with jobs like this. It means that I don't have to talk and people see that I'm busy and leave me alone. The only time the cup ever shakes on the saucer is when my uncle watches me. He is waiting for me to make a mistake. [...]

I was about to leave the room but my thigh scraped against a small dresser in the room. A box dropped onto the floor [...] I could not resist taking the cover off and felt that it was papery and old. Inside there were small black and white pictures of children standing in the snow. They stood forever framed in the picture, bundled in wool clothes. There were images of gardens,

farms and on the back most of them were dated in watery blue ink from the 40's. I came across a few strange pictures. The first one had a series of odd shapes all over it. I peered down on it adjusting my glasses. There was a messy, hilly mound in the left hand corner of the photo. Behind the mound was a boring, dusty abandoned looking house with very straight wooden paneling. The picture was unsettling because I felt like I was misreading something. The chaotic mound clogged a part of the view of the house. It was filled with random garbage like clothes, torn blouses, pale leggings, shirts, pants and hands. [...] My mouth went a little dry. I followed the fingers to a pale head, then to a pair of thin, frail legs popping out from the mound, and then my eyes moved to more hands and more hands. Shoulders burst out from the pile like butterflies from cocoons. Their faces were thin and gaunt and they looked drowned. White shirts were really rib cages gutting out like warnings. It wasn't waste but it was a garbage mound full of people. Skin morphed into skeletons and the mound was mixed with skulls. There must have been over twenty skulls.

"Eva! What are you doing?" My uncle grabbed the picture from me and observed it with a quiet frown. He looked down at me with sparkling blue eyes and I braced myself for the worst. The blue of his eyes looked much deeper than normal. I waited for an explosion but he simply took the box from me and closed the lid on it. [...] "Now, we're going to fill you." He pulled out from the parking lot and started to drive towards the museum. "Today, you're going to learn something about Poland."

SHONET L. NEWTON
SLAG

The metals have lost their preciousness.
Reeking in failure of their tarnish,
their ebbing strength cannot coalesce
and from rocky fortitudes will vanish;
not worth a fraction of their weight.
Weightless in a system of superficial lust
such mercurial molds will never satiate
our greed. Mountains made of rust
recant their splendor, they retract
their shine like waning sunlight
yielding to night. Stones that lacked
adornment will never be contrite,
for Industry's clock is ticking again,
tocking malignancy to no end.

QUITTING

BY CRAIG SARICH

I pulled up late to the funeral home in Mahopac, the one by the lake. It looked like just about every funeral home I had ever seen. Trees lined the canopy covered brick walk; men in dark suits hung around out front and talked about the weather, wakes and how nice weather is a good sign from the spirit of the deceased. I felt as though I was walking through a tunnel into a dream. Maybe it was a dream. I'd wake with a phone call from him. "Chuck," I'd say, "I just had a dream that you died and I never got that twenty dollars you owe me. It would be just like you to use death as an excuse not to pay me back."

The man at the door gave me a nod; his expression said he understood my grief. Chuck's mom, Marie, had put me in charge of getting the old crew together. Jim and Matt would be here for sure. Tom would be late because he had a meeting. Simone said Phil couldn't make it because he had some kind of training class at work so she brought Becca in his place. John made an excuse about needing sleep once he found out Becca was coming. He told me that Jude was back in jail again and no one knew how to get in touch with Pete. Andy wasn't coming because one of his babies' mothers might show up and ask for her child support. It's amazing how inventive some people become once they find out someone has died. "You know, I'm busy this week. If Chuck could die again next week around Thursday, that would work better for me." Maybe it was the approach. I should have said something about getting together for drinks and We haven't seen each other, and We owe it to ourselves to stay in touch. Then they'd say, We wouldn't miss it for the world, and ask for the time and place. I'd give them the address for the funeral home and tell them Chuck was buying. I bet every one of them would show with a friend or two in tow. [...]

One of the last times we spoke before [Chuck] was back on the hard drugs, he told me, "I've gotten everything I've every wanted and I've never been more miserable. Each time I win at something, I get this great feeling. The next time I do it, it doesn't feel the same. I have to keep winning and do ten times more than the last time to get that feeling back. Most of the time I do better but fall short and I feel like shit. When you finally get what you've always dreamed and you're still not happy, you find out the problem is you. I never thought I was the problem." [...]

I went out to dinner with the family after the wake. I thought the conversation would be light and we'd talk about fond memories. Everyone would compete for who was closest to Chuck or had the cutest story or who had actually seen his suicide coming. To my surprise, it turned into a court trial with everyone trying to assign blame like Tom Cruise in *A Few Good Men*. Marie said it was her fault since she couldn't afford the proper environment to raise him. Brian thought he was to blame because he never called back after Chuck hung up on him that last time. Chuck's other brother Jake was accusing everyone of not doing enough even though he had been an absentee brother for three years. Aunt Arlene said it was society and the trade deficit and global warming. "If it wasn't so warm, Chuck might still be alive. You know he didn't have air conditioning. This is just like JFK. If we can't stop the president from dying, how can we stop a thirty year old who can buy drugs off the street? That Jack Kennedy was a good man he was."

Who is to blame? Is anyone to blame? Could we all be blameless and it be just one of those things? Had anyone thought to blame Chuck? I don't remember anyone jamming the drugs into him. Maybe this was his fault, or his will. Could he have willed himself dead?

I went into the bathroom to get some cold water on my face. I looked down and for the life of me, I couldn't figure out how to turn the water on. I must have looked like Rainman. Is it a twist-on or one of those motion sensor ones? Or one of the spring-loaded ones where I can only get one hand under it at a time. I was waving my hands around the faucet and running them over it like I had three wishes coming. Faucets suck!

Could I have changed things? What if I had made that last phone call or stopped by one more time? I would have showed up in the nick of time to save the day, just like in the movies. But maybe this was supposed to have a sad ending. I opened the bathroom door and wondered if I had done enough. Marie was waiting there for me. I stood there, frozen, like Lot's wife. She leaned forward and threw her arms around me.

The drugs had gotten Chuck again. A drug induced suicide. Marie asked me to be a Pallbearer. As we moved up the tree lined walk, I pulled a shop rag out of my suit pocket and rubbed it on Chuck's casket, then I tied it around the handle.

A WEDDING STORY
JENNA BOSTOCK

AURA; ANYA; DUSARA (Hindu: "Other; other; other")
SHANA KRISILOFF

It was better this way.

That's what everyone said – it made the most sense. And now, I believe them.

I didn't always. I didn't believe them when Neela caught Malaria and died in a week. I didn't believe them when Bo nearly killed me, his elephant feet narrowly missing my screaming face. I didn't believe them when, at twelve, the ape-man raped me and kept me as his sex slave for three days before anyone noticed. And when I was sold like a tattered sari, I laughed bitterly at those familiar parting words: "It is better this way."

I can still see her, my mother, crouching in front of me, her skirt parted. She wasn't wearing any underwear – why would she? She'd just take it off in a few minutes anyway, when her three-thirty arrived, hard and ready. I remember her face: round and luminous like the moon, the gold hoop in her nose glinting in the sunlight, and her deep dark eyes – those eyes could see into the depths of your soul, they could haunt you.

"It is better this way," she said to me, "you'll find a place to belong, yes?"

I knew that it was better – for her at least. At seventeen, my mother had half as many customers a day, and my presence was taking her heart out of her work. I was distracting her, making her feel guilty for not being more of a mother to me. After all, a four-year-old living in a brothel was one thing, but a four-year-old who refused to leave her mother – even when she was doing business - was another.

I would see them, those men, following her behind the colored curtain with Mickey Mouse smiling – it had been my bed sheet until the flowered one needed to be replaced when a customer pulled too hard. I would sit at the card table near the open window, laundry fluttering, always fluttering in the corner of my eye. I ate naan and honey –Madame of the Brothel shaking her head over the top of her sewing as she waited for the end of the liquid transaction.

I hated them all and my mother knew it. She could see it in my eyes as I watched them leave, tying their pants closed and smiling dumbly into the air. She said there was a devil lurking in my eyes, waiting to be set loose. My tiny fists would clench so hard when I saw them give my mother one last touch, that tiny cuts would split my palm and blood would stain the new dress Madame had sewn for me.

My mother was afraid. Afraid of how I lashed out in my sleep, how I would bend myself into untraditional shapes and angles, trying to merge myself with the wall against our bed.

So when the Raj Kamal Circus came to Bombay in the summer of 1973, my mother found a way to put me to good use. The Circus Master was happy to take me. He said they were always looking for a good contortionist, the younger the better.

"All these older girls run off with an acrobat or two before three months have gone. And what can I do? I have to compensate and change the whole routine. No, no, a young one is always better; always worth the money."

I cried when my mother left me with the Circus Master, his belly hiding his small feet from the passer by. But I could see them, bare and decorated with henna and gold. I didn't want to be with this fancy-footed man. If I wasn't there, watching the curtain closely with my two strange eyes, who would? Who would protect my mother now?

Holding Sweetie the Puppy – my mother's parting gift – I followed the strange man into the dust and sweat of Bombay. I felt Sweetie's soft, white fur against my neck, and I wondered, in my four-year-old mind, where he had come from. Where he belonged. [...]

We were married when we were five.
The engagement wasn't long
Bryan said I do and then it was do I?
My sister, maid of honor sang our song

My wedding dress, my mothers
His tuxedo was for play.
We danced and laughed, aflutter
Till the honeymoon next day.

Honeymoon is over, I heard as mother
cried-
Suddenly what's mine was his
Johns crime to Beth-she died.
My father in law a murderer, death sublet
his kiss

Instead of a spouse I gained a brother,
I thought it fun and games
Instead of a husband I gained a friend,
He has never been the same

JESSICA JEFFREYS

I found her standing by the backdoor. She was wearing one of the head scarves my mother had gotten her when she didn't have enough hair to comb anymore. This one was pink fleece. It was bunched up with elastic in the front, right over her forehead. It was supposed to make it easier, so that she didn't have to tie a knot, but made it as wrinkled with worry as the rest of her face.

"Whatcha doin'?" I asked.

She turned to look at me, very slowly, almost reluctantly, as though by making her turn away from the day's last few dying rays of sunlight, I was depriving her from some vital force. As though her skin had grown transparent enough that she was desperately trying make up for the lack of her own energy by absorbing it from the sky. It was like asking a wilting flower to turn away from the sun.

She looked at me, her deep eyes clouded with the kind of pain and sorrow that only doubt in a lifetime's worth of faith could summon. Like every pill and round of chemo were weeds whose roots were slowly cracking and growing in the gaps she had never before seen in her Roman Catholic foundation. Her eyes were watery, and it was hard to tell if she was looking at me or through me, trying to find some answer she knew I could not possess.

"God is punishing me," she said.

And I looked at her, this woman who had raised my father, who had watched him raise four children. This woman who had held me as an infant, and watched me become this half-grown kid who shared her eyes and her feet but knew nothing about her. I saw for the first time a woman who had waited for and married her soldier, lived fifty years with him and then lost him to a different battle. Now she was slowly surrendering in a fight she had never prepared for. And while she was doing everything possible, the medicine, the doctors, the hospitals, she even dutifully used the oil paints my mother had bought her; all she wanted was for the pain and waiting to end.

And I wanted to tell her something, anything...anything wise or insightful or comforting. I searched through all my mental piles of movies and books and cartoons and tried to remember what you were supposed to say to your grandmother who was dying of cancer. I searched every last pink streaked cloud and found nothing.

CHRISSEY CORRIGAN
REVISION

When I still believed in you,
I lived for the spaces

between your words. I collected
them and made my case,

stumbling over my own syntax
which made circles around you.

You were an idea then,
a story I'd written over on to itself,

and I was covered in the
exposition, scrawled in the eager

fade of ink all over my arms
and legs, forehead and eyes,

dripping from my tongue. I spit
it out in fast black drops that

hit the ground and seeped slow
into buried soil, anticlimax.

I took what was left and drew
your face; perfect, with no mouth.

Instead, we watched the sun set as I stood beside her, shivering against the autumn chill... [....]

I was away at camp when I found out my grandmother had come to stay with us. My mother's letter read, "Gammy is visiting us a while, she might come to live with us." I didn't think much of it at the time. My grandfather had died about a year earlier, and I guessed my father was worried about her. I didn't know that her cancer had come back. [....]

So we made her a room. Not that we built it, but we made her a place, emptying two rooms with previous lives so that my grandmother could have her own space. My father convinced her to sell her house on Staten Island. It was like she was already gone, and he was trying to get a jump start on cleaning up the mess. She crammed as much furniture as she could into her tiny bedroom and sitting room, trying to save everything. I think if she could have fit her entire house in those two rooms, she would have. Finally, she admitted she had everything she could find a place for, and so we placed an advertisement in the paper. Everything that remained in her house was for sale. My father sold her two kilns to a man in a green pickup truck, for fifty dollars each. The guy kept saying what a great deal it was...my grandmother refused to look at either of them

She didn't really look at any of us that day. My parents had told me that whatever we didn't sell we had to get rid of, so I did my part. I put my yard sale skill together with my hatred of moving, and practically gave away all the things my grandmother had worked her whole life to build. We were the bulldozers, crashing through the ceramic forest, while she sadly watched on... [....]

Continued from page 1 about our own culture,” observed Prof. Halasz.

The final speaker of the evening was Michelle Woods (English) who discussed the complexity of the act of translating. Quoting Robert Frost, Prof. Woods noted that “poetry is what gets lost in translation,” adding that certain cultural sensibilities are “untranslatable.” Prof. Woods pointed out that translating can be as much a linguistic process as a political statement. The Irish poet Seamus Heaney, for example, made the decision to use Irish English when translating *Beowulf* rather than British English, which he regards as an artifact of colonialism. “Cultures are constructed through language,” said Prof. Woods. “Perhaps we should start from the premise that we don’t understand each other.” By focusing on untranslatability, “we might have a better idea of how to go forward” in becoming more truly cosmopolitan.

“Translation is more than words,” Prof. Gonzalez observed. “It means developing insider knowledge of a culture.”



Moderator Reva Wolf with Judith Halasz

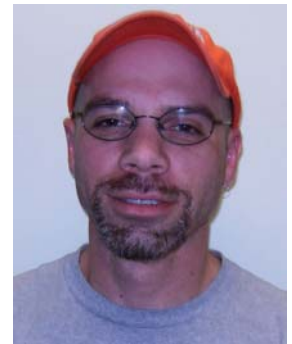
More Winners from Celebration of Writing Day 2008



Kristen Henry



Jessica Jeffreys



Craig Sarich



Constance Skedgell



Eva Zanio



Shonet Newton

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

THE UNIVERSITY WRITING BOARD AND WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSES

What Is the Writing-Intensive Requirement?

As part of the GEIII program, a writing-intensive course is required. The requirement stipulates that “to graduate, every student must complete successfully at SUNY New Paltz at least one writing-intensive course.”

What Makes a Course Writing-Intensive?

Writing-Intensive courses provide a variety of opportunities for students to reflect on and to analyze course material through writing. In addition, these courses encourage students to engage in the processes of critiquing and revising their writing. Writing assignments may be both formal and informal. Sample writing-intensive course syllabi can be found on the University Writing Board’s website.

Where Can I Get Help with Designing and/or Proposing a Writing-Intensive Course?

The University Writing Board can assist faculty in a variety of ways. The Writing Board:

- Conducts workshops that introduce the philosophy of writing as a mode of learning.
- Provides opportunities for faculty members to share ideas about and approaches to writing.
- Sponsors seminars and programs on writing-across-the-disciplines.
- Provides ongoing support for faculty members’ efforts to make courses writing-intensive.
- Recommends courses that have been proposed by faculty members as writing-intensive.

Members of the Writing Board

2007-2008

Members:

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Peter Kaufman

Lee Bernstein

Maureen Morrow, Website

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Laura Dull

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Web:

<http://www.newpaltz.edu/WritingBoard/>

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University Writing Board

The University Writing Board Mission

The purpose of the University Writing Board is to encourage and to support the development and the maintenance of writing-intensive courses in all academic disciplines at SUNY New Paltz. Fundamental to this program is the premise that writing constitutes an important means of learning in all disciplines. Writing is a complex, cognitive process that involves translating thoughts to words, as well as questioning, reflecting, and analyzing in order to seek clarity and meaning. Writing is a means by which a person discovers, creates, and communicates knowledge.

To support the writing-intensive program, the Writing Board:

- Conducts workshops that introduce the philosophy of writing as a mode of learning.
- Provides opportunities for faculty members to share ideas and approaches.
- Sponsors seminars and programs on writing-across-the-disciplines.
- Provides ongoing support for faculty members' efforts to make courses writing-intensive.
- Recommends courses that have been proposed by faculty members as writing-intensive.

The University Writing Board 2007-2008 Theme: Global Literacies

[The Writing Intensive Requirement](#)
[Submitting a Course for WI Designation](#)
[Workshops, Retreats, and Other Events](#)