



"I think storytelling has the power to sort of walk you through it, and put yourself in the shoes of another person. If it takes ten to twelve hours to read a book, then you have a depth of experience and understanding that you wouldn't get from short bits on TV or sound bites and such."

—Dave Eggers on *Zeitoun*

ONE BOOK / ONE NEW PALTZ

At a time when "moderate" is one of the most endearing terms used for Muslims in the media, author Dave Eggers brilliantly captures the true story of a Muslim-American hero trying to relieve the suffering of those abandoned by their government in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Abdulrahman Zeitoun, middle-class father of four, spent several days paddling through the flooded streets of New Orleans in a canoe, trying to provide survivors with what little relief he could until he was arrested without cause or due process under suspicion of being a terrorist.

One Book One New Paltz has chosen *Zeitoun* for this year's community reading project. Founded by Gerald Benjamin in 2005, the project seeks to build community among students and the New Paltz community through a shared reading experience. Numerous discussion groups will meet between November 12-20, and all English majors are encouraged to participate and offer their insights on this fascinating tale.

Extensively researched, *Zeitoun* tells the story of a failed bureaucracy so Kafkaesque in nature it seems terribly out of place in the realm of non-fiction. With authorities convinced that the city had lapsed into a state of pure anarchy, the damage caused by the hurricane was quickly multiplied by a virtually non-existent response by FEMA. Instead of sending in aid workers, troops were deployed with the intent of restoring order

through martial law. The premise of the story is a breeding ground for cynicism, and yet Eggers' penetrating lens maintains sight of American idealism amidst the chaos through the eyes of a man who has seen the worst of its violations.

Shreds of optimism aside, the choice may appear an ironic one, given the mission of One Book One New Paltz to promote a community atmosphere with a novel detailing the disintegration of society.

Gerald Benjamin, English Department Chair Thomas Olsen, and Professors Phyllis Freeman (Psychology), Peter Kaufman (Sociology), and Eve Tuck (Education) will be holding a panel discussion on Tuesday, November 16 at 12:15 p.m. in the Honors Center. Slam poet Patricia

Smith will be on campus Friday, November 12 for a workshop and a reading of Katrina-related works (see page 4 for details). The Political Science and Sociology Departments will also host discussions on November 15 at 5 p.m. in the Honors Center, and November 16 in LC 100 at 7 p.m., respectively. There are also numerous discussion groups meeting off-campus, including a panel of Katrina volunteers at the New Paltz Community Center on November 17 at 7 p.m. For more information on the novel and times and locations of additional discussion group times, visit the One Book / One New Paltz website at google.com/site/onebookonewpaltz.



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Faculty Profile: Insu Fenkl

Lucid Dreams. Anthropology. Cognitive Psychology. Folktales. Literary Theory. Shamanic Tradition. Writing. Technology. Professor Insu Fenkl took an interesting path to arrive here, sprinkled with chance and fortune. Born in Korea, Fenkl lived in Germany, then came to the U.S. In his undergrad years at Vassar, he studied Science, Technology, and Society, but was not satisfied with the program. Looking at the completed coursework, he figured out what major he could graduate with. English seemed best, but to complete the degree he had to take a required course: Romantic Poetry. He loathed it at the time, and was a gadfly in the class, but Fenkl now admits it was one of the most helpful classes he ever took, instrumental in teaching him about research methodology, later saving him “huge amounts of time.”

Fenkl went to UC Davis for his MA, and received a Fulbright Scholarship to Korea. At first, he wanted to explore the connection between technology, pop culture, and storytelling, but instead began translating Korean folktales. After he returned, he entered the Cultural Anthropology doctoral program at UC Davis. When his wife got a fellowship to Rochester, he moved to New York with her. Following a conversation with a colleague, Fenkl’s wife suggested he apply to Sarah Lawrence as a Creative Writing professor.

Fenkl was researching for a project at UC Davis, a study on Aborigine dreamtime. Fenkl says “I started lucid dreaming. I lived in Rochester for two years, but my subjective time of that was like six years; one of the characteristics of lucid dreaming is time-dilation.” Fenkl found the jarring aspect of waking life vs. lucid dreaming trying, so he applied to, and was hired at Sarah Lawrence. His experience there was helpful to his teaching: the program was half classroom and half tutorial. “It was incredibly good for me; not only did I have to know the material, but I had to be able to explain it, concretely, on a one-to-one basis. It also helped me to understand how a person’s life and fiction overlap.”



He directed Asian-American Studies at Vassar, taught at Eastern Michigan University, then was hired at New Paltz. Fenkl felt strongly about setting up a robust Creative Writing Program, and implemented a writing-centered model that also had rigorous standards for content and literary studies, much like MFA programs.

Fenkl’s first book, *Memories of my Ghost Brother* (1996), was published as fiction, but could very well have been marketed as memoir. He was named a Barnes and Noble “Great New Writer” and was a PEN/Hemingway finalist in 1997. Largely because of his background and the reception to his book, he was asked to write the introduction to an anthology of interstitial fiction, published by Small Beer Press. According to Fenkl, “plenty of things mix two or more genres—interstitial fiction refers to, and is aware of genre, but does not *fit* into any of them and does not necessarily want to.”

Fenkl found tales often reveal the teller’s psychology. Similarly, what is meaningful to writers is encoded in their writing. He strives to get students to be their “own ideal readers.” Engaged writing produces quality work—this authentic writing lacks a theoretical name, but Fenkl refers to Peter Handke’s “a moment of true feeling.” Fenkl says this is beyond craft; it is inherent in the writing. “Even in the worst story, if it gave you a moment of true feeling, then it has *done something*. Sometimes that’s all we get from a whole novel . . . if you can evoke that feeling, that’s what writing is all about.”

He admits his writing exercises are idiosyncratic, like writing “fractals, or palimpsests” but organic, tapping complicated cognitive processes. He suggests that scientists, Taoists, and folklorists all use different discourses to arrive at the same truths—all trying to reach *gnosis*.

Professor Fenkl keeps busy. In addition to teaching, he is translating a seventeenth-century Korean Buddhist novel, *Nine Cloud Dream*, and this past Wednesday was interviewed about his writing on WAMC’s “The Roundtable.”

Professor Fenkl’s Writing Tip:

“When you proofread your work, do it backwards, one sentence at a time. It will be much easier to catch typos and grammatical problems when you’re not in the ‘flow’ of your own work. (When you read your own work, you’re not actually reading the words on the page, you’re using them as associative triggers for the thoughts and images you had when you were writing.)”

Pre-registration Opens in November

If you have not begun constructing your schedule for next spring, now is the time to start. For those of you new to the process, begin by logging into my.newpaltz.edu. If you have forgotten your password, contact Records and Registration at recreg@newpaltz.edu. In the Student Services box, find out your time assignment under “Registration.” This is when you will be able to begin signing up for classes. Graduate students, your pre-registration begins on November 8.

Under the Advising heading, click on “Planning My.Next Semester.” This is an extremely useful page that contains virtually everything you need to construct a schedule. Your progress report will list the requirements you still need to fulfill before you graduate. All available courses are listed under “Schedule of Classes.” Make sure you meet all of the prerequisites for the courses you intend

to take, as shown in the picture below.

You should also view the expanded course descriptions available online at www.newpaltz.edu/english. Most professors have provided a complete list of texts to be studied and a description of their course themes.



Finally, remember to schedule a meeting with your advisor to obtain your ARN number that will allow you to register. Your advisor’s name and contact information can be found under the “Advising” sub-heading. Come prepared with your progress report and a full schedule outlined beforehand, with several

back up classes in case your first picks fill up. In addition to helping you finalize your schedule, your advisor can help you to form an efficient plan of study that will allow you to graduate on time, and he or she can also help you think about future scheduling and life after college.

Dennis Doherty’s *Crush Test*

Creative Writing professor and poet Dennis Doherty’s newest book, *Crush Test*, was recently released. The poems in *Crush Test*, like much of Doherty’s work, are a mix of humor, questioning, grief, love, hope, the natural world, and the surreal. They are often bodily, physical, human. They are, above all, honest.

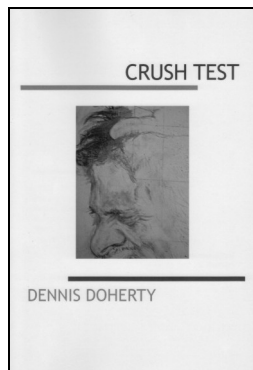
While the themes vary, the language is always luscious and musical. The speaker in the titular poem, “Edge Crush Test (40 Pounds),” after musing upon a cardboard box, avers, “This is no confessional. I’ve given / And got, and seen other scenes on larger / scale, and not: a mountain slowly smote by / snowstorm’s languid, fury-concealed hour hand. / Sapsucker draws the last honeysuckle, / the crush that slakes the host, smashed and riven.” The consideration of the box’s strength explodes outward to other (larger- and smaller-scale) “crushes.”

The poems run from epiphanic to apocalyptic. In “Washington Field Trip,” a stop at a war memorial serves as catalyst for illumination: “I only know, that moment the universe / entered me, my love for Mollies and families /and camaraderie . . .” At the other end lies the haunting

sonnet “Organ Music”—one that echoes long after it’s read.

Others juxtapose disparate images. In “A Kind of Order,” the speaker’s anaphoric “loves” are interrupted by images of death and decay: “I love anybody’s daughter in the poignancy of any kind of / light / I loved to play baseball until dark. The call to dinner, then / night tag / *Night vision sights acquire targets — a muzzle flash — burning /children fill the distant / West Bank streets and alleys, silent flailing white ghosts*” It’s not hard to find glimmers of oneself in Doherty’s poems, of the uncertainty of being, of trying to find meaning in chaos. The speaker in “Imposition of the Difficult” seems to articulate the position of the poet when he asks “Am I the message, messenger, / or the one who heeds what calls?”

Crush Test certainly holds up to its name, strong poems layered upon one another, each supporting the next. The book is available through the publisher, Codhill Press, or Amazon.com. Doherty will read from the new book at Opus 40 (50 Fite Road, Saugerties, New York) on Saturday, November 6 at 3 p.m. The reading will be followed by an open mic.



Briefly Noted

November 5 is the deadline to withdraw from a course without receiving a failing grade.



Patricia Smith will be on campus Friday, November 12, Workshop 2 p.m. in CSB 110 and Reading and Book Signing 7 p.m., Parker Theater. The workshop is limited to 20 participants. Contact Professor Jan Schmidt or Professor Pauline Uchmanowicz to register in advance.



On November 15 at 5 p.m. poets Dennis Doherty and H. R. Stoneback will read in the Honors Center.

November 15 is the deadline for spring 2011 TA applications. You will need a statement of intent, three letters of recommendation, a writing sample and a transcript. Contact Ethel in the English Department for more information. (257-2720).



On Tuesday, November 19 at 3 p.m. in JFT 1010, join us for a Graduate School Application Workshop.



The Library Used Book Sale begins Wednesday, December 8 at 8 a.m. Mark your calendars!

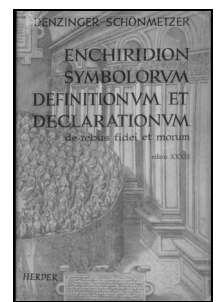
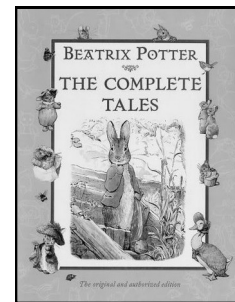
“What I’m Reading”: Robert Waugh

This issue, we asked Professor Emeritus Bob Waugh what he was reading lately. Here is what he said:

“My reading is like a bridal gown, something old, something new. I am always reading three or four books at the same time. At present I’m reading *Blackout*, a time travel novel by Connie Willis about England during the Blitz, a remarkable mix of horror and comedy. I have read almost every novel by her because of this mix, that you can find in *Passage* about death experiences and in *To Say Nothing of the Dog*. All highly recommended. Also I am reading Eugen Drewermann’s *Strukturen des Bösen*, (Structures of Evil) a close reading of the Jahweh-level of Genesis, something of a mix of depth-psychology and theology; and I am also pecking at Denzinger’s *Enchiridion Symbolorum et De-*



finitionum (Handbook of Creeds and Definitions). For me nothing prepares so well for writing poetry as reading philosophy and theology; and speaking of poetry, I am rereading Geoffrey Hill’s latest collection. In bed preparing for sleep I am reading the Alice books; but also at that time I often read Mother Goose and Beatrix Potter—once I read Burton’s *Anatomy* at that time also, and slept very well.”



Footnotes

1. November 5: End of course withdrawal period
2. November 8: Advance Registration for Spring 2011
3. November 24-26: Thanksgiving Recess (No Classes)
4. Final Exam Schedules:
www.newpaltz.edu/events/finals.cfm

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