



Works Cited

English Department Newsletter

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Fall 2004

Anyang Agbor, Fulbright SIR, Enriches

“American students are like students everywhere,” says Sarah Anyang Agbor, Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence in the English department for the 2004-2005 academic year. “Some are very hard-working and curious about the wider world, and I’m happy to have those kinds of students in my classroom at Scranton.” In addition to enriching the English department curriculum by offering classes on modern African fiction and drama, the visiting Fulbright scholar will co-direct a University Players production of a work by Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka in March 2005. Currently conducting an ambitious course of readings for students enrolled in Modern African Fiction (ENLT 284) and settling into life in the United States, Anyang Agbor has been giving talks to a variety of on- and off-campus organizations. “Her presence on our campus and in the greater Scranton community is a direct outgrowth of the university’s commitment to global education and cultural diversity,” reports English department chair Jody DeRitter, “and she’s a welcome addition to our department.” A senior lecturer in the department of English at the University of Yaounde in her native Cameroon, An-

yang Agbor took a PhD from Ibadan University in Nigeria in 1998 with a dissertation on “Dirge Culture and Performance in Banyang, Cameroon.”

“It’s been a busy couple of months, but I’m very happy to be here,” Anyang Agbor says. Arriving in Scranton in late August and recently joined by her husband, a government research chemist at home in Cameroon, the visiting Fulbrighter has given invited talks to students in the political science department and to members of United Colors. She also participated in Marywood University’s recent International Week celebrations. “I expect to give invited talks in area high schools and to more groups here on campus in the coming months. I’m just back from the annual meetings of the African Studies Association held this year in New Orleans, and I’ll be giving a paper on the novelist Jamaica Kincaid in a Caribbean & Latin American session at the annual Popular Culture Association conference to be held in San Diego in late March. Anyang Agbor will extend her stay in the United States to present a paper on “Gender Representation in Anne Tanyi-Tang’s Plays” at the

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Congratulations!

Pat **Toomey**, Theatre Technical Director, and his wife, Carrie, recently announced the birth of their second child, Ciera Rose Toomey. Ellen **Casey**, professor, has been named a commissioner of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, headquartered in Philadelphia, for the January 2005-December 2007 term. The Commission is composed of 27 individuals who represent the higher education community and the public interest. Twenty-six of these members are elected by and represent the colleges and universities in the region. Casey joins colleagues from Barnard College, Hamilton College, the College of New Jersey, the University of Pittsburgh and elsewhere. At the 2004 University Convocation in September, Frank **Jordan**, associate professor, was presented with the John L. Earl III Distinguished Service Award for outstanding service to the university and the wider community. Maria **Landis**, Administrative Assistant in the English department, has accepted a position as Information Coordinator for the Office of Research Services. 



What Would Martha Do?

Breakfast on Thursday. This column was due yesterday afternoon, but I have a plan. “Leslie,” I say to my wife, “what should I write for the department newsletter?”

“I don’t know,” she responds. “What have you done the other three times?”

“Well, the first one was about how, since students are rating their professors on line, there should be a website where professors can go to rate their students . . .”

“That sounds a little petulant.”

“Yeah, I guess so. Then I suggested a bunch of things that people should read before they read any more Stephen King books.”

“That also sounds petulant. You didn’t tell them to read any of that weird stuff you write about, did you?”

“No, it was all about pop culture—baseball books, *Krazy Kat*, *American Splendor*, stuff like that. I also made fun of *A Separate Peace*.”

“Well, of course.”

“Then I wrote a parody of ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’ that was all about how messy my office is.”

“Why did you do that?”

“I couldn’t think of anything else.”

“I see the problem.”

“So what should I do?”

“You should tell them to watch *Christmas in Connecticut*.”

“*Christmas in Connecticut*?”

“It’s almost December. It’s time for everyone to read catalogues, make cookies, spackle the bathroom before the relatives get here, clean and decorate their houses, mull some cider, and watch great holiday movies in glorious black and white.”

“Some people go to college so that they don’t have to spackle their own bathrooms.”

“Spackling is optional.”

“Can we make cleaning and decorating optional this year?”

“No. Anyway, you don’t have anything else.”

Christmas in Connecticut stars Barbara Stanwyck and Dennis Morgan, with great character turns by Sidney Greenstreet and S.Z. Sakall. You should watch it.

- Jody DeRitter, Chair

Anyang Agbor

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Association for Theatre in Higher Education annual meetings in San Francisco in late July. “Tanyi-Tang is a respected West African playwright and an old friend of mine. This year she’s at CUNY as a Fulbright research scholar, and she’s agreed to work with me as co-director of Soyinka’s “Madmen and Specialists” for the Players in March. That play will provide many opportunities for discussion about Nigerian culture and the politics of West Africa. I’m looking forward to working with Anne and the Players.” Early indications are that Anyang Agbor’s spring 2005 course offering, *Modern African Drama* (THTR 372), will be well-enrolled. “We’ll read work by a half-dozen major African playwrights and maybe even attempt an occasional in-class performance exercise ourselves. In addition to my scholarly research I’ve been active in promoting and producing theatrical projects at home in Cameroon. I’m a bit of a ham myself.”

In mid-September, Anyang Agbor and other visiting international scholars were welcomed to the university at a reception hosted by Hal Baillie, Interim Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, and Beth Barnett, Provost/AVP. “It was exciting to meet other faculty and students from around the world,” the Fulbright scholar-in-residence says. John Meredith Hill, professor of English and principal writer of the grant that brought Anyang Agbor to the university, says, “I’m happy things worked out for Sarah and for Scranton. Anglophone literature from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean has enriched the traditional English curriculum, and our Fulbright scholar brings energy and a new range of literary and cultural awareness to those of us who work and study in the McDade Center for the Literary and Performing Arts. It looks like a win-win situation.” 📖

Poetry, Fiction and More!

Two distinguished writers launched the University Reading Series’ 2004-2005 season. Samuel Hazo, Pennsylvania’s Poet Laureate, 1993-2003, was a guest of the URS on Wednesday, October 13. After his well-received public recitation of poems to an audience of approximately 45 students, faculty, and community members in the Heritage Room of Weinberg Memorial Library, Hazo signed books and chatted with attendees at an informal reception. On Monday evening, November 15, Nicholas Rinaldi, professor and writer-in-residence at Fairfield University, read from his new novel, *Between Two Rivers*, to an appreciative audience of English majors and Writing program students and faculty in the Heritage Room.

Rebecca Martin, editor of *Esprit*, the university’s review of arts and letters, will host a public reading by contributors to the Fall 2004 issue on Thursday, December 9 at 8 p.m. in the Studio Theatre, McDade. Prior to the reading Stephen Whittaker, professor and Moderator of the review, will announce the issue’s Berrier Award winners in poetry, prose, art, and photography. 📖

The Department of English notes with sorrow the death of colleague and friend William V. Rakauskas, professor, on September 11, 2004. For much of his career at the university, beginning in 1969, Rakauskas prepared students for their professional role as English teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic region. Memorial donations may be made to: Dr. William V. Rakauskas Student Scholarship Fund, in care of the University of Scranton, Scranton, PA 18510.

Kraus Offers Creative Nonfiction

Lecturer Joe Kraus brings distinctive credentials to the English department for the 2004-05 AY. With a PhD from Northwestern University and special interests in creative nonfiction and multi-ethnic literature, Kraus defines himself as a former "campus brat," having grown up on the campus of Denison University in Granville, Ohio, where his father was a professor of English. After some geographic zig-zagging in pursuit of a BA from the University of Michigan, an MA from Columbia University, and a doctorate from Northwestern, Kraus is pleased to be making a home in northeastern Pennsylvania. "I had three good years of teaching at King's College," Kraus says, "and I'm pleased to be here at Scranton." He, his wife, Paula, and their two sons live in Wilkes-Barre where Paula is assistant director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Wilkes-Barre. While pursuing his PhD in Evanston, Kraus also taught for three years in the English department of Oakton Community College in the suburban Chicago area.

Kraus will teach a section of Creative Nonfiction (WRTG 214) in Spring 2005, a popular course offering in the department.

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CLOSE READING

Eileen **Tamerlani**, English/Honors '02, is enrolled in a part-time graduate program in Fiction Writing at The Johns Hopkins University while continuing to work as advertising coordinator/editorial assistant for *Destinations*, a travel magazine published in Washington, D.C. Talia **Argondezzi**, English '03, enjoys teaching composition at Baruch College as a graduate student in CUNY's Department of English doctoral program. Ellen **Casey**, professor, gave a paper at the annual meeting of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals in Ghent, Belgium, in July 2004. Entitled "The End of the Three-Decker Novel," her paper drew upon her on-going research on the *Athenaeum*, an influential literary journal



of the nineteenth century. Richard H. **Passon**, professor, returns to teaching duties in the department after serving for two years as Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. At its May 2004 convocation, St. Joe's dedicated its new organic chemistry laboratory in Passon's name. At its May 2004 commencement the university awarded him an honorary doctorate of humane letters. Catherine **Slattery**, English/Criminal Justice '02, works for a criminal defense attorney in Alexandria, Virginia, and recently passed the German reading exam in her Philosophy MA program at Catholic University where she also studies for her JD degree. Cecelia **Mecca** (formerly **Skivington**), English '96/MA '99, received her doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from Pennsylvania State University in August 2004. She teaches eighth grade English in the Pocono Mountain School District. John **Siegle**, English '85/MA '90, was awarded tenure by Susquehanna Community High School in 2004. Len **Gougeon**, professor, presented a paper titled "Emerson and Thoreau in 1854" at the Annual Gathering of the Thoreau Society in Concord, MA, in July. While in Concord Gougeon was interviewed by the BBC as part of a program called "Walden Revisited" broadcast in August. In October he attended a conference sponsored by the Ikeda Forum for Intercultural Dialogue which examined the influence of East Asia on Thoreau's view of transcendentalism. In November Gougeon participated in the annual meetings of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association in Roanoke, VA. In August Michael **Friedman**, professor, presented a paper, "'I'm not a feminist director, but . . .': Recent Feminist Productions of *The Taming of the Shrew*," at the Wooden O Symposium, a conference held in connection with the Utah Shakespearean Festival in Cedar City, Utah. Friedman is currently directing a production of "The Taming of the Shrew" for the Actors Circle at the Providence Playhouse in Scranton. Performance dates are January 28-30 and February 4-6, 2005. While on sabbatical in Spring '05, Friedman will research and develop a course called "Shakespeare on Film" to be offered in Spring '06. Leah **Laspina**, English '06, will be enrolled at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing in Spring '05. Teresa **deLaurentis**, English/Honors '06, is currently enrolled at UIBE for the '04-05 AY. Gene **Terruso**, English '73/MA '75, and chairman of the Theatre department at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, was the guest director for the University Players' production of "Dead Man Walking" staged in the Royal Theatre in late October. Stephanie **King**, Theatre '05, and Jeff **Trainor**, Theatre '06, took the lead roles as Sister Helen Prejean and Matthew Poncelet, respectively. The theatrical adaptation of the best-selling book by Prejean was derived by Tim Robbins from his screenplay of "Dead Man Walking" and made available to Jesuit colleges and universi-

ties.



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CLOSE READING

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ties. Janice **Tellier**, adjunct professor of Theatre, designed the costumes for “Dead Man Walking.” In late September the University Players premiered the 2004-2005 theatre season with a production of “Greater Tuna,” directed by Michael **O’Steen**, assistant professor. Rich **Larsen**, Theatre Director and associate professor, designed the set and lights for “Greater Tuna” and “Dead Man Walking.” Tech Director Pat **Toomey** was sound designer for “Greater Tuna” and “Dead Man Walking.” Rachael **Miller**, Theatre ’04, designed the costumes for “GT.” Jeff **Trainor** and Will **Dennis**, Theology ’05, energetically enacted the two-man multi-role production. John Meredith **Hill**, professor, published two poems, “Lyric Poetry” and “Norwegians in Late Autumn, the Upper Midwest,” in the Spring issue of *Zone 3*, a national literary journal from Austin Peay State University. Jon **Kelly**, Theatre ’06, won the Bagdzinski Memorial Scholarship for AY 04-05. John **Nardone**, English ’99, is a graduate student in creative writing at UNLV where he enjoys teaching undergraduates and observing life on The Strip. 📖



Creative Nonfiction

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ment’s Writing program in the early 1990s that has not been scheduled in recent years due to staffing challenges. He expects to see strong enrollment numbers, as students in the English department and beyond have approached him to discuss the nature of the course. “As I see it, creative nonfiction is the gifted child of the personal essay. Sometimes it’s well behaved and acts the way traditional essays do. Sometimes it dyes its hair green, pierces its tongue, and refuses to keep its voice down in church,” says Kraus.

Co-author of a book entitled *An Accidental Anarchist* about a 1908 Russian Jewish immigrant and author of an essay on “The Jewish Gangster” published in

The American Scholar, Kraus is also at work on a new book about Jewish gangsters in Chicago in the early twentieth century. “Part of my interest in the subject stems from the fact that members of my own family, a grandfather and a great uncle, had a criminal history, although it wasn’t something I learned about until I was an adult. I suppose most people wouldn’t choose to speak up about their outlaw relatives, but I found the history especially fascinating. A Jewish grandpa living in the same world as Al Capone? Wow.” In addition to his teaching duties and writing projects, Kraus enjoys bicycling and acknowledges a passion for Ultimate Frisbee. “Then there are the boys, our boys. Life is busy—and good.” 📖

November

**I watch my daughter jump
 in heaps I’ve raked.
 Scrambling to her feet,
 she bends and scoops,
 my helper, then drifts away,
 Waving so long, I shoulder
 to the curb dark green bags
 bulging with loss**

John Meredith Hill

rptd. from Hummingbird

