

# Postings

*Musings and goings-on from the Department of English & Philosophy*



**Graduate Director Alan Johnson discusses the new Ph.D. program with graduate student Steve Harrison.**

## ISU English Department Announces New Ph.D. Program to Begin Fall 2009

The Department of English and Philosophy at Idaho State University is pleased to announce the establishment of a new Ph.D. program in English and the Teaching of English. Upon its inception, the program will offer the only Ph.D. in English in the state of Idaho. The program, which integrates the study of literature and English pedagogy, will train students for teaching careers in English at two- and four-year colleges and universities.

ISU Associate Provost Stephen Adkison commends the new program: "The English department's shift to the Ph.D. from the D.A. further strengthens an already sound doctoral program, enabling it to better meet the evolving needs of doctoral students throughout the state and region. The department's strengths and expertise are well-reflected in the State of Idaho's only Ph.D. program in English."

In the fall of 2009, the department will begin phasing out its Doctor of Arts (D.A.) degree program, which has been training students in English studies and pedagogy since 1971. Students currently enrolled in the D.A. program will have the option of completing the D.A. or of enrolling in the new Ph.D. program.

Special items of interest and stories contained inside

- Faculty News
- Dead Writers' Night
- Letter from Poland

*P*ostings contains notes and updates that reflect the activities of the department. It also provides information about upcoming activities and other items of interest.

The Ph.D. builds on the strengths of the D.A., which attracted applicants from around the world and placed over 90 percent of graduates in tenure-track teaching positions. With the new Ph.D., the department will continue to draw national and international students and provide doctoral training for teaching-oriented careers at two- and four-year schools. The department also has an established M.A. program and recently added a graduate certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), which may be completed as part of a graduate degree or as a stand-alone credential.

Applicants to the Ph.D. program must have an M.A. in English (or a related field) as well as a 3.5 GPA and at least 50 percent on the verbal section of the GRE. Applications are due by February 15 and must include an application form, undergraduate and graduate transcripts, three letters of recommendation, a writing sample of 10-20 pages, and a 500-word statement of purpose. Priority in admission will be given to experienced, successful teachers.

For more information, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies in English, Dr. Alan Johnson, at johnala2@isu.edu. Further details are available on the English Department Web site at [www.isu.edu/english/](http://www.isu.edu/english/).

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## New Faculty



The Department of English and Philosophy welcomes **Angela Petit** to the faculty. Petit joined the department this fall as an assistant professor. Petit's area of specialization is technical writing, and she previously worked as a technical writer and taught at the University of Texas-El Paso. Petit received her Ph.D. in 1999 from the University of Southern Mississippi.

## Faculty News

**Mark Dodd's** review, "*Measure for Measure* at the 2007 Idaho Shakespeare Festival: Or, As the Director Likes It," is forthcoming from *The Upstart Crow: A Shakespeare Journal*, published annually by Clemson University.

This December at the South Asian Literary Association conference in San Francisco, **Alan Johnson** will present a paper on Bollywood cinema. He also published "Anglo-Indians and Globalization" in *The Way We Are*, an edited anthology concerning Anglo-Indian diaspora.

"The Pagan Griselda," an article by **Lynn Shutters**, is forthcoming in the *Chaucer Review*. This work is part of Shutter's book project entitled "Female Pagans and Pagan Femininity in Late Medieval Literature."

**Susan Swetnam's** professional activities have taken her across the state and across the country. In October, she spent a week at Harriman State Park as a writer-in-residence for the Log Cabin Literary Center of Boise. Later that same month, she was hosted by the Department of Education at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, MD, as a visiting scholar and writer in conjunction with her "My Best Teachers Were Saints." Over three days, she presented a public lecture to an audience of 250, spoke to classes, led a half-day in-service workshop for the parochial school teachers of Frederick, MD, and met with students and staff. St. Mary's used Swetnam's book in a year-long program for undergraduate student interns working to develop a new curriculum.

November's First Friday Artwalk in Old Town was opening night for **Penelope Reedy's** second annual art exhibition in the gallery space of Walrus & Carpenter Bookstore. Her weavings and installations were up for the entire month of November; the theme was "shrouds and wraps."

**Bethany Schultz Hurst** was recently named runner-up for the journal *RHINO's* Founders Poetry Prize and will be published in *RHINO's* 2009 issue.

**Nancy Wall** has been appointed to serve on the NCAA Certification Steering Committee as the chief report writer for ISU's NCAA Certification Process for 2009-2010.

**Jessica Winston** won a \$3,650 course-release grant from the ISU Faculty Research Committee for fall semester 2008. The course release has allowed her to work on an article, "The Literary Associations of the Middle Temple," one of the four English legal societies in London, which are collectively known as the Inns of Court. The article is co-authored with Dr. Alan Nelson, emeritus professor of English at UC Berkeley.

The Idaho Humanities Council has awarded Winston \$3,500 to fund a three-week trip to London to complete the research for her book-project "Lawyers at Play: Literary Culture of the Inns of Court, 1558-1581." In addition, Winston's article, "English Seneca: Heywood to Hamlet," will appear shortly in the *Oxford Handbook in Tudor Literature* (forthcoming from the Oxford University Press in early 2010).

*Lexical Processing in Second Language Learners*, forthcoming from Clevedon: Multilingual Matters (Eds. Fitzpatrick, T. and Barfield, A., 2009), will have a chapter by **Brent Wolter** entitled "Meaning-last acquisition and collocational productivity." Wolter will also present "L1 knowledge and the development of L2 intra-lexical links" at the American Association for Applied Linguistics 2009 Conference in Denver.

**Jennifer Adkison** presented "Writing the Unspeakable: Cannibalism and Women's Narratives of the Donner Party" at the Western Literature Association Conference in October.

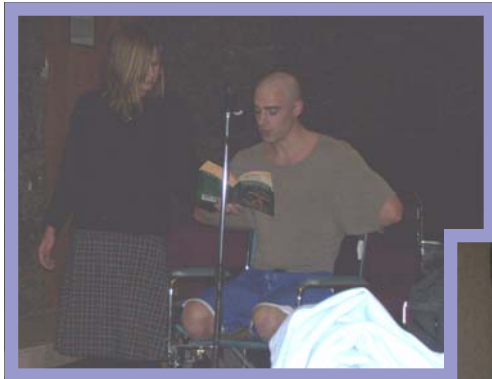
## Graduate Student News

Each semester, the **English Graduate Student Association (EGSA)** participates in ISU's Student Organizations Fair — an event designed to help ISU's organizations gain exposure in the campus at large. This semester's event theme, "From the Ground Up," played on the construction taking place around the Pond Student Union. Many organizations adorned their tables with toy construction equipment, signing, and architectural models. EGSA, however, decided to have passing students help "construct" a campus story line by line. Participants built a story, one sentence at a time, on a piece of poster board. The resulting piece wove the tale of a pair of birds who decided to return to college at Idaho State University, and eventually ended up at Disneyland. The display was voted the third best for the event, and EGSA was awarded a small cash prize as a result. The money will be used to help fund next year's Intermountain Graduate Conference, to be held at ISU.

**Baoguo (Bob) Zhang's** article "Different Types of World Links in the Mental Lexicon" was published in the June 2008 edition of the *College Student Journal*. The article considers whether people from different cultures store English words in their minds in different ways and examines the elements that determine people's mental lexicons.

## Dead Writers' Night

The literati, both dead and un-dead, were out *en masse* for this year's EGSA Dead Writers' Night. Enconced in appropriately low light, English faculty and students alike shared their favorite Halloween passages, ranging from the unsettlingly dystopian to the outright horrific. Listeners sipped cocoa and hot cider and reveled in selections from *Dracula*, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, and even a shudder-inspiring scene from *Beowulf* read in perfect Old English! Dead Writer's Night is an EGSA annual event, and all students and faculty are invited to participate.



**Colin Meldrum** portrays a character from a book called "Freak Show" as Meredith Harvey holds his book.



**Tom Klein** reads from *Beowulf*.



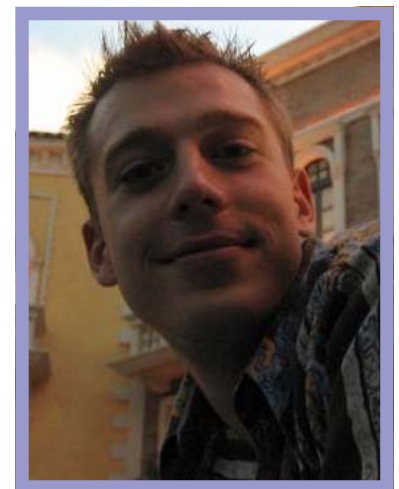
**Steve Harrison** reenacts a Kurt Vonnegut short story.

## Alumni Spotlight — Colin Meldrum

**Colin Meldrum**, a 2008 ISU graduate with a B.A. in English, created a local stir earlier this year when he successfully launched *A Cappella Zoo*, a Pocatello-based literary magazine featuring prose, poetry, and art inspired by the school of "magical realism." Meldrum serves as the magazine's chief editor, and recruits the help of other English students to see his vision through. *A Cappella Zoo* is currently receiving submissions for its second issue. To learn more, please visit [www.acappellazoo.com](http://www.acappellazoo.com).

**Q:** How are preparations coming for ACZ's second issue? Any changes?

**A:** Preparations are going well, and readers have already expressed that they're excitedly anticipating the second issue. Nothing drastically significant has changed, but I reworded our guidelines and learned quite a bit about communicating with peers in the literary community. As a result we've seen a more impressive response to our call for bilingual submissions, and a lot more attention from professional writers and critics. Twice the number of submissions in general are coming in for this second issue so far.



**Meldrum**



*"Be honest  
with yourself  
in what you  
enjoy most."*

Q: What were the most important things you learned during your time at ISU that have helped you in your position as the editor of a fledgling literary magazine?

A: This might sound sappy, but, honestly, self-confidence has been a huge factor in all this. And I'd call that a skill, not just an emotion that developed in me on its own, but a front that I've learned to put on and push ahead of me into the real world of what we call "adults."

Q: In addition to providing a publishing venue for other creative writers, you have also had some luck with your own work. Where should we be looking for your name in print?

A: My first publication was a creative memoir in ISU's own *Rendezvous*. I also have some fiction in a handful of online mags, like *Underground Voices* and *Postcards from the Woody End*. I keep a list on my Web page: [www.colinmeldrum.com](http://www.colinmeldrum.com).

Q: What advice would you give students who might want to undertake a project like ACZ?

A: I'd say, "Be honest with yourself in what you enjoy most." I dove head-first into this because I had known for years not only that accomplishing something like this would feel immensely satisfying, but that every detail of the work going into it would not feel like work. This is my greatest hobby. I happen to enjoy managing a journal at least as much as I enjoy writing (it's less stressful, in fact), and I happen to enjoy hunting through great and awful writing alike at least as much as I enjoy reading my next favorite novel. Don't put off what you love.

Do your research before even thinking about a project of this magnitude, especially when it will cost you. I absorbed a sea of information and half-related experience before even starting this. I read other lit mags. I submitted to other lit mags. I made a list of things I would need to do or wanted to do or wanted to avoid, and then I Googled my way through it. I worked with ISU's creative journal and turned my other class projects into *A Cappella Zoo* prep work. I got a lot of feedback. I emptied my bank account. I pretended to know what I was doing. Somehow, it all worked out. Not that it was an accident, but you know, sometimes it was just like, wow, this is for real, a professional author from Jerusalem is looking for me to publish her story.

I would not recommend this to someone who has other extravagant things to do with his/her time and money. This is a part-time job of profitless labor; I am very much a geek for dedicating a good chunk of my life to this, but I am a happy geek.



**Colin Meldrum collaborates with Michael Lee, Devori Kimbro, and Syndie Allen as they edit the inaugural issue of *A Cappella Zoo*.**

## Letter from Poland

*Brian Attebery shares his experiences and epiphanies in Wroclaw*

I recently traveled to Poland to deliver a keynote address at a conference sponsored by the Center for Young People's Literature and Culture at the University of Wroclaw. It was a wonderful experience (except for the efficiency of LOT Polish Airlines<sup>1</sup>). What particularly struck me about this gathering of scholars from Poland, the U.S., Canada, Taiwan, Estonia, Spain, Lithuania, the U.K., Hungary, Croatia, Italy, and Bulgaria was that we spoke a common language. Not English, though I did reap the benefits of living in a culturally hegemonized world—most papers were delivered in my native tongue rather than the speakers'. Instead, our common language was the fantastic.

The range of topics was as diverse as the points of origin of the attendees, but whether the talk was about a Galician translation of a Mexican children's story or about Soviet-era fairy tales, each speaker could be certain that the audience would share an interest and a set of literary touchstones. We all knew Tolkien, Rowling, Terry Pratchett, L. Frank Baum, and the body of retold traditional tales and legends upon which these writers have built their worlds. Wherever we came from, we also came from the realm of the imagination.

My own talk was about the way fantasy fulfills the same function as what folklorists call *memorates*: personal experience stories that link to, and help validate, traditional legends. A storyteller might start, for instance, by recounting an eerie event from her own childhood before launching into a performance of a traditional legend about ghosts or angelic visitations. The memorate connects the teller (and the listeners) to the legendary world of spirits and miracles. Fantasy does the same thing on a broader cultural level, and thereby fulfills what may be a universal need.

Ursula K. Le Guin once wrote about discovering in childhood that she was really a native of a country called Mondath, which only exists in the works of Lord Dunsany.<sup>2</sup> Like Le Guin, we who attended the conference were all citizens of Mondath.

The conference organizers very aptly titled the gathering "Relevant Across Cultures: Visions of Connectedness and World Citizenship in Modern Fantasy for Young Readers." Though some of us are not exactly young readers, we are connected by the things we read and experience in fantasy. Tolkien thought that the stuff of magic was precisely the most basic and universal sorts of things: bread and trees and stars and stones. Much modern literature forgets about these fundamental realities, but fantasy brings us back to them. No wonder it crosses borders freely.

Many of the conference speakers talked about the challenges of translation—for instance, one of the attendees, Anikó Zohár, Terry Pratchett's Hungarian translator, is faced with the task of carrying his verbal soap bubbles across minefields of cultural and linguistic difference. Many of the works discussed are not available in English. I would love to read some of the Soviet fairy tales that, according to Anna Gubergrits from Talinn, mostly managed to evade the regime's pressure to propagandize, unlike the realistic children's literature of the time, but those stories are no longer available in Russian, let alone in English versions. Still, there is something eminently translatable about the core experience of fantasy. Unlike poetry, fantasy—or its mythic substructure— does not get lost in translation. It is indeed relevant across cultures, at least for those of us who remember Mondath.



**Brian Attebery enjoys a carriage ride with other conference participants in Wroclaw, Poland.**

<sup>1</sup> My deepest disappointment with the trip was that the aircraft from Warsaw to Wroclaw was not, as promised on my Expedia itinerary, a "two-bedroom apartment for five." Alas, only in Mondath.

<sup>2</sup> "A Citizen of Mondath," *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, ed. Susan Wood (New York: Putnam's, 1979): 25-30.



## Pictures from the Annual Spring and Fall Picnics



**Brandon Hall feeds baby Desmond as Bethany Schultz Hurst watches.**



**Tom Klein, Margaret Johnson, and Brandon Hall enjoy a delicious repast at the annual fall picnic in September.**



**Jacob Adkison enjoys a little water fountain fun at the Spring picnic.....**



**...while Roger Schmidt and Steve Adkison look on in amusement.**

Over the years, friends and alumni of the department have been charitable with their contributions, and we sincerely appreciate their generosity. These contributions have allowed us to bring guest speakers and artists to campus, provide match funding for much needed technology and system upgrades, assist with funding the literary magazine *Black Rock & Sage*, and offer more scholarship opportunities. If you are interested in contributing to the department, please contact Terry Engebretsen, chair, [engeterr@isu.edu](mailto:engeterr@isu.edu) or call the department office at (208) 282-2478.

## Department Babies



Congratulations to Steve and Michelle Harrison on the birth of their daughter, Shaelynn. Shaelynn was born on December 6, 2008.

Congratulations to Brent Wolter and his wife, Kaori, on the birth of their daughter, Angela Emma Wolter. Angela was born on June 9, 2008.



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