

## Sabbatical Report for Fall 2010

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I have enjoyed this sabbatical semester enormously, and I think I have been reasonably productive. I had a bit of a late start because I taught a summer-school class and then went on vacation, so I didn't really start working until the beginning of August. Here's what I've accomplished:

1. I wrote a long essay (around 30 pages) on Hart Crane's poem *The Bridge*, which I submitted to the journal *Texas Studies in Language and Literature*. This journal comes out of the University of Texas at Austin, which has an excellent English department, so I'm aiming high here. I won't hear from them until next semester, but their editor promises a thorough response.
2. I revised an essay on William Carlos Williams and T. S. Eliot that began as a conference presentation, and was later revised to try to fit into a special issue of *The William Carlos Williams Review* (it was rejected). So I revised it again this fall, and sent it to *The CEA Critic* (CEA stands for the College English Association, a national organization). I'm not sure when I'll hear from them.
3. I submitted an essay on Herman Melville's poem "The House-Top" to *Leviathan*, which is *the* Melville journal. This essay also began as a conference presentation, but I revised and developed it for submission to the journal.
4. In 2009 Mike Day and I learned that a long (around 40 pages) essay that we co-authored on Robert Oppenheimer and Archibald MacLeish had been rejected by *American Studies*. Mike used part of that essay for his sabbatical project on Oppenheimer, so I revised our essay, shortened it, and submitted it to the journal *Soundings*, out of the University of Tennessee, which focuses on interdisciplinary studies.
5. Two years ago my long essay on Charles Olson's depiction of John Winthrop in *The Maximus Poems* was accepted by the journal *Boxkite*, out of Australia, which was planning a special Olson issue. However, the editor stopped replying to my e-mail, and finally his e-mail address returned my messages as "undeliverable." Our LVC research librarians were unable to learn whether *Boxkite* had published anything after 2008, or whether it still existed. So, assuming that *Boxkite* has crashed, I revised the Winthrop essay and sent it to *The New England Quarterly*, out of Northeastern University.
6. In June I was an invited speaker at the Charles Olson Centenary Conference at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. I had written an essay for that conference, and was invited to submit it for a collection of essays on Olson to be published by Talonbooks in Vancouver. However, the editors had a maximum-word-limit, so I had to cut around 10 pages of material. The shortened essay was submitted as "At the Boundary of the Mighty World: Charles Olson and Hesiod," and it should appear in that collection some time next year.
7. I took the 10 pages of material that I cut and developed it into another essay, titled "The Fathers Run Out in the Sons: Charles Olson, Ezra Pound, and The Song of Ullikummi," which I sent to the journal *Sagetrieb*, out of the University of Maine.

8. In October I gave a paper at the United States Intellectual History Conference at the CUNY Graduate Center. The conference organizers invited the participants to submit essays for a proposed collection, so I developed and revised my conference paper and submitted it. It's titled "In the Borderlands: American Poetry Engages History."
9. Right at the end of my sabbatical, in one of those "oh, what the hell" moments, I submitted a book proposal to two publishers, University Press of America and Palgrave Macmillan. I sent out an initial query e-mail, just to see if it was worth developing a formal proposal, and both publishers asked to see a formal proposal, so I worked one up and sent it out. Palgrave Macmillan has the better reputation, so it would be my first choice, but I wouldn't say "no" if UPA wants it.

So I have eight essays out at various places, as well as the book proposal, and we'll see if anyone thinks any of it is worth publishing (one of the eight will definitely be published: the piece from the Olson Centenary Conference). I think that's a pretty good total. I also continued to review books for *Choice*. During my sabbatical I reviewed Beverley Southgate's *History Meets Fiction* (Longman), John McIntyre's *Memorable Days: The Selected Letters of James Salter and Robert Phelps* (Counterpoint), and Peggy Samuels's *Deep Skin: Elizabeth Bishop and Visual Art* (Cornell UP). On behalf of the Charles Olson Society, I organized a roundtable panel titled "Charles Olson: Only One Poem" for the May 2011 American Literature Association conference. I also continued to work as an academic advisor to 22 English majors during my sabbatical, and as Director of General Education (for which I was generously compensated by the College). I worked with the faculty committee writing the General Education section of the Middle States Report, filled out the outcomes assessment forms on General Education requested by the Associate Dean, made recommendations on General Education requirements for students studying abroad (and for students here on campus who, for one reason or another, had problems with various General Education requirements), and met with the General Education Advisory Committee to develop a recommendation on early planning of course schedules for Foreign Studies and Social Diversity Studies. I also recruited First-Year Seminar instructors for Fall 2011, and publicized and recruited faculty judges for the General Education Essay Contest.

One of the best parts of sabbatical is the freedom to read whatever I want, without the pressure of reading what's on my course syllabi, or simply for the research I'm working on. During this sabbatical I read twenty-eight books. The DSP class I taught recently on "Religion and Literature" led me to Jack Miles's *God: A Biography*, Elaine Pagels's *The Origin of Satan*, and *The Best Spiritual Writing of 2009*. My AMS class, "American Thought and Culture," led me to Richard Francis's *Judge Sewall's Apology: The Salem Witch Trials and the Forming of an American Conscience* and Patricia Bonomi's *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America*. My interest in intellectual history led me to Sian Miles's *Simone Weil: An Anthology*, Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*, and David Edmonds's and John Eidinow's *Wittgenstein's Poker: The Story of a Ten-Minute Argument between Two Great Philosophers*. My interest in current events led me to Dexter Filkins's *The Forever War* (he's been covering the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for *The New York Times*). My interest in General Education led me to Lawrence Levine's *The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture, and History*. My DSP course "Myths and Their Meanings" led me to Joanne Stroud's *The Olympians: Ancient Deities as Archetypes*. My interest in history led me to John Burrow's *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth*

Century and Steven Mithen's *After the Ice: A Global Human History, 20,000-5000 BC*. My interest in Charles Olson led me to *Letters for Origin, 1950-1956*, *Charles Olson and Frances Boldereff: A Modern Correspondence*, *Charles Olson: Letters Home*, and the revised second edition of *Muthologos: The Collected Lectures and Interviews*. Because Olson was interested in his work, I read *Seventeenth-Century North America* and *Selected Essays* by Carl Sauer, who was for many years the Chair of the Geography Department at the University of California at Berkeley. And partly because Olson was his friend, and partly because I was his friend, I read the final novel in Jonathan Bayliss's *Gloucesterman* trilogy, and wrote one of the two blurbs that appear on its back cover (I read the text before it went to the publisher). "What?" you must be thinking, "all of this reading, and no literature?" Well, not as much as the non-fiction, I confess. But I did manage to read Rainer Maria Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet* and *Sonnets to Orpheus*, and Nick Havely's *Dante*, on the poetry side, as well as Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Alice Munro's *Runaway and Other Stories*, Colleen McCullough's *The Grass Crown*, and the Lebanese novelist Rabih Alameddine's *The Hakawati* on the fiction side.

I am deeply grateful to the College for granting me this sabbatical. I was able to complete a number of unfinished projects lying around my office, to begin and finish several others, and to propose a book-length project. I'm looking forward to seeing these different editors' decisions on my work. There is a part of me that wishes I could continue with the sabbatical—I have several more essay-length projects in mind, as well as the book-length project, and it's been nice to come and go as I please, to have all of the privileges and resources at a college professor's disposal with very few of the responsibilities. It's been very nice to be able to ignore faculty meetings, committee meetings, and department meetings, confident that my colleagues would make sound decisions in my absence. But there is another part of me that looks forward to the give-and-take of the classroom, and to the work that gets done in faculty meetings, committee meetings, and department meetings. So I'm ready to come back.