

Fall 2011

***Department of English***

***INKLINGS***



“Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,

But to be young was very heaven!”

—William Wordsworth

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH CELEBRATES GRADUATES WHO**

**BECAME DISTINGUISHED WRITERS**



**L-R: Angie Abdou, Connie Gault, Joan Givner, Dianne Warren, Nicholas Ruddick**

**Photo taken by U of R Photography Department**

As part of the University of Regina Homecoming, celebrating 100 years of higher education in Regina, the Department of English hosted a panel of four writers, three students and a retired member of the department, who have had successful careers as writers. The three former students on the panel were Angie Abdou (B.A. Hons. English, 1991), Connie Gault (B.A. English, 1984), and Dianne Warren (B.F.A. Visual Arts, 1976). Each shared her memories of the English classes, including creative writing classes, she took at the U. of R. Angie, who graduated with a Ph.D. in English literature from the University of Calgary, has nearly 20 years of teaching experience in writing programs throughout the country and now teaches at the College of the Rockies. Her short story collection *Anything Boys Can Do* (2006) was called an “extraordinary debut” by the *BC BookWorld*. The Globe and Mail praised her first novel, *The Bone Cage* (2007), for its “beautiful writing” and *Quill & Quire* called it “vivid, intense, and authentic.” *The Bone Cage* was included on Canadian Literature’s All –Time Top Ten List of Best Canadian Sport Literature. Her second novel, *The Canterbury Trail*, appeared earlier this year.

Connie Gault’s works include two short story collections, *Some of Eve's Daughters* (1987) and *Inspection of a Small Village* (1996). She has also published four plays, *Sky*, *The Soft Eclipse, Otherwise Bob*, and *Red Lips*. Her stories have appeared in anthologies such as The *Oxford Book of Stories by Canadian Women, Turn of the Story: Canadian Stories for the Millennium*, and *Best Canadian Stories*. Her plays have been produced across Canada and her radio dramas have aired on CBC and the BBC World Service. Her work has also been presented internationally in Ireland, Bermuda, the USA and Mexico. A past fiction editor of *Grain* magazine, she has taught many creative writing classes and often mentors emerging writers through the SWG Mentorship Program.

Dianne Warren is best known for her short stories and plays. One of her three published plays, *Serpent in the Night Sky*, was a GG finalist in 1992, and she has written several radio dramas for CBC. She has published three short story collections – one of which, *Bad Luck Dog* (1993), won three Saskatchewan Book Awards. Her stories can also be found in numerous anthologies, journals and magazines. A long-time resident of Saskatchewan, she brings to her writing an honest portrayal of people in rural communities, conveying their subtle complexities and deep attachments to family farmland. Dianne was born in Ottawa, and currently lives in Regina. Her first novel, *Cool Water*, was published by HarperCollins in 2010. It won the 2010 Governor General's Award for English language fiction and was also long-listed for the Giller Prize.

Joining the three former students on the panel was Joan Givner, who taught in the English Department for over two decades, taking early retirement in 1995 to devote herself to writing. While teaching at the University of Regina, she published biographies of Katherine Ann Porter and Mazo de la Roche, and an autobiography, *The Self-Portrait of a Literary Biographer*. She also published three collections of short stories and won the CBC fiction competition in 1992. Since retirement she has concentrated mainly on writing fiction, publishing two novels, *Half Known Lives* (New Star) and *Playing Sarah Bernhardt* (Dundurn). *Ellen Fremedon* was her first young adult novel; two sequels are now available.

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**ALUMNUS ROSS KING,WINNER OF A GOVENOR-GENERAL’S AWARD,**

**RECALLS HIS YEARS IN THE**

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**

Ross King graduated from the U. of R. with an M.A. in 1986. After completing his Ph.D. at York University, Ross carried out post-graduate work at the University of London before becoming a full-time writer. He has published six books, including two novels and studies of Italian and French art. He won the Governor General’s Award for nonfiction in 2006 for *The Judgment of Paris: The Revolutionary Decade that Gave the World Impressionism*. His most recent book, *Defiant Spirits: The Modernist Revolution of the Group of Seven*, was published in conjunction with an exhibition Ross curated at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in 2010. The reviewer in the *Montreal Gazette* wrote of *Defiant Spirits*: “If Ross King were a geologist, he’d have made millions striking untapped rivulets of gold or oil in overlooked places. Instead, as an art historian, he mines nuggets of obscure information that he forges into page-turners about Brunelleschi, Michelangelo, Manet and, in this new book, the Group of Seven.” The review in *Canadian Art* is equally laudatory: “With his usual spirited prose and faultless research, King makes internationalists out of the Group of Seven, showing them responding and reacting to the art of their day and the socio-political upheavals brought about by the First World War. These were ambitious artists and King never lets them settle into the comforts of cottage life and Canadiana.”

Ross is visiting Saskatchewan this month, and as part of the trip he will be giving a lecture in conjunction with his recent book on the Group of Seven. The lecture, entitled “The Backwoods and the Boulevards: The Group of Seven and International Modernism,” is free and open to everyone: October 25, 7:00 PM, Education Auditorium (book signing to follow).



**Ross King**

*At the invitation of the editor, Ross has written the following reminiscence of his time as an M.A. student in the Department of English*.

I arrived in the English Department as a teaching assistant in the autumn of 1983. I left in the summer of 1986 - yikes, 25 years ago - clutching my MA. My thesis was supervised by Ray Mise with Nick Ruddick and Ken Probert, both recent additions to the department, serving on my committee. It was composed on my Apple IIc, one of the very first computers in the department. I remember how a bemused Don Murray used to stop by to examine this newfangled bit of technology on which my thesis was developing in lurid green letters.

The English Department was a huge part of my intellectual and social life in those three years. My office mates were fellow students like Cindy MacKenzie, Margaret Duffy, Mary Kavanagh, Dale Zalenko, Sue Fairbairn and Lenni Frohman, with Pam Kostur and Michelle Pretzer a couple of doors down the corridor. What made my experience on the third floor of the Ad Hum so entertaining and special was something whose uniqueness I appreciated only in retrospect: the interaction we grad students enjoyed not only with one another but also with the department’s faculty and staff.

A major part of my experience in the department revolved around one particular extracurricular activity: the “Theory Group.” We met once a month on Sunday mornings, usually at Ray and Ruth’s house (then on Elgin Road), to grapple with arcane and intimidating texts. Clustered in Ray’s basement we discussed Derrida, Lacan, Althusser, Eagleton and Jameson. I was sorry to have missed the incident in which Eugene Bertoldi, invited to offer a philosopher’s opinion on Derrida, ripped *Of Grammatology* in half. If only there was a YouTube video. But it’s a real credit to the department that so many of its members were open (albeit with healthy amounts of humour and scepticism) to these challenging new ideas. In those (now unimaginable) days before the internet, Ken Probert, Aydon Charlton and Bernie Selinger were my search engines, finding articles and references, and leaving them photocopied in my mailbox. Who needed Google?

My other extracurricular activity was the baseball team. Sadly, a match against the English Department was regarded with undisguised relish by the crack teams made up of engineering or biology students. We may, in fact, have gone through the summer of 1984 without a single victory - although I like to think that our conversation in the pub afterwards (either Bennigan’s or the Lazy Owl) was always more stimulating than our victorious opponents’. I still have the scar I got on the palm of my hand from sliding head-first into third base during one of our defeats. My other souvenir from those days is a bookend I inherited from one of my predecessors, John Dietrich, who was my TA in my first year and a source of friendship, inspiration and support.

The Ad Hum Building was new enough in those days that it was still settling in, structurally speaking. At one point, during some urgent repairs, we had two-by-fours propping up the walls and ceilings on the third floor and a layer of dust on every surface. Sue Fairbairn and I overheard the structural engineers in the fifth-floor board room examining their equipment and saying: “Holy sh\*t, look how much it’s moved!” The other excitement I remember was  the covert police operation, complete with marked bills, that led to the arrest of "Big Al" for stealing from the department’s coffee fund.

Memorable courses include Ken’s on postmodernism, Nick’s on American literature, Geoff Ursell’s on Conrad, Bill Howard’s on Romanticism. Many of the books I read in those years are still vividly with me: *One Hundred Years of Solitude, Moby Dick, Four Quartets, The Master Builder*. But even more it’s the people I like to remember - a great group of friends whom I missed dearly when my studies took me away from Regina.

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**SECRETARIAL CHANGE**

Danielle Myers will be leaving for a one year maternity leave on October 28th, 2011, and Doreen Thompson will be filling in until Danielle’s return.

We will miss Danielle, but welcome back Doreen.

**EDITORIAL**

**University Rankings: The Not-Exactly-Transparent Order of Things**

There’s a short article by Malcolm Gladwell in the 14-21 February 2011 issue of the New Yorker that should be required reading for anyone who, like me, is fascinated by the annual university rankings that proliferate each fall. In the article, entitled “The Order of Things,” Gladwell begins by demonstrating how the relative ranking of three popular sports cars will vary depending on slight adjustments to the ranking methodology—even though each methodology seems, in isolation, perfectly reasonable.

Some features of sports cars, like acceleration, top speed, and horsepower, seem to beg comparison. And indeed these “one-dimensional” factors seem to be the most valid when one is making comparisons. Yet most sports car purchasers actually base their decision on unquantifiable aesthetic criteria like body styling in combination with economic ones like price. Whoever bought a sports car for its gas mileage?

But if sports cars, those dumb, inanimate objects, are more multi-dimensional than they appear, what does that say about universities, those complex institutions constituted of large numbers of people all performing different, interlocking roles (instructors, students, janitors), multitudes of inanimate objects of different sizes (buildings, books, computers), not to mention highly significant abstract factors (location, history, tradition)?

Gladwell’s conclusion is clear: universities are far too multidimensional to be meaningfully compared to each other for overall quality. Narrow (i.e., close-to-one-dimensional) aspects of the operations of similar universities can be compared, but these comparisons are largely meaningless as indicators of quality. Once the comparison starts to involve more than one dimension—and all university comparisons do—then its validity starts to dissolve.

For example, the University of Regina currently has just over twice as many undergraduate students (10,740) as Princeton University (5,113), from which we may conclude...what exactly? If you think about it, the only inarguable conclusion from this statistic is that Regina has more than twice as many undergraduate students as Princeton. One might infer that the undergraduate experience at Princeton might be more intimate—but only if, for example, one were absolutely sure that first year classes at Princeton didn’t all contain a minimum of 250 students. Strictly, one cannot even infer that the U of R is “bigger” than Princeton without factoring in the physical size of the two campuses.

But of course universities are continually being compared—American universities by the annual *US News & World Report*, Canadian universities by *Maclean’s*, world universities by THES, QS, ARWU and other acronymic agencies. Gladwell shows us that the methodologies used to rank universities in the end tell us a lot about the rankers but very little about the quality of the institutions. The large weight usually given to “reputation” in rankings, for instance, serves only to ensure that universities which are old, rich, famous, and supposedly exclusive (i.e., they have high tuition fees), will always come out near the top of the rankings. There is, however, not the slightest evidence anywhere in the rankings to support the inference that, say, the quality of Harvard’s undergraduate teaching must be ten times, or even twice, as good as any given public university whose tuition fees are one tenth of Harvard’s.

The university ranking industry exists primarily because we all have a lot of prejudices about universities and we like to have them annually confirmed, positively or negatively. We “know” Oxford and Cambridge are top universities because they’ve got a lot of beautiful old buildings and many famous people went there. Moreover, we are not surprised that Cambridge has beaten Oxford to top spot this year: when we were touring the Oxford colleges during the summer, a warden was condescending to us and a sausage roll in the cafeteria upset our stomach. Read Gladwell’s article and you will understand why the University of Regina will never top the *Maclean’s* list of Canadian universities—at least, not until an eccentric billionaire leaves us a fortune in his will.

**Nicholas Ruddick**, Department Head

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**NEWS OF DEPARTMENT MEMBERS**

**Brenda Beckman-Long**'s book, *Breaking with Theory: Carol Shields and Women’s Self-Representation,* has been accepted for publication by the University of Toronto Press. Based on her PhD dissertation at the University of Alberta, it is forthcoming in 2012.

**Nils Clausson** published “Clarity, George Orwell, and the Pedagogy of Prose Style; or, How Not to Teach ‘Shooting an Elephant’” in *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 11.2 (Spring 2011): 301-23. His article “Charles Yale Harrison’s ‘Little-Known Minor Masterpiece’: *Generals Die in Bed*, Modernism, and the Canon of World War I Fiction” appeared in *War, Literature & the Arts* 23 (2011); available online at <http://wlajournal.com/23_1/23_1_critessay.html>. His 2007 essay on G. K. Chesterton’s short story “The Invisible Man” was reprinted in *Short Story Criticism* Vol. 148, ed. Jelena Krstovic (Detroit: Gale, 2011): 97-103. His brief articles on Matthew Arnold’s “Thyrsis,” Earle Birney’s “David,” Arthur Machen’s *The Great God Pan*, and Charles Yale Harrison‘s *Generals Die in Bed* were published in *The Literary Encyclopedia* in 2011. In October Nils gave a paper at the Arthur Conan Doyle Conference “A Study in Scandal” held in Toronto; the paper was on “Mesmerism, Criminality, and Scandal in ‘The Illustrious Client,” “John Barrington Cowles,” and *The Parasite*.”

**Marcel DeCoste** published "The World's Anachronism: The Timelessness of the Secular in Evelyn Waugh's *Helena*" in April in the essay collection *A Handful of Mischief: New Essays on Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Donat Gallagher, Anne Pasternak Slater and John H. Wilson (Fairleigh Dickinson UP: 2011). In August, Marcel traveled to Downside School and Abbey in Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Somerset, to participate in the Third International Evelyn Waugh Conference. His paper was entitled "'Just Death and Art': The Mortuary Aesthetic of Secular Culture in *The Loved One*."

**Susan Johnston** has recently published "*Harry Potter*, Eucatastrophe, and Christian Hope" in *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 14.1 (2011): 66-90.

**Cameron Louis** published *“A Macaronic Medieval Poem* in the Faversham Borough Custumal” in *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 112 (2011): 211-15*.* He would also like to thank his colleagues and friends for all their support and encouragement during his recent illness.

**Cindy MacKenzie** participated as a presenter at the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild Fall Conference (October 14-16) on a panel called "The Science Within You: Biographical Methods."   Her paper was titled, "Fleeing the Biographer: Who Is Emily Dickinson?"

**Medrie Purdham** has had a poem accepted by the *Malahat Review* and an essay on Leonard Cohen has been provisionally accepted by *Canadian Literature*.  Her essay on Alice Munro is forthcoming in the Critical Insights series.

**Nicholas Ruddick** was appointed head of the Department of English on 1 July 2011 for a three-year term. Jonathan McCalmont’s “Interview: Nicholas Ruddick, Author of *The Fire in the Stone: Prehistoric Fiction from Charles Darwin to Jean M. Auel*,” appeared in *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* 39 (Summer 2010): 18-26. Nick’s article “Science Fiction” was published in the online *Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century British and Irish Fiction*, edited by Brian W. Shaffer (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). He has signed a contract with a 2013 deadline with Gylphi Press of Canterbury, England for a book tentatively titled *Science Fiction Adapted to Film*: *Attack of the Mutant Parasites*. His 2010 conference paper, “‘Did you think God had exempted Weybridge?’: Spatiotemporal Dislocation in Film Adaptations of H.G. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds*,” is now available online at the Humanities Research Institute (University of Regina) Research Showcase: <http://www.humanitiesresearch.org/2011/03/did-you-think-god-had-exempted-weybridge-spatiotemporal-dislocation-in-film-adaptations-of-h-g-wellss-the-war-of-the-worlds/> He gave a public talk, “Rapunzel Untangled: Should Walt Disney Be Allowed to Mess with Our Beloved Traditional Fairy Tales?” in the “Profs in the City” series at Neutral Ground Contemporary Art Forum in downtown Regina on 23 August 2011.

**Jeanne Shami**’s essay "Women and Sermons” appears in the recently published *Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*. This is the first essay that tries to integrate women's history and experience into this most powerful institutional practice. Jeanne has taken up a Visiting Fellowship in the English Department at University College London. As part of her duties this semester, she is delivering a public lecture on "John Donne, the King James Bible, and the Challenges of Authority" (November 22). She is also leading a seminar on "Women and Sermons in Early Modern England" (November 16). Jeanne has been invited to chair SSHRC's new Research Grant Committee (which replaces the Standard Research Grant Program) for the 2012 adjudication process.

**Michael Trussler** published "The American Pelicans are Going to Disappear" in Grain. Vol. 8.3 (Spring 2011) 75-9.

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**GET READY TO TALK SOME TRASH**

The countdown to Trash Talkin’ has begun! The Call for Papers has been written and sent out to a half dozen universities, the official website of the conference is now online at [http://www.trashtalking.ca](http://www.trashtalking.ca/), and Dr. Marcel DeCoste (faculty advisor) and Christian Hardy (chair of the organizing committee) have begun to apply for funding from a number of different student and faculty organizations.

Trash Talkin’ is a student-run and faculty-assisted conference that invites scholarly and creative work that explores, celebrates, and interrogates the intersections between popular culture and academic discourse. The event presents an opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students to discuss popular culture in a serious academic environment, including topics not studied in their classes or academic field. Scholarly papers, creative writing, visual art, and film, from students of all disciplines, any theorectical or methodological perspective, on any aspect of popular culture, will be considered.

Trash Talkin’ has consistently proven to be a popular success, attracting visiting students and guest professors from universities across Canada. Dr. Ann Martin of the University of Saskatchewan will be the keynote speaker of this year's conference.

The planning committee hopes to have the full support of the English Department to make this year's conference as much of a success as it has been in the past, and will be looking for professors to donate their time to vetting conference submissions and to act as panel chairs.

More details on the conference will emerge as they are confirmed, but if you wish to have more information on this year's conference, please visit our website at [http://trashtalking.ca](http://trashtalking.ca/) or send Christian Hardy an email at [christian.hardy85@gmail.com](mailto:christian.hardy85@gmail.com)

**Christian Hardy**

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**WASCANA REVIEW**

Volume 43.1 of *Wascana Review* has just been published online.  It consists of papers from the first Canadian Creative Writers and Writing Programs Conference held at the University of Calgary and the Banff Centre of the Arts in October of 2010.  The 290-page issue includes plenaries by Greg Hollingshead, Aritha Van Herk, and Rosemary Sullivan.  There are other excellent essays that address diverse issues.  Catherine Bush has written about writing that evokes character by highlighting the kinetic aspect of the characters' lives.  Tom Wayman has described the University of Calgary's development of a class on creative writing pedagogy.  There are several essays on the way the online environment is changing writing and writers' lives.  Other essays address practical issues like running workshops with large classes or the fraught task of evaluating creative writing.  The link is: [www.wascanareview.ca/index.php/Wascana/index](http://www.wascanareview.ca/index.php/Wascana/index)

**Kathleen Wall, Editor, *Wascana Review***

**GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS**

On September 23-24, the Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan hosted Literary Eclectic VI. Well-received presentations were made by the following University of Regina students: Courtney Bates: "A Blood Pact/A Promise: Ecopoetry on Nature and Relationship", Christian Hardy: "'The Counsel of Our Fathers': Pedagogy and Fatherhood in *The Stonemason*", Cassidy McFadzean: "Riddlehoard: Metaphor and Play in the Genre of Literary Riddles",

Myron Soloduk: "Inviting Error: James Joyce's Aesthetic of Error."

Congratulations to the following students, who were awarded the MA in English on October 15th: Kelly-Anne Riess (Supervisor Kathleen Wall), Heath Phillip Smith (course-based program), Myron Anthony Soloduk (Supervisor Marcel DeCoste), Jaime Rae Speed (Supervisor Christian Riegel).

A number of students in the graduate program have been successful in winning grants and awards. Cassidy McFadzean, in addition to holding an SSHRC Master's grant this year, has been awarded a Graduate Studies Teaching Assistantship, and is the first recipient of the Dr. Morris Shumiatcher Graduate Scholarship in English. Christian Hardy is the recipient this year of the Lucy Murray Entrance Scholarship and Michelle Hardy has been awarded a Faculty of Graduate Studies Scholarship. Several other nominations for awards are in process. Congratulations to all.

During the past year inquiries and applications have been received from students at universities in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the Caribbean, the United States and Canada. New graduate students in 2011 from the University of Regina include Farron Ager, Courtney Bates, Christian Hardy, and Cassidy McFadzean. New students from other universities are Lisa-Marie Brunnen from the University of Prince Edward Island and Sarah Vennes-Oullet from McGill University. Welcome to all.

1. **MacDonald, Graduate Chair**

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**NEWS OF GRADUATES**

**Eleanor Jones** (BA English 1996) was appointed last August to a teaching post with Government of Hong Kong in the area of Secondary English Language Arts and Debate.

**Orlene Murad Academic Discussion Series**

* Friday, October 21

Ad-Hum 348

**Medical Men, Women of Letters, and Treatments for Eighteenth-Century Hysteria**

Dr. Heather Meek

(Department of English)

* Friday, November 4

Language Institute 215

**Jean-Luc Godard and Ludwig Wittgenstein in New contexts**

Dr. Christina Stojanova

(Media and Production Studies)

* Friday, December 2

Ad-Hum 348

**‘We are what we all abhorre’:**

**Anthropophagy and Early Modern Physiology**

Dr. Jan Purnis

(Campion College)

**Followed by a Reception**

**Everyone Welcome**

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News to be included in the next issue of *Inklings* is due March 16, 2012**.**

**PLEASE FORWARD YOUR NEWS TO:**

**Nils Clausson, Editor**

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***INKLINGS***

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