

# Department of English



## INKLINGS

"What must anything whatever be to  
be worthy of the name of education?"  
—John Dewey

### EDITORIAL

#### THE ILLUSION OF CHOICE IN MANAGING DECLINE

by Nicholas Ruddick, Head of the Department of English

"As universities become glorified vocational schools for the corporations, they adopt values and operating techniques of the universities they serve"—Chris Hedges, *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle* (2009).

For the past three months, I have had the melancholy duty of serving on the Faculty of Art's Management Committee. This Committee, struck to "manage" looming major cuts to the Faculty's budget, has representatives from various departments in Arts, from the three Federated Colleges, and from the student body. The cuts are supposedly necessitated by an unexpected reduction in the provincial government's operating grant to the U of R over the next three years: we will get either a 2% increase in funding for the next three years (2% x 3), or, in a "worst case scenario," a 0% x 3 increase. But why should a 2% increase, or even the status quo, require major cuts? The view of the university's central administration is that as salaries are by far the largest expenditure at the U of R, and these increase by about 5% per year, the U of R needs a 5% increase from the government per year just to break even.

The Management Committee was asked by the Dean to choose among three ways of managing the cuts: 1) to "keep all boats afloat," i.e., to try to ensure that all units in Arts remain viable; 2) to identify those units that seem "weak" with the aim of helping stronger units to thrive; and 3) to consider some new, creative, and more efficient way of delivering Arts courses. In the event, we soon discovered that there was no choice. As salaries are also the largest part of the Arts budget, significant amounts of money can't be saved unless permanent jobs are cut—and sackings were fortunately not within the province of the Management Committee. Meanwhile, experimenting with innovative ways

of delivering programs requires an investment of (currently unavailable) new capital. The Management Committee discovered what should have been already obvious: after years of being under-resourced, Arts is already down to the bone. The only "savings" to Arts operations within the purview of the Management Committee would be through cutting the sessional and TA budgets—even though courses taught by sessionals assisted by TAs actually earn a lot of money for the university!

Once upon a time, when Saskatchewan was a have-not province and the fledgling U of R's existence was marginal, cuts could be managed fairly painlessly. A retiring full professor would be replaced by an entry-level assistant professor earning half the salary. In truly dire economic times, the full professor wouldn't be replaced at all and a whole salary "saved". Back then, of course, the full professor's salary was considered a permanent part of the faculty budget at the Dean's disposal. Now, however, a full professor's retirement "saves" very little for a faculty: the majority of the "saved" salary goes to the central administration, where decisions about how to spend it are made that may not involve the retiree's faculty at all. This year, the Dept. of English at the U of R lost three and a half full-time positions through retirements, with no replacements either in English or elsewhere in Arts—and this was before the new round of cuts.

The current radical cuts facing Arts, then, have little to do with the amount of money that the U of R receives or doesn't receive from the provincial government. They are chiefly the latest consequence of long-standing decisions by the central administration not to spend available resources on the Faculty of Arts. Indeed, not spending money on Arts has been an unspoken policy of the central administration for years. It seems to derive from the perception that enrolment in Arts is weak, so funds are better deployed elsewhere, e.g., in professional faculties that supposedly guarantee jobs for their graduates, or in other, non-academic areas of the university that generate income. Of course, it's impossible to know for sure how and why such

decisions are made—but the consequences are clear enough.

These consequences are very serious. The failure to replace retiring faculty means that units in Arts that currently comprise one or two positions supplemented by sessionals or TAs will disappear sooner or later. The English Department is already far below the complement of permanent faculty required at a Canadian university that claims to be comprehensive. Our service courses ENGL 100 and 110, heavily dependent upon sessionals and TAs, will no longer be sustainable. A steep decline in English, and Arts, enrolment is inevitable if retired faculty are not replaced and programs disappear. In this way, the U of R pioneers a route probably not envisioned by its founders: from public comprehensive university centred on a Faculty of Arts that teaches students to think for themselves, to a “glorified vocational school” training them for corporate jobs that may no longer exist by the time they graduate.

### OF OYSTER PIRATES AND QUICK WRISTS: THE CREATIVE WRITING M.A.

by Medrie Purdham and Jes Battis

There is more than one way to become a writer. William Faulkner wrote *As I Lay Dying* in six weeks while working the night shift at a power plant. Jack London made a living for a time as an oyster pirate, and wrote. Alice Munro's brief employment as a turkey gutter makes its way into her short story, “Turkey Season.” A Master's degree in creative writing is not a prerequisite to a writing career, but an increasingly common career path for writers begins with graduate-level creative writing workshops, as was the case for Amy Hempel, Raymond Carver and many others. The creative writing M.A. offers students an opportunity to enrich their creative endeavours with scholarship. When asked why they've chosen to pursue their prospective writing career through academic channels, our students characteristically say, *Because I want a critical and theoretical perspective on the literary field I'm entering as a writer. Because it gives structure to my work. Because I want to workshop my writing among peers who are formally knowledgeable about literature. Because I wouldn't mind teaching a class like this workshop one day.*

The University of Regina's Creative Writing M.A., a degree of relatively recent inception, now invites a growing number of applications from prospective students. It is a non-terminal degree (meaning that a student with this degree can proceed to a Ph.D.), and it supports a wonderful culture of student writing within the English department.

The department's creative writing faculty currently includes Kathleen Wall, Gerry Hill, Michael Trussler, Medrie Purdham and Jes Battis: novelists, short story writers, poets, anthologists and editors. As creative writing instructors, they work to present innovative courses at the graduate level, on subjects like Personality and Impersonality in Poetry, or

Fiction: Writing the Body. Certain literature courses (like Michael Trussler's graduate courses on Experimental Memoir and on Poetics: Theory and Practice) are designed to include interpretive options for both literature and creative writing students, who may respond to course texts creatively or critically.

Between them, faculty members have been recognized with a number of important awards, including high honours in the CBC's prestigious annual literary competition, multiple nominations and honours at the Saskatchewan Book Awards, a nomination for a Best Canadian Science Fiction award, a host of journal awards at *Arc*, *Grain*, *Vallum*, *Prarie Fire*, *The Antigonish Review*, *Contemporary Verse II* and *The New Quarterly*, and an inclusion in the *Best Canadian Poetry* yearbook.

This fall, the English department celebrates the graduation of its third M.A. in creative writing, Cassidy McFadzean. Cassidy's compelling manuscript of riddles inspired by the tenth-century Exeter Book was, for her committee, an ideal expression of an academically-realized creative work. Cassidy adopted Anglo-Saxon riddlic conventions in her book of poems and so, in the process of her composition of the thesis, made a formal study of Old English linguistics under the mentorship of Cameron Louis. Her work is in conversation with both the modern reader and with the Anglo-Saxon culture from which English literary riddles emerged. Cassidy's contemporary adaptation of the ancient form allows for a historically-engaged exploration of materiality and transcendence, and the ways in which culture constructs its object world. As Cassidy explains in her work's introduction, the riddle form gives the reader a specific perspective on the hermeneutics of metaphor and the creation of metaphorical meaning. Her external examiner, poet/editor Carmine Starnino, confirmed that the riddle was, in his view, the one form that was absolutely fundamental to poetry.

The English department has been successful in securing major Canadian writers to act as external examiners for the creative M.A. theses that have been completed to date. Our three graduates, Tracy Hamon, Kelly-Anne Riess and Cassidy McFadzean, have been examined by Anne Simpson, Dennis Cooley and Carmine Starnino respectively. The aim of the creative writing M.A. is to allow the student to produce a manuscript of publishable length, and so the department considers the rigorous external adjudication of this manuscript to be an important step in its journey towards publication. Tracy Hamon and Kelly-Anne Riess have integrated their academic work into successful poetry careers, and Cassidy, with a growing number of journal publications, a chapbook forthcoming, and a book-length thesis at the ready, is certainly poised to do the same.

For the sake of the professionalization of its students, the department is offering a half-day proseminar on certain aspects of becoming a writer: researching and submitting work to journals, considering non-traditional book formats, seeking mentorship in the community (such as in the Sage Hill program) and other such topics. The event will run on

Saturday, November 17, and more details will be forthcoming from the English department as the date draws nearer.

There is nothing to recommend a program like the excellence of its graduates, and so it is a delight to share Cassidy McFadzean's riddle, "Beat him and he stifles:"

### Beat him and he stifles

This creature answers      silent queries  
 posed by faceless      figures scattered far  
 across the plains.      He plays an endless  
 stream of melodies,      a series of birdsongs  
 as if twittering below      your balcony's window  
 each morning hour.      His hands move like  
 the sun rising across      the sky, sounds  
 blasting ever louder,      blaring as you lie.  
 Beat him and he stifles      speech, ceasing  
 his bleating for a moment,      muted for a spell.  
 In time, he'll chatter,      his channels fixed  
 to a medley of voices,      reverberating forth,  
 rousing your slumber,      spurring your day.  
 A nagging nuisance,      he's nevertheless loyal.  
 His tasteless spiels      temper your sleep.

Gwendolyn MacEwen once referred to poets as "magicians without quick wrists." The M.A. in creative writing at the University of Regina proudly assists developing writers in cultivating their own forms of transfiguration and legerdemain through strong mentorship and academic rigor; it is an appealing option for graduate students.

## NEWS OF DEPARTMENT MEMBERS

**Nils Clausson** published "Interpretation, Genre, Revaluation: The Conventions of Romance and the Romance of Religion in Benjamin Disraeli's *Lothair*" in *Dickens Studies Annual* 45 (2012): 187-208. He contributed the entries in *The Literary Encyclopedia* on Disraeli's novel *Lothair*, on Kenelm Digby's *The Broad-Stone of Honour*, on Clifford's Odets play *Waiting for Lefty*, and on Elmer Rice's play *The Adding Machine*.

**Troni Grande** and **Garry Sherbert** attended "Educating the Imagination: A Conference in Honour of Northrop Frye on the Centenary of His Birth," held October 4 – 6 at Victoria University in the University of Toronto. They both delivered papers, Troni's entitled "'Our Lady of Pain': Prolegomena to the Study of She-Tragedy"; and Garry's entitled "*Verum Factum*: Frye's Deconstruction of Actuality." As the co-editors of *Northrop Frye's Writings on Shakespeare and the Renaissance* (volume 28 of *The Collected Works of Northrop Frye*), Troni and Garry were delighted to attend the Gala Reception held October 4 in the Isabel Bader Theatre, celebrating the extraordinary completion of the 30-volume set of *The Collected Works* (general editor Alvin Lee; managing editor Jean O'Grady). The event culminated in the unveiling of a new statue of Northrop Frye by sculptors Darren Byers and Fred Harrison, a variation on the one

Byers and Harrison had created for the City of Moncton, New Brunswick, Frye's childhood home. Picture a bronzed, vested, bemused but genial Frye sitting on a bench between Emmanuel College and Northrop Frye Hall, leaning on a stack of books with another book (containing images dear to Frye) open on his lap. Despite Jean Sibelius's claim that no statue has ever been erected to a critic, Frye has once again proven the exception to the rule.

**Gerry Hill**, with designer Jared Carlson, has published *Hillsdale, a Map*, a folding, full-colour, playful but precise portrait of Hillsdale (our Hillsdale, anyway) featuring poems, photographs, animal tracks, and "65 Points of Historical Interest". For sale, \$20, at fine stores, including U of R Bookstore, Paper Umbrella, Mackenzie Gallery shop, and Luther College room 218.

**Nicholas Ruddick** published a chapter, "Adapting the Absurd Apocalypse: Eugene Burdick's and Harvey Wheeler's *Fail-Safe* and Its Cinematic Progeny," in the critical anthology *Future Wars: The Anticipations and the Fears*, edited by David Seed (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), pp. 161-79. He also published a review of Brian Boyd's *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*, in the Berlin-based periodical *Arcadia: International Journal of Literary Culture* 47.1 (July 2012), pp. 206-10. Nick gave an invited talk, "Rapunzel Untangled: Should Walt Disney Be Allowed to Mess With Our Beloved Fairy Tales?", at the Lifelong Learning Centre, University of Regina, on 27 September 2012.

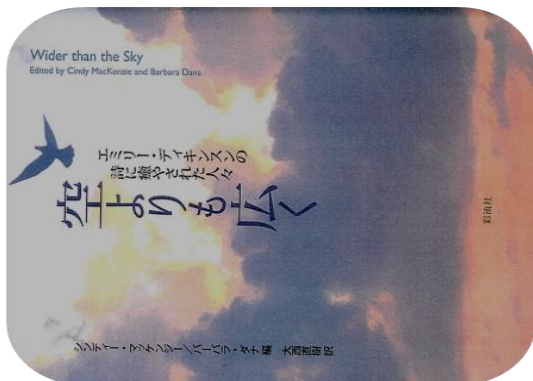
**Michael Trussler** delivered "Reading and Writing: Creative Practice" and did an Invitational Poetry Reading at the *Canadian Creative Writers and Writing Programs Conference*. Toronto: May 11, 2012. He published poetry: "You Can Tell," "Inside This 4X6." *The Fiddlehead*. 252 (Summer 2012): 136-40; and literary criticism: "Pockets of Nothingness: 'Metaphysical Solitude' in Alice Munro's 'Passion'; "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and the Short Story as Threshold"; "Michael Trussler on Hayden White, Paul Ricoeur and Others"; "A Response to Charles E. May." *Narrative*. (Spring 2012): 183-97; 147-50; 163-4; 239-40, 243. "Minimalism." *American Book Review*. 33.4 (May/June 2012): 11. Rev. of Ian D. Copestake's *The Ethics of William Carlos Williams's Poetry*. *English Studies in Canada*. 37.1 (Spring 2011): 156-60. "Narrative, Memory and Contingency in Alice Munro's *Runaway*." *Critical Insights: Alice Munro*. Ed. Charles E. May. Ipswich: Salem P, 2012. 242-58.

## NEWS OF GRADUATES

Winona Kent (B.A. Hons. English, 1975) has published her third novel, *Cold Play*, as an e-book on Amazon Kindle. To order visit: <http://www.amazon.com/Cold-Play-ebook/dp/B0083TC45Y> You can also visit Winona's website, where you can read more about her: <http://www.winonakent.com/>

## EMILY DICKINSON IN JAPAN

Cindy MacKenzie was surprised and honoured when she received an e-mail message from Dr. Naoki Onishi, Associate Professor of American Literature and American Studies at International Christian University in Tokyo, apprising her that he had translated her book, co-edited with Barbara Dana, *Wider Than the Sky: Essays and Meditations on the Healing Power of Emily Dickinson* into Japanese. Stating that he had been deeply moved by the personal readings of its contributors, Onishi, who is currently President of the Emily Dickinson International Society of Japan, wanted to share the book with Japanese readers. It so happened that he had already translated several of the articles when the great earthquake and tsunami hit the eastern part of Japan. This tragic turn of events motivated him to work more quickly and to find a publisher, the Sairyu-Sha Publishing house, in order to offer the book a year later on the March 11, 2012, on anniversary of the tragedy. His own grief plagued him as he was unable to rid himself of the horrifying scenes of suffering seemingly embedded in his mind. As he read Emily Dickinson's words, "It burned me -- in the Night -- / It Blistered to my Dream -- / It sickened fresh upon [sic] my sight -- / With every Morn that came," he felt that Dickinson must have somehow shared the same experience and he felt the strength of that thought. Several weeks later, when he opened the Asahi Shimbun, a major national newspaper to find a Japanese translation of a Dickinson poem in a popular column, "Vox Populi Vox Dei," he understood why as he read Dickinson's words: "Unto a broken heart / No other one may go / Without the high prerogative / Itself hath suffered too" (F 1745). In her words, Onishi feels, we are not simply given encouragement, but more significantly, compassion, through the sharing of feelings of loss and grief. Through the generous act of translation, Dr. Onishi has confirmed the success of Cindy's and Barbara's motivations in creating the book in the first place. As they write in the preface to the translation, "With the wisdom of Emily Dickinson and all those who have found consolation in her words, we can now do something that might offer hope, 'the thing with feathers / That perches on the soul.'" Through the invisible web of time and space, we are all joined. And so we send our sincerest wishes of hope and comfort with this translation, knowing that Japanese readers will share in the healing power that Emily Dickinson offers to all of us."



## Orlene Murad Academic Discussion Series

❖ Friday, November 9  
Ad-Hum 348

**"I meant *nothing* by the lighthouse": Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry, and the aesthetics of uncertainty**

Dr. Kathleen Wall  
(Department of English)

❖ Friday, November 23  
Ad-Hum 348

**'A judgment come upon him': Atonement and Incarnation in Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol**

Dr. Susan Johnston  
(Department of English)

*Followed by a Reception  
Everyone Welcome!*

---

News to be included in the next issue of *Inklings* is due  
March 18, 2013

## PLEASE FORWARD YOUR NEWS TO:

Nils Clausson, Editor  
[nils.clausson@uregina.ca](mailto:nils.clausson@uregina.ca)

## INKLINGS

Department of English  
University of Regina  
Regina, SK S4S 0A2



# LITERARY ECLECTIC VII



ENGLISH GRADUATE STUDENTS' CONFERENCE

ANNUAL JOINT VENTURE OF U OF R / U OF S ENGLISH DEPARTMENTS  
HELD AT UNIVERSITY OF REGINA, SEPTEMBER 21-22, 2012

**Literary Eclectic VII was a hit! The audience was stimulated and entertained with 24 splendid papers by students at the PhD, MA, Honours, and undergraduate level—10 from U of R; 10 from U of S; and the rest from U of Winnipeg, Calgary, Lethbridge.**

REALIZE.  
U R  
ECLECTIC!

## Four Reasons for Literary Eclectic

*By Tanya Foster, M.A. participant, U of R*

Literary Eclectic VII is a fall highlight for me. This year, the one-and-a-half-day event facilitated several of my academic and creative propensities. *LE* showcased fine theoretical readings of literary texts within familiar areas—Dickens, George Eliot, Yeats, Shakespeare—as well as less familiar works to pique our interest, such as *The Playboy of the Western World* and *Tree of Codes*. *LE*'s eclectic approach is thus particularly welcome. As grad students, we tend to focus on narrow fields of study; even the literary conferences we might attend are generally within our specific spheres of scholarship. *LE* offers a range of forms and styles as well as a sea of critical and textual approaches, which we might otherwise not encounter.

The opportunity for academic discussions with other scholars is the second function of *LE*. During refreshment breaks, it was stimulating and inspirational to speak to other grad students, scholars, writers, and professors about literature. For part-time students or thesis students who spend a limited amount of time on campus, these occasions are rare.

The ESA planned a social event on the Friday evening which included readings by students and by the distinguished alumna, Tracy Hamon, who enlivened the room with her lyrical poetry. Alumna Coby Stephenson also entertained us with her exquisite, soon-to-be-published prose. Such fine writers motivate and inspire me to continue seeking after my own literary success—the third function of *LE*. The week following the conference, I wrote with greater clarity and fecundity. I had been touched by the *LE Muse*.

The most profound experience of *LE* was unquestionably the plenary talk given by Daniel Scott Tysdal. Through his masterful use of technology, he told "the story of a poet and his phone," a humorous account of his own experimental practice. He presented pieces from his collection of poetry, conveying the aesthetic superiority of his work and demonstrating that he is a man of intellectual depth, empathy, and honesty. The plenary session, to me, was sublime; and how often do I encounter the sublime? This, I propose, is *LE*'s fourth, uncommon achievement.

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

English Department; Saskatchewan Writers' Guild;  
Campion College; Humanities Research Institute;  
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research; Faculty of Arts; Luther College.

*from* PLENARY TALK: SEPT. 22, 3:30 P.M.,  
RIC THEATRE

DANIEL SCOTT TYSDAL — University of  
Toronto Scarborough

BA Hons (Regina 2003); MA (Acadia 2006); MA Creative  
Writing (Toronto 2008)

"Ludacris in Louisville, Anything to Any  
One, and the Really Real Thing: On the Value  
of Experimental Practice"

Slide 55: Summary 2: Closing Icebreaker

*Think!* Close your eyes and think about it—the ice. Think about the massive block of ice, that unskate-able surface, or un-scale-able glacier, made of what is missing, or composed of alienation or what alienates, anxiety or dread, or the trap or the expanse, or the voice that demeans or distorts or deceives.

*Pair!* Pair up with the maker inside yourself: the one who listens, crafts, questions, explores.

*Share!* Share the work of encountering the ice, of breaking it, or the work of scaling the glacier, climbing up or down, or the work of navigating the frozen expanse—share the fall into the frigid waters when the ice gives way, your breath held and limbs churning as you swim in search of just the right spot to break back through.