



Department of English Graduate Student Newsletter

Letter From the Director of Graduate Studies

“Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will: or, How I Became the New Director of Graduate Studies”

Dear Graduate Students,

As most of you know, Dr. Thomas L. McHaney has stepped down as Director of Graduate Studies, and I have stepped in. What most of you probably don't know is that if it weren't for Tom McHaney I might not have had an academic career at all.

Over twenty years ago I came to Georgia State to finish my undergraduate degree. I had just enough money to take one class that particular term, and it happened to be Tom's course in the American

Novel. I had also just started to try to write some fiction, and about halfway into the term I asked Tom if he would read a story I had written. He read it, said he thought it was good stuff, and even encouraged me (with typical McHaney optimism) to send it to the *New Yorker*. When the story was quickly rejected there, Tom told me the Faulkner line about

rejections—that you need a hundred to make it up to zero—and suggested that I try *The Georgia Review*. Now, at the time I knew what the *New Yorker* was because I had seen it at the newsstand, but I confess that I didn't know *The Georgia Review* and in fact didn't really understand what literary quarter-

lies were. So I was surprised in more ways than one when the story was accepted. The publication itself helped, considerably, when I began applying to graduate schools. I'm not saying that I wouldn't have

gotten into grad school, and hence wouldn't have an academic career, without that first publication, but it did help, considerably, which means that Tom helped, considerably. His enthusiasm and optimism helped me, just as they have helped many others over the course of many years.

To offer a slightly contrasting narrative, I recall that, around the same time, I was visiting another faculty member in his office (I used to pester these people quite a bit), and I was discussing with him my, well, enthusiasm and optimism about literary studies and the possibility of my going to graduate school. He listened patiently, and was at least tacitly support-

ive, as I recall. However, in the corner of his office, hunched over a small writing desk, was a gaunt and pale figure who, without looking up from the text at which he was squinting, offered the suggestion, more or less snarled, that a consideration of the academic job market might have an effect on my enthusiasm and optimism. I suppose this person must have been a graduate research

assistant. Perhaps he went on to a brilliant academic career and is now himself a Director of Graduate Studies, maybe even a Dean, fat and happy, at some prestigious institution. But he didn't seem particularly happy, enthusiastic, or optimistic at the time.

Of course, I don't know what happened to him, nor do I know what might have happened to me if I had taken too closely to heart his snarled advice and the other voices of discouragement I heard over the years. I do know that listening to Tom McHaney, and other encouraging voices, got me where I am

Kudos

Creative Writing professors John Holman and Sheri Joseph are featured in the collection *After O'Connor: Stories from Contemporary Georgia*. This collection was just published by the University of Georgia Press. Dr. Holman's story "Rita's Mystery" and Dr. Joseph's story "The Waiting Room" are included, along with stories by other writers who have taught here at GSU—Pam Durban and Carol Lee Lorenzo. Congratulations!



today (happy, trying not to get fat), and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him, once again.

The point of my stories is that while you may very well develop a sort of pessimism of the intellect during your graduate studies, you shouldn't lose your optimism of the will (the phrases come from the Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci). Be realistic (no, the academic job market isn't exactly great) but not fatalistic (people do get jobs). Be prepared for moments of disappointment (your seminar presentation doesn't go as well as you would have liked; your article gets rejected; you go to a conference and your 8:00 a.m. panel outnumbers your audience), but use these moments to build your strength, even if it's only the strength of your skin (what doesn't kill us makes us stronger, says Nietzsche). Cultivate relationships with people (faculty members, fellow graduate students, friends) who are interested in—or at least not hostile to—your own intellectual cultivation. Remember that song by the Smiths, in which Morrissey wonders: "why do I waste valuable time on people who don't care if I live or die?" And remember, along with the Buddha's first noble truth—"life is suffering"—his forty-second noble truth, "grad school isn't easy."

OK, Buddha never said that, and it may not be noble, but it's true. Difficulties, and causes for pessimism, will emerge, perhaps abound. But so will opportunities for developing your optimism of the will. In any case, whatever your level of optimism or pessimism, whatever your concerns or questions about the graduate program and your place in it, please come by my office, introduce yourself if we haven't met, or, if we have, catch me up to speed on your progress and projects.

Dr. Calvin Thomas
Director of Graduate Studies

2003–04 Lecture Series

All lectures will be held in the Troy Moore Library, 939 General Classroom Building, unless otherwise noted. Information: (404) 651-2900.

Stephen Ennis, Special Collections, Woodruff Library, Emory University. "In the Author's Hand: The Role of the Artifact in a Facsimile Age." 12:30 p.m., Wednesday, 5 November 2003

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, Dublin, Ireland. "Translating Mythology." 12 noon, Tuesday, 16 March 2004

Ní Dhomhnaill will also be giving a reading from her

poetry at the Margaret Mitchell House at 10th and Peachtree at 7 p.m. on Monday, 15 March 2004. This event will be preceded by a reception at 6 p.m. RSVP: (770) 578-3502.

New MA Exchange Program

The Department of English is initiating an exchange program at the Master's level with the University of Northumbria in Newcastle, UK. The program is specifically intended for students with interests in British and American Cultural Studies, and will begin as early as the spring semester of 2004. Interested students should contact Tanya Caldwell, Associate Director of Graduate Studies (404-651-2900).

Cynthia Scheinberg, Mills College, Oakland, California. "Goblins, Whores, and Talmudic Charity: Victorian Women Writers and Jewish Theological Literacy." 12:30 p.m., Monday, 22 March 2004

Professor Scheinberg's lecture is presented in conjunction with the Program in Jewish Studies and the Middle East Center for Peace, Culture, and Development.

Mason Lowance, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. "Rhetorical Strategies in Uncle Tom's Cabin." 12:30 p.m., Wednesday, 14 April 2004.

Music Review

Dear Catastrophe Waitress, the latest from Belle & Sebastian, hasn't left my CD player since I got it a few days ago. I'm a fan, but not since their great *If You're Feeling Sinister* (1996) have I found immediate pleasure in every song on one of their albums, and so far this one just gets better. Like all their work, this is pristine pop with jazz and folk touches, and, as usual, the smart lyrics paint detailed portraits of people in ordinary trouble; but the varied melodies here sound especially assured and straightforward and the stories a bit less enigmatic than usual without losing any of their heart or wit. To quote Nick Lowe in another context (tongue firmly in cheek), this is "pure pop for now people," and for those who don't know this fine Glasgow band, the new album would be a perfect introduction.

Speaking of Glasgow bands, my favorite one, the Pastels, have just released music they composed as a

soundtrack for a Scottish film called *The Last Great Wilderness*; it's mostly dreamy instrumental music that evokes said wilderness, but it also includes a couple of new Pastels songs, one sung by Stephen and one by Katrina. By the way, fans of soundtrack music should listen to the WRAS Nitrate 88 show on Friday afternoons.

But the album that's impressed me most during the last few months is *You Forgot It in People* by the Toronto music collective Broken Social Scene, a group of ten men and women plus guests who trade off instrumental and vocal duties to create a wildly eclectic and lightly experimental cycle of songs. Juxtaposing lovely minimalist instrumentals, folk and jazz textures, squalling guitars, indie pop, and noisy sound sculptures, along with lots going on in the background and unpretentious vocals and lyrics, the music stays vibrant and engaging throughout, with something for everyone.

I spent some of the summer in power pop mode, listening to Big Star, Teenage Fanclub, Velvet Crush, the DBs, and the Go-Betweens, who have a fine new album this year, as do the Clean. For fans of this hook-heavy, punky pop, I'd recommend new releases by Fountains of Wayne (boys), All Girl Summer Fun Band (girls), and, especially, The Salteens (girls and boys), another entry from north of the border.

Most who have read this far probably go out to see music, but here's my two cents worth anyway: there's lots of great, cheap music to see in Atlanta, and there's no reason to pay thirty bucks to see anyone. *Stomp and Stammer* and *Creative Loafing* can help you decide what to see and where to go.

Among many possible recommendations, I'd suggest that readers check out Jonathan Richman at least once, treat themselves to a Yo La Tengo show, and see any incarnation of the Mekons, including the incendiary Waco Brothers or John Langford or Sally Timms singing folk and country standards. And if you just want to have a fun night at a club, take in a show by the Woggles, the Young Antiques, or another of the many fine local bands.

– Wayne Erickson

News & Notes

After recovering from a serious back injury sustained last spring (compliments of a Georgia State staircase), **Connie Baechler** traveled to New York in a back brace, determined to find an agent for her

multicultural novels, *American Stila* and *Coconut Milk*. Ultimately, she secured excellent representation and continues to work on her latest manuscript while her agent sends the completed novels, dressed in their best frocks and flashing party smiles, to a variety of publishing houses. In addition, Connie placed second in a Georgia Writers Association contest this summer, and her poem "Disturbance Amid Dust Motes" was published in the fifth volume of *On My Mind*, the Georgia Writers Association Anthology. Her poetry submissions accumulate rejections from a variety of literary journals; the latest include *Glimmer Train*, *Alligator Juniper*, and *River Oak Review*. Meanwhile, Connie works ardently on her dissertation and, of course, maintains an interest in departmental culture. She would like to thank Drs. Carolyn Denard and Thomas McHaney for their guidance

Spring 2004 Examination Dates:

PhD Specialist: March 27, 2004

PhD Non-specialist: April 3, 2004

MA: April 10, 2004

Please note that the MA exam has been changed from what was listed in the previous GEA newsletter.

For those of you who plan on taking the PhD exams, we now have a form you will need to fill out specifying which exam you will be taking. Please see Michele Yulo to obtain the form.

and unwavering support during her recuperation.

Mike Dockins has poems appearing this fall in *Crazyhorse*, *The Southeast Review*, and *5AM*, and an essay on Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* forthcoming in *The Massachusetts Review*. On August 5, 2003, his poem "American Love Story," from *The Gettysburg Review*, was featured on *Poetry Daily* (www.poems.com). The second issue of *Redactions*, a poetry journal he co-founded and co-edits, will be available in late October. Mike's acoustic band CLOP hopes to release its fourth album, *Fame For Zoe*, this spring. Look for live shows at Vickery's in Midtown on Sunday nights. Mike recommends Liz Phair's new self-titled album and, as always, the prose poetry of Louis Jenkins.

Daniel C. Richardson will be presenting a paper

on Brazilian cinema, entitled "From Quilombo to Favela: The Creation of Space in Two Films by Carlos Diegues," at the November SAMLA conference. His paper "Bridging the Gulf: An Analysis of a Brazilian Translation of Faulkner's *Wild Palms*" will be published by *The Faulkner Journal* in 2004.

New Readings of Significant Texts

The English department is sponsoring its Fourth Annual Lecture in its "New Readings of Significant Texts" series on Wednesday, March 31, 2004, in the Troy Moore Library. Dr. Malinda Snow will present "Betrayed by Adults: Teaching Jane Austen's *Persuasion*."

SAMLA Convention

The 2003 South Atlantic Modern Language Association (SAMLA) Convention is being held November 14–16, 2003, at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis. If you are interested in volunteering for this year's convention (and having your registration fee waived), please contact Lori Howard (910 GCB; phone: 404-651-2693; email: samla@samla.org). For more information about SAMLA, our journal—the *South Atlantic Review*—or our annual convention, please visit www.samla.org.

Ninth Annual Conversation among Partners in Learning

The English Department is sponsoring its ninth Conversation among Partners in Learning on March 20, 2004, from 8:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m. This conversation will be on the topic of "Critical Approaches to Drama in the Classroom." Feel welcome to join this conversation between undergraduate students, graduate students, middle and secondary teachers, and college instructors. Registration forms will be available in the main office (923 GCB) closer to the event.

Spring 2004 Course Offerings

FOLK 6100 British Folk Culture (MW 5:30–6:45)

This course, offered only once every two years, should be of special interest to those studying British literature. With lots of slides and audio illustrations, the course examines the oral, musical, cus-

tomary, and material traditions of England, Scotland, and Wales, focusing on their regional patterns and reflection of history. For information, contact Dr. John Burrison (404-651-2904 or jburrison@gsu.edu).

ENGL 6510 Grant & Proposal Writing

Offers study and practice in grant and proposal writing in business and organizational settings. Examines the rhetorical issues concerning grant and proposal writing. Aims to help you develop useful skills whether you'll be working for non-profit organizations, businesses, or research institutions. Introduces various genres such as project proposals, grant applications, research proposals, funding requests, consulting proposals, internal vs. external proposals, product vs. service proposals, research vs. R & D proposals, etc. (Dr. Gu)

ENGL 8750 Twentieth-Century Prose

This course will focus on the themes of time, art, and intertextuality. Our ur-text will be one of the most important novels ever written, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. Growing out of that, we'll read things like (still subject to changes if I get a last-minute epiphany) Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot*, John Fowles's *French Lieutenant's Woman*, Tom Phillips's *The Humument* (an obscure artifact—and, I guarantee, one of the most mind-blowing texts you'll ever encounter), maybe A. S. Byatt's *Possession*

Keep in Touch



Has your mailing address, telephone number, or email address changed recently? If so, please be sure to update your information with the University on GoSOLAR.

To keep the Department up to date, email any new information to Michele Yulo at engmay@langate.gsu.edu.

... and a couple of other works TBA. (Malamud)

ENGL 8855 Early American Literature, TT: 2:30–3:45 (Comp. # 11366)

Please join us to read about *Savage Indians*, *Wild Women*, and *Desperate Men* in Dr. Reiner Smolinski's seminar on the early American novel:

(1) Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly* (1799)

- (2) Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland: Or the Transformation* (1798)
 (3) William Hill Brown, *The Power of Sympathy* (1789)
 (4) Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok* (1824)
 (5) James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826)
 (6) Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette* (1797)
 (7) Gilbert Imlay, *The Emigrants* (1793)
 (8) Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple* (1794)
 (9) Rebecca Rush, *Kelroy* (1812)
 (10) Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie* (1827)
 (11) Tabitha Gilman Tenney, *Female Quixotism* (1801)
 (12) Royall Tyler, *The Algerine Captive* (1797)

German Exchange Program

Spend a year in Germany, fulfill your foreign language requirement, and transfer your course credits to GSU!

We are looking for a graduate student interested in spending a year (Oct. 1, 2004–July 31, 2005) at the American Studies Department, Johannes-Gutenberg Universitaet, Mainz, Germany (GSU–Mainz Exchange). Classes are conducted in English! Benefits include: (1) tuition waiver (2) assistantship c. \$1,500 per semester (3) teaching classes for extra money—if you are in the PhD program (4) transfer credits to GSU (5) study German there to fulfill foreign language requirement at GSU (6) and much, much more.

If you are interested in this program, please contact Dr. Reiner Smolinski, Department of English, 963 GCB, e-mail: rsmolinski@gsu.edu

Spring 2004 Calendar

The Spring 2004 calendar is available online at <http://www.gsu.edu/%7Ewwwreg/regguidespring04/calendar.htm>

Course Lookup:

https://www.gosolar.gsu.edu/bprod/plsql/wwwkschd.P_CrseSearch

Department Websites

Department of English Homepage

www.gsu.edu/~wwweng

Eudora Welty Newsletter

www.gsu.edu/~wwwewn/

Five Points

webdelsol.com/Five_Points

Graduate English Association (GEA)

www.gsu.edu/~wwwgea/

GSU Review

www.gsu.edu/~wwwrev/

Rhetoric and Composition

rhetcomp.gsu.edu

South Atlantic Review

www.samla.org/review.htm

Studies in the Literary Imagination

www.gsu.edu/sli

Writing Across the Curriculum

www.gsu.edu/~wwwwac/

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