

Loose Canons

Volume 2, Issue 3

Emory University English Department

November 1999

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In Future Issues:

Loose Canons will be branching out to include more information by and about undergraduates.

Each issue will also include a feature article written by an alumna of the Ph.D program and a Faculty Profile.

Please consider contributing to Loose Canons. For more information contact:

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The Tenuous Trail to Tenure

By *Elizabeth J. West* ('97)

The fall of 1998 brought a long awaited moment for me. Years of working in private industry and knowing that I had compromised my ambition, years of graduate school, and years of anticipating completion of studies and the beginning of a career in academia—I was there. I was there with all the trimmings—a tenure track position in a large research institution with plenty of resources. There was a small price to pay, but then there always is. The cost: living in a small, conservative (code word for intolerant) town surrounded by the most unattractive landscape I have ever experienced. But I had made a campus visit—I knew this before I submitted my letter of acceptance. Surely, these little side annoyances couldn't interfere with the great professional opportunity before me. A year later in the fall of 1999 I have come to understand all too well that the side annoyances as well as the adjustment to a new academic environment can be much to negotiate. I have survived—I think—and still see academia as my professional home. And that is saying a lot, for it has not been an easy road.

The view of academia from the lens of the tenure seeking scholar looks more like a distant panorama of endless pasture land—much like the landscape here in Southeast Texas. This vast emptiness must be filled with publications, committee work, and exemplary teaching, and while it is not part of the official criteria, you must give off an aura of collegiality. Of course, the paradox in part lies in the realization that you have minimal control in these areas that serve as the reflection of your academic merit. You send articles out to journals that have a two year turn around—and that's only to notify you of acceptance. Another two years to publication is not uncommon. Meanwhile, you are up for yearly reviews that are based on your publication record. Then there is committee work. You are freed of committee work for your first three years in my department; however, to continually reject requests for your participation on committees can quickly gain you the reputation of not being a team player, i.e. lacking in collegiality. And teaching, that part of the job that you love the most, also has its paradoxes. We want to challenge students and award them grades that reflect their performance, but then we would also like to receive rave reviews from them so that our teaching portfolio impresses our reviewers. Somewhere in all this there is one's personal life, and in a small Texas town two hours from everywhere there is much to be negotiated. Given the aftermath of the Hopwood Decision and the lack of diversity in the institution and the town, I have found



John Bugge and Elizabeth West

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Graduate students volunteer with Hands on Atlanta

On October 2nd, approximately 15 graduate students (and Professor Frances Smith Foster, an honorary grad student for the day) awoke in the wee hours of the morning—an unusual feat for many grad students—to put their various skills to work for Hands on Atlanta Day, the annual festival mobilizing the largest group of volunteers in the Southeast. These bright-eyed youngsters met at Perkerson Elementary School in South Atlanta and quickly found themselves digging, raking, planting, sorting, scraping, painting, and washing their way throughout the school and the surrounding area. After a few hours, strengthened by instant coffee and Krispy Kremes, they looked upon a freshly painted gymnasium and matching restrooms, clean windows, sorted library books, litter-less grounds, and a landscaped entrance and knew that, after a few hours of sorely-missed nap time, they could appreciate all they had accomplished. Until next year. . .

Scott Ellis

Loose Canons

Loose Canons is published three times a year - Fall, Spring, Summer.

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this a most challenging place to teach African American Literature. How is it that we find a place in the curriculum for African American Literature when we have been handed a court decision informing us that we are a color-blind society? If race no longer matters, how secure is a job that teaches race-based readings of American Literature?

With all these bonuses in this job why am I not making a hasty return to private industry? Some days I am not quite sure, but I think I am determined to stay because there are these rare but heartening moments when I see an idea connect with a student—an idea that he or she entered my classroom in stern opposition to. It is an uncommon moment in the classroom. In fact, it is a rare moment in life when we witness learning—the opening of the mind and placing of one’s convictions on the public block for critical scrutiny. But again, these are rare moments, hardly enough to compensate for the nightmare of pursuing tenure. I suppose, then, that I am not certain why my passion remains. And perhaps this is a good thing, because it is often in the knowing that we come to abandon the quest. So, let’s hope that my epiphany does not arrive before tenure. 🌟

Academy of American Poets Prize for Best Poetry Written by an Emory Student

In 1955, The Academy of American Poets established its University and College Poetry Prize program at ten schools. The Academy now sponsors more than 160 annual prizes for poetry at colleges and universities nationwide, and has awarded more than \$350,000 to nearly 10,000 student poets since the program’s inception.

Many of America’s most esteemed poets won their first recognition through an Academy College Prize, including Diane Ackerman, Toi Derricotte, Louise Glück, Robert Pinsky and Sylvia Plath.

Emory’s first place poem, *Crossing Waters*, by Brendan Corcoran is below; Connie Monson’s poem, *When she turns fifty*, received an honorable mention and can be found on page 11.

Crossing Waters

Brendan Corcoran

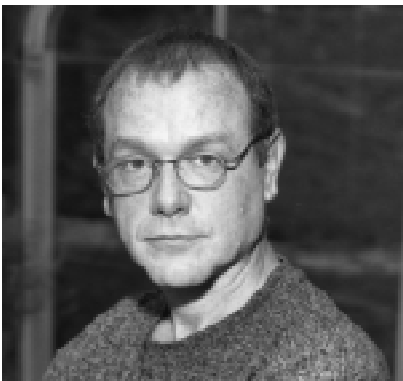
To get there we breasted no surf in a bantam vessel, pulled no oars with salt-cured hands, traversed no rich banks beneath blue water—the ferry dropped us at the pier. Our destiny lay not in donkey carts retrieved from postcards; nor in Dún Aengus, that marvel of brute battlements keeping what out, what in at the world’s edge; nor in the intricate stone tracery of walls, like the heavy net of myth the island bulges against but to be sliced into green, gold, and dark parcels by granite filaments. Hauled high at the harbor’s mouth, a curragh lay wrecked belly-up like a black caul bleaching in the weather, needing more than pitch proper hands and eyes to be sea worthy again. A child, I lay upon the sulfurous wrack beneath the canvas hide and, peering overboard, felt the vessel settling into its element: deep blue swells, hope for fine weather and a lucky spot upon a blinding vastness. In your father’s tweed cap, you were a headland slipping into the blue, smiling, not quite at home.

Welcome to our New Faculty



Patricia Cahill holds degrees in English from Wellesley College and Columbia University; she also holds a degree in rare books librarianship from Columbia, where she served as curator at the University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library from 1990-1993. Her teaching interests are in early modern literature and culture as well as in gender studies. A specialist in Renaissance drama, she has received fellowships from the Whiting and Mellon Foundations as well as from the Folger, Huntington, and Newberry Libraries.

Her current research focuses on the early modern theater's engagement with the new discourse of military science, including emergent rhetorics of corporeality, labor, and race.



Jim Grimsley is a playwright and novelist who lives in Atlanta. Jim's first novel, *Winter Birds*, was published by Algonquin Books in 1994 and won the 1995 Sue Kaufman Prize for First Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and received a special citation from the Ernest Hemingway Foundation. Jim's second novel, *Dream Boy*, won the American Library Association GLBT Award for Literature and was a Lambda finalist. His third novel, *My Drowning*, was released in January of 1997 by Algonquin Books,

and his fourth novel, *Comfort and Joy*, was published in October, 1999. He is playwright in residence at 7Stages Theatre, and in 1987 he received the George Oppenheimer/Newsday Award for Best New American Playwright for *Mr. Universe*. His collection of plays, *Mr. Universe and Other Plays*, was published by Algonquin Books in 1998, and was a Lambda finalist for drama. Jim received the Lila Wallace/Reader's Digest Writers Award in 1997.



Joseph Skibell's debut novel, *A Blessing on the Moon*, received the Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Foundation Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Steven Turner Prize for First Fiction from the Texas Institute of Letters. A Book of the Month Club selection, the novel was named by Publishers Weekly and Amazon.com as one of the year's best books. It has been translated into a half-dozen languages. Joseph's prize-winning short stories and journalism have

appeared in *Story Magazine* and the *New York Times*, among other publications, and his plays have been produced in theaters around the country. A recipient of a James A. Michener Fellowship, Joseph holds an MFA from the University of Texas Center for Writers and has recently taught at the University of Wisconsin, where he was the 1996-97 Halls Fellow in Fiction, and the Humber School for Writers in Toronto.

Calendar of Events

Carolyn Heilbrun
(Amanda Cross)
Detective Fiction

November 9, 1999 7:45 p.m.
Reading and lecture
Cox Hall Ballroom
Reception and book signing to follow.

**Word & Image: Samuel Beckett
and the Visual Text**

November 11, 1999 5:00-7:00 p.m.
Opening Reception
Schatten Gallery, Woodruff Library

November 12, 1999 7:00 p.m.
Marjorie Perloff
Symposium on Word & Image
Special Collections, Woodruff Library
Please call 404-727-4885 for more
information.

Edna O'Brien
Irish novelist

January 20, 2000
Reading from her forthcoming novel
Wild December. Please call 404-727-
4885 for more information.

**Jim Grimsley
Joseph Skibell**
novelists and playwrights

January 26, 2000 8:15 p.m.
Reading
Please call 404-727-4683 for more
information.

Frederick Busch
short story writer and novelist

February 9, 2000
Colloquium 2:30 p.m.
Reading 8:15 p.m.
Please call 404-727-4683 for more
information.

Electronic Texts and Resources at Emory

Two years ago, a former professor of mine sadly recounted how her six-year-old daughter had just taught her to use their home computer. "I can't believe it," she recalled. "Here I am, a professor of English, I have numerous publications to my credit, I teach graduate students, yet my daughter has to show me how to use a cd-rom. That's a little troubling."

Troubling, maybe, but her six-year-old had assisted her with a cd-rom entitled, "The New England Transcendentalists," a multimedia resource designed to help introduce students to Transcendentalism and Transcendentalist writers, a resource she would later use in her undergraduate classroom.

Over the past decade, several companies, universities, and well-wishing scholars have created resources such as "The New England Transcendentalists" to assist with literary scholarship. Emory University's own Lewis H. Beck Center for Electronic Collections and Services is one such organization. Since 1995, the Beck Center has increased its holdings of manufactured cd-roms and has created a few databases of its own, an effort designed to keep pace with scholarly technological advances throughout the world. While a few curmudgeons, Luddites, and technophobes, who still view "Pong" as technologically excessive and who pine for the days when they would walk three miles through driving snow to the local library to turn the pages of a "real" book and read it by candlelight, remain skeptical at best about electronic texts, organizations such as the Beck Center are trying to ease such growing pains. "Electronic resources," says Alice Hickcox, Electronic Text Specialist at the Beck Center, "complement traditional scholarship and give students and teachers alike access to documents previously restricted to a few

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GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

Elizabeth Brewer presented "There's Somebody There: Empathy in Yeats's Purgatory," at the Central New York Conference on Language and Literature.

Patrick Erben will present his paper "Francis Daniel Pastorius's *Beehive* and *Deliciae Hortenses*: A unity of vision through a multiplicity of language" at the MLA Convention in Chicago. His paper will be part of the "Beyond English: The Languages of Early America" division meeting for American literature.

Laura Jeffries married Ryan Reid on October 9, 1999. Her new name is Laura Jeffries Reid.

Jason Jones presented "Luckily, Few Know How to Read: *Encore* and *The Interpretation of Dreams*" to the Affiliated Psychoanalytic Workgroups conference at Boston College in May. In June, he presented "Virginia Woolf's *The Years*: Towards a Non-Reparative History" to the International Virginia Woolf Society conference at the University of Delaware. He recently presented "'An Obstinate Instinct': Notes on Arnold Bennett's History of the Real" to the seminar on "Modernists and Victorians" at the inaugural Modernist Studies Association conference at Penn State University. He also presented "History's Ravaging Joy: Blanchot, Leclair, and Unconscious Causation" to the Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society conference at Columbia University. During the summer, Jason was TA to the Emory Studies Abroad Program at University College, Oxford University.

Jennifer Margulis ('99) and Karen Poremski have produced a new edition of Susanna Haswell Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers; or, A Struggle for Freedom* (1794), which will be published by Copley Publishing Group next year. The edition is intended for classroom use and includes an introduction and notes written by the editors. Rowson's play presents women as strong advocates for liberty while it explores the situation of Americans captured by pirates and held in captivity in Algiers.

Aimee L. Pozorski will be presenting "Hagar as Hero: Representations of Womanhood in 19th and 20th Century Slave Narratives" at the Eighth National American Women Writers of Color Conference in Salisbury, Maryland.

Robert Stalker presented his paper "Unrest and Ruination in Conrad's Colonial Context" at the Victorian Interdisciplinary Society's conference on "Victorianisms" at Clark College, Vancouver, Washington.

Peter West's paper "One Hundred Years in Hadleyburg: Mark Twain and the Confiding Reader," was selected as the best paper presented by a graduate student at the 1998 SAMLA Convention. As part of the award, the essay will be published in *South Atlantic Review* in the upcoming year.

ALUMNI NEWS

Amy Benson Brown ('95) recently accepted a position as Assistant Editor for the *Academic Exchange* at Emory University. She continues to do freelance writing and editing.

This past summer at Cornell University, two Emory graduates (Catherine Burroughs,

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Ph.D. 1988, and Sarah Ferguson-Wagstaffe, B.A.) had the pleasure of teaching together a section of ENGL 131: Critical Reading and Writing (“Secret Stages: The Theatre of Living Dangerously”). Sarah was an intern preparing to teach her own course in the fall. Catherine teaches at Wells College during the regular academic year.

Nicole Cooley ('96) was awarded a fellowship at the American Antiquarian Society for her book in progress about the Salem witch trials of 1692. She recently accepted a tenure-track assistant professor position teaching English and Creative writing at Queens College-CUNY and has moved to New York City.

Louis Corrigan (M.A. '90) has decided that the world would not be measurably better if he wrote a dissertation on gender and sexuality in Hemingway, and has pursued options outside the academy. He spent a year writing for *Rogue*, an online magazine that was like a poor woman's *Salon*. For the last three years he has written about stocks, the market, and related topics for *The Motley Fool*, a leading financial site (www.fool.com) that's managed to make Shakespeare seem relevant to investing. He recently left *The Fool* to become a partner at Aesop Capital, a new money management firm based in San Francisco. He can be reached at Louis@aesopcapital.com.

Rosemary Cox ('93) has been named Most Outstanding Faculty Member at Georgia Perimeter College for 1999.

Dansby Evans ('98) has taken a job with Golin/Harris International in New York City. Golin/Harris is a public relations firm that offers strategic communications consulting to Fortune 500 companies. Over the past couple of years, the New York office has been advertising in the MLA job list, soliciting applications from Ph.Ds from across disciplines. Primarily, they have been hiring English Ph.Ds who are interested in fleeing the ivory tower, or who have just hit too many brick walls trying to find a secure position in academe. In his sixth week of work, he is delighted to report that all is well. He loves New York, and though challenging and stressful, the work is fulfilling and very rewarding. If anyone is interested in this type of career path, he would be happy to correspond (dansby@sprynet.com).

Susan Lang ('92) has taken a leave of absence from Southern Illinois University, where she is the Director of Technology and English Studies, to take a Visiting Assistant Professor position in the program in Rhetoric and Technical Communication at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. Her book, *Resisting Assimilation: Defining the Relationship Between Hypertext and English Studies*, is under contract to Southern Illinois University Press.

Magli Cornier Michael ('90) is currently Associate Professor of English and Director of Graduate Studies at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. She published a book, *Feminism and the Postmodern Impulse: Post-World War II Fiction* in 1996 with SUNY Press and, more currently, has two forthcoming articles—one on “Rethinking History as Patchwork: The Case of Atwood's *Alias Grace*” (in *Modern Fiction Studies*) and the other on “Materiality vs. Abstraction in D.M. Thomas' *The White Hotel*” (in *Critique*). She has directed one Ph.D. dissertation to completion and is at present directing three more dissertations. She co-wrote a proposal for a Women's and Gender Studies Minor at Duquesne University, which was accepted and is now being developed. She is also serving as Second Vice-President of the MLA Women's Caucus.

scholars.” As with their textual counterparts, electronic resources vary in their usefulness and credibility, but most of them offer something valuable to any student or researcher.

One example of such a resource is “The Martyred President: Sermons Given on the Occasion of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln.” This database, created over the past few months, is the result of a joint project with Pitts Theology Library and the Preservation Office to place on the world wide web a variety of sermons delivered following the assassination of President Lincoln. Within this electronic collection, scholars can read the full-text of these sermons, the originals of which are located in the Special Collections department of Pitts Theology Library, or search them for relevant words or phrases. Scholars can also click on the thumbnail image to view a full-size image of the original sermon. Before this database was created, these sermons were available only to scholars who visited Pitts Library, an opportunity not available to many researchers. “The Martyred President” now gives scholars throughout the world the capability of quickly and easily accessing these documents.

The Beck Center divides its holdings into a cd-rom and online collection. The cd-rom collection represents commercial cd-roms accessible only through the machines within the Center itself. These resources offer everything from full-text selections to annotated bibliographies, from search capabilities to informative videos narrated by top scholars in the field. The online collection, however, allows researchers to access databases from the comfort of their own computer screens. Many of these databases, such as the *Database of African-American*

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Poetry and the online version of the *OED*, are available only to individuals currently enrolled or teaching at Emory, but databases created by the Beck Center itself—the *Emory Women Writers Resource Project*, *The Martyred President*, and *Southern Changes*, for example—are accessible to anyone connected to the internet. Visit the Center's homepage at <http://chaucer.library.emory.edu>

A few of the Beck Center's resources:

Online Collection (available to everyone):

- Sermon at the Funeral of Dr. Martin Luther
- The Merton Diaries Project
- St. Aubin Abbey (Angers, France)

Online Collection (limited to Emory faculty and students):

- American Poetry
- Database of African-American Poetry, 1760-1900
- Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism

CD-Rom Collection:

- African-American Newspapers: the 19th Century (Part 1)
- American Journey: the African-American Experience
- American Poetry, full-text database
- Archive of Celtic-Latin Literature
- Chaucer: Life and Times
- The Civil War: A Newspaper Perspective
- Eighteenth-Century Fiction
- Encyclopedia of French Literature
- Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Works Now Newly Imprinted*
- Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*
- International Medieval Bibliography, 1980-1994
- James Joyce: Complete Works
- Literature of the Spanish Caribbean to 1900

Scott Ellis

Leigh Tilmann Partington's ('99) essay, "'roughly hammered links': Lady Gregory, Irish Ballads, and Political Memory" will appear in the Fall 1999 issue of the *South Carolina Review*, along with her review of James Pethica's edition of *Lady Gregory's Diaries, 1892-1902*. Leigh and George are the proud parents of Eleanor Leigh Partington, born on September 3, 1999.

David Raney's ('99) article, "'I have Only My Body for a Voice': Sex and Silence in Louise Glück's Poetry," will appear in a forthcoming issue of the *Cumberland Poetry Review*.

Laura Runge ('93) and her husband, Mark Gordon, announce the birth of Spencer Runge Gordon, born on October 1, 1999.

Anya Silver ('97) has accepted a tenure track position at Mercer University in the English and Interdisciplinary Studies Departments. She will teach both English and Women's and Gender Studies courses. Andy and Anya offer hope to all those other academic couples out there who are seeking geographically proximate jobs!

Sujay Sood ('98) is currently teaching in Boston, where he has joined the Boston Conservatory on a one year appointment as a visiting assistant professor. He is teaching junior level classes in the liberal arts department and is designing a year long course (Alternatives to the West in fall, Sources of Contemporary Culture in spring) that is a core requirement for juniors.

Kristina Straub ('84) is currently teaching a seminar on "Domestic Servants and Apprentices in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Culture" at the Folger Library in Washington, D.C.

FACULTY NEWS

Deborah Ayer's essay-review of Ted Hughes's translation of *The Oresteia* appeared on September 19th, in the Sunday edition of the *Chicago Tribune*. It is entitled "A Poet's License."

Martine Brownley's *Women and Autobiography*, which she edited with Allison Kimmich, was published in May; in the spring St. Martin's Press will publish her *Deferrals of Domain: Contemporary Women Novelists and the State*. This summer she gave a paper on "Fictions about Early Women Novelists" at LaTrobe University's conference on "Women Writing, 1550-1750" in Melbourne, Australia, and she moderated a two-week summer seminar for high school teachers at Wabash College.

Jim Grimsley's fourth novel, *Comfort and Joy*, was published in October by Algonquin Books. A selection from the novel he is currently writing, *Boulevard*, will appear in the anthology *Men on Men 2000*, to be published in February. His short story, "Jesus is Sending You This Message," will be published in the forthcoming issue of *The Ontario Review*. His play, "A Bird of Prey," is being produced at City University of New York-Long Island this fall. The play adaptation of his novel, *Dream Boy*, opened in September in San Francisco at the New Conservatory Theatre. He has been commissioned by The Working Theatre of New York/Playwrights Theatre of New Jersey to write a ten-minute play for "The Working Project," for the spring of 2001. He has completed a

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play, "In Berlin," commissioned by 7Stages Theatre in Atlanta, to be produced in the fall of 2000. His science fiction short story, "Free in Asveroth," was included in the 16th annual *The Year's Best Science Fiction Anthology*, edited by Gardner Dozois, published in July, 1999. Jim's papers were recently acquired by Duke University Library.

Xuefei Jin's story, "The Bridegroom," was published in the July issue of *Harper's Magazine* under the name Ha Jin. His story "In the Kindergarten" was reprinted in this year's *Best American Short Stories*. Recently his novel *Waiting* came out from Pantheon Books; a Danish edition of the novel was published at the same time by Lindhardt og Ringhof. *Waiting* is also among the five fiction nominees for the National Book Award. Last summer he served as a judge for the Nelson Algren Award for Short Fiction, sponsored by the *Chicago Tribune*. Recently he read his poetry and fiction at the Wesleyan Writers Conference and at Lake County College, Illinois.

Walter Kalaidjian presented a paper entitled "Reading the Incestuous Symptom: Djuna Barnes and Anne Sexton" at the Social Symptoms Conference of the Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Christopher Lane has just finished co-editing *Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis*, a collection of twenty-one essays to be published next winter by the University of Chicago Press. The book includes chapters by Leo Bersani, Catherine Millot, Arnold Davidson, Lauren Berlant, Jonathan Dollimore, Judith Roof, Paul Robinson, Lynda Hart, and many others, as well as two previously untranslated essays by Michel Foucault. Chris's essay on Mary Kingsley and three other nineteenth-century women travelers will also appear next year, in a collection published by the University of Minnesota Press. Novel: A Forum on Fiction will be publishing next summer "Almayer's Defeat," his essay on Conrad's nineteenth-century fiction. Chris lectured this semester on George Eliot at the University of Utah, on Octave Mannoni and Jacques Lacan at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), at the APCS conference at Columbia, and at Harvard.

Jim Morey and graduate student, Chip Court, announce the debut of their web page done in conjunction with Harry Rusche's summer Culpeper Seminar and the Pitts Theology Library. Point your browser to www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/CULPEPER/MOREY for a virtual exhibit of early printed books of John Milton's works. Be sure to see the 1688 edition of *Paradise Lost*, especially Book Nine, where your mouse can conjure the speeches of the Devil, Adam, and Eve. The exhibit itself, "A Peculiarly Excellent Poet," can be viewed in the Pitts Theology Library at Emory this November. Please feel free to use the site in your classes on Milton or on the archaeology of the early printed book.

Richard Rambuss's essay on Stanley Kubrick's Vietnam War film, "Full Metal Jacket," appears in the current issue of the journal *Camera Obscura*. Earlier this fall, he was invited to Davidson College to present two lectures: "The Pornography of the Sacred" and "Spenser and Milton at Mardi Gras: English Literature, American Cultural Capital, and the Reformation of New Orleans Carnival." The latter paper has been accepted for publication in the journal *boundary 2*. Rick chaired and presented a paper on a panel he organized for the Group for Early Cultural Studies Conference in Coral Gables. The panel, "Putting the Renaissance to Work", considered the surprising renaissance of the Renaissance in popular culture that has occurred in the past few years.

In Plato's Cave by Alvin Kernan

Reviewed by Walter Reed

Reprinted courtesy of *Emory Report*.

Alvin Kernan has had a distinguished career in higher education. But he is not inclined to any high-minded nonsense about it. In his experience at a number of elite colleges and universities (Yale and Princeton at length; Columbia, Williams, Oxford and others more briefly) the groves of academe look more like the cave of the unenlightened in Plato's famous parable—hence the title of his book and its epigraph from *The Republic*.

Kernan is currently a senior advisor in the humanities at The Mellon Foundation. He has served as dean of the graduate school at Princeton University and provost (associate and acting) at Yale. He is a distinguished scholar of English literature, an expert on Renaissance drama and the genre of satire, and he has been an influential teacher of distinguished scholars in his field. But he believes his day is over now and that the American university he knew and loved and hated has become something else, something not nearly as noble or compelling or exasperating to those who are now passing through its precincts.

There are two tones of voice that run through this bluntly written and often amusing academic memoir. There is the sardonic voice and indignant tone of the satirist, a figure Kernan has written about in several books. We learn of senior faculty who tyrannize their junior colleagues with petty errands, faculty wives who are

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condescended to by one and all, university presidents who are political opportunists (sorry—you'll have to read the book to get the names) and students who make a virtue of their complete lack of interest in learning. The fact is, Kernan lets us know, the halls of higher education have more than their share of fools.

But there is also the voice of the common-sense democrat, an attitude Kernan brought with him from his boyhood in rural Wyoming and his military service in the Navy during World War II, after which he arrived on the doorstep of the Eastern academic establishment under the G.I. Bill. His refusal to be impressed with the white-shoe gentility of a university culture that still served the well-to-do in the '40s and '50s becomes a refusal to be impressed with the tie-dyed radicalism of the '60s and '70s. His insider's account of the Black Panther trial in New Haven in 1970 gives an unflattering sketch of all the players in that piece of academic and political theater. Kernan never presents himself as a hero or martyr in these affairs—rather as a bemused half-outsider, even though he was clearly a person of influence all along. He makes one believe that the power an academic wields at any level of the institution is considerably less than the responsibility he or she bears. This is in itself a considerable accomplishment in our current culture of institutional suspicion, and it will no doubt be greeted with suspicion for this very reason.

Kernan acknowledges from the start that his view of the university is a particular and a local one, but he lays claim to a wider vision as well. He writes from his departmental and disciplinary home ground of English literature, but he invokes a friend who

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Ronald Schuchard's new book, *Eliot's Dark Angel*, has been published by Oxford University Press. It was launched by the Friends of the Library at Emory in October, and is being launched at the Grolier Club of New York, and at the Institute of English Studies, University of London, in November.

Lynna Williams' essay, "We Told You That Didn't We?" won the first annual Lamor York Prize for Creative Non-Fiction, sponsored by the *Chattahoochee Review*. Her story, "Comparative Religion," appeared in the August issue of *The Atlantic*. Her essay, "And Eyes to See: The Art of the Third Person," is included in *Creating Fiction*, published in April by Story Press.

Sally Wolff and Nagueyalti Warren's new book, *Southern Mothers: Fact and Fictions in Southern Women's Writing*, will be available in November from L.S.U. Press.

Uncompromising Undergraduates: Danielle Sered

Danielle Sered is a senior English major, Vice-President to the Department's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, and one of Emory's nominees for the Rhodes and Fulbright Scholarships.

My experience of literature is a living experience. In my few years at Emory, I have had the chance to converse personally with the Irish poets Seamus Heaney, Eavan Boland, Medbh McGuckian, Paul Muldoon, Thomas Kinsella, Peter Fallon, and Rita Ann Higgins, as well as the American poet Jorie Graham and the Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka. I had the opportunity to study creative writing with Michael Longley when he visited for five weeks in 1997. There are times when I feel as though I have composed a wish-list of poets I dream of meeting and have spent the last three years checking off the entries on that lists. Shakespeare and Yeats have yet to arrive, but if my experience to date is any indication, it will not be long until they do.

With the support of the Center for International Programs Abroad Summer Scholars Program, prize monies from the Norton/Modern Language Association essay prize, and support from Special Collections at the Woodruff Library at Emory, I spent the bulk of this past summer in Ireland interviewing contemporary women poets about their work. In addition to more distinguished poets such as Medbh McGuckian, Paula Meehan, Rita Ann Higgins, Nuala NiDhomhnaill, and Eilean NiChuilleain, I also spoke to emerging writers such as Kerry Hardie, Eva Bourke, Sheila O'Hagan, Mary O'Malley, Mary O'Donnell, Anne Hartigan, and Vona Groarke. Just reading the entire corpus of published work by these poets (the starting point for my project) would have been a challenging and rewarding endeavor; hearing the same poetry brought to life by its authors bordered on the overwhelming. While I am truly grateful for each of these conversations individually, I know the real life of the project lies in their interaction with one another.

The content of each conversation was dictated by the poetry itself, but some of the more prevalent themes included the relation to the English-language literary tradition, the idea



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(or problem) of the muse, the place of politics in poetry, and the healing capacity of art. While these women certainly have a great deal in common, they also exhibit all of the variations and disagreements present in any body of literature.

From the outset of the project, I have been suspicious of attempts to sequester women into a category wholly distinct from that of their male counterparts. If there is anything that undermines the notion of contemporary Irish women's poetry as a simple, uniform body of literature, it is the sound of these poets' voices placed side by side. One of the aims of my project was thus to problematize the very notion of "women's literature" (or the "woman poet"), while still recognizing that these women have in fact been excluded from the literary tradition as women and that exclusion has indeed affected much of their writing in comparable ways. When given a chance to speak about the thematics and intentions of their work, they exhibit the sheer vitality and diversity of the literary projects in which they are engaged.

This summer breathed a new life into this poetry for me. I have returned to spend this year writing an honors thesis in which I will explore issues of authority and politics in the writings of Medbh McGuckian, one of the participants in my summer project. An interview I conducted with McGuckian last year at Emory will appear in the forthcoming issue of *Nua: Studies in Contemporary Irish Writing*. Additionally, this collection of conversations will be considered for publication by several presses. I am excited about where this project may lead and what I might contribute to the growing body of critical literature on contemporary Irish women's poetry. First and foremost, however, I am honored to have had these conversations and thankful for the sheer energy and support I have found in the English faculty at Emory. If my professors (or to be more accurate, my guiding lights) produced Mr. Shakespeare for me to converse with tomorrow, it would not be the slightest bit uncharacteristic of their behavior. 🌟

A Writerly Perspective

Lynna Williams

Writers who want to keep writing learn ways to cope when the work isn't going well. I'm drawn to archery myself, since yelling 'Bullseye!' now and then can only be good for a person's morale. But I also know that Robin Hood (who was, after all, too blocked to finish *Sherwood: An Arrow's Tale*) didn't live in a forest full of slow-moving cats named Fluffy, or wear tri-focals. So I've developed other ways to cope when the cheeriest thought I can muster about work in progress is my grandmother Martin's famous line, "It's always darkest just before the power company cuts you off completely."

Over the years, I've come up with a sure-fire, two-step regime. I put it in motion the moment I begin to fantasize about simply dropping whatever I'm working on into a handcrafted basket and driving to a church in rural Oregon (clean air, so-so literacy rate) to leave it in the vestry.

The first step, always, is reading Peter Taylor. A page into "The Old Forest," and I'm already remembering what stories are, and do. No one in my family can read a map (hence another saying, "Never ask a guy holding an open bottle of Grape Nehi for directions to El Paso"). But I've learned to find my way back to my own work through reading Peter Taylor's. The *completeness* of his fiction, in every sense, makes that possible. Reading his stories, I think about what I want from my own, and for them. I think about what matters,

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once advised, "If you want to know what is actually disturbing a university, visit its English Department." He writes from his own particular experiences in prestigious Ivy League institutions, but he aims to show the huge "tectonic shifts that [have] change[d] the purpose of higher education in the last 50 years."

Such tensions between personal and historical perspectives are built into any memoir, of course. Finally, one might say, *In Plato's Cave* is parochial in the honorable sense of the word, derived as it is from "parish," etymologically "the dwelling of those who are strangers to the world." What impresses this reviewer is the melancholy of Kernan's narrative as he chronicles the transformation of the university in his lifetime, his lament over "the vanity of human wishes," as Samuel Johnson—one of Kernan's scholarly interests—called it.

Academics tend to pride themselves on being above the vanity of the less reflective segments of the society that supports them, but Kernan lets us know that this too is vanity, if not vexation of spirit. 🌟

Andrea de Man Chosen by Emory College Dean for One of Two Staff International Travel Awards

The primary purpose of Andrea's trip was to visit Emory exchange universities and to meet with contact personnel and prospective students. Andrea's trip has equipped her to better guide English majors who are interested in abroad programs. Andrea will be sharing her insights and adventures visiting the famous houses of England and Scotland and other historical sites in the Spring 2000 issue of *Loose Canons*.

New Graduate Students 1999

Mary Behrman

B.S. in Economics, Univ. of Pennsylvania
M.A. in English, Georgia State University
19th Century Novel; James

Rian Bowie

B.A. in English, Tugaloo College
M.A. in Afr. Ame. Studies, Temple Univ.
African American Literature

Jennefer Callaghan

B.A. in English, Princeton University
20th Century American Poetry; Post-
Colonial Literature

Tara Christie

B.A. in English, Princeton University
Irish Literature

Tony Cuda

B.A. in English, Duquesne University
Medievalism; Modernism

Nikia Dawkins

B.A. in English, University of Florida
American Literature; African American
Literature

Christopher Evans

B.A. in English, Bucknell University
Modernism; Joyce

Erin Goss

B.A. in English, Washington University
Blake; Yeats

Brian McGrath

B.A. in English, Northwestern University
M.A. in English, University of Maine
Modernist Poetry; Poetics; Theory

Rosslyn Pratt

B.A. in English/Theater, Yale University
Southern Literature; Drama

in other words.

Which might sound overly solemn, if it weren't for step two.

That's right, I read Peter Taylor, and then I get out the chicken video.

Two years ago, during college basketball's Final Four, I turned on the television one Saturday afternoon just in time for a short piece on Mississippi State University. The voice-over began to talk about one of Mississippi State's players, nicknamed "Big Country."

At the news that Big Country was a poultry science major, we switched to classroom footage. Instinctively, out of a hunch that something wonderful was in store, I hit "record."

When I replay the tape now, this is what I see.

The basketball player stands next to a woman professor at the front of a class. On the table in front of them is a chicken, so shiny with health that I think for a moment it's been lacquered.

"What does this chicken do?" she asks, and I start to laugh, so hard I've never actually heard the student's answers as he lists the chicken's various parts and uses.

For me, the question is enough. It's the question I ask about my work every time I read it, especially when I think I can't stand reading it again.

Asking what this story does (or this point of view, this structure, this dialogue, within a story) is also, of course, one of the ways we teach Creative Writing in our workshops at Emory. It's part of finding a story or poem's heart, a process that involves both magic and analysis. And both are needed equally, although sometimes at different stages of creation. Generation is all about possibilities, about dreaming the dream, about following the story. Revision is about learning to see what's on the page, coming to understand what a particular piece needs, serving the story.

The chicken video makes me wonder one other thing, something that has nothing to do with my getting back to work as a writer (except delaying it for another five minutes or so).

Does anyone ever ask if poultry science can be taught?

The question is asked about writing all the time, of course. The best answer I've ever heard came from North Carolina novelist and short story writer, Doris Betts, who teaches in the undergraduate writing program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Betts, who gave the keynote address at the Associated Writing Programs conference in Atlanta in 1996, has worked with a multitude of young writers at UNC, including Jim Grimsley, Emory's new Senior Resident Fellow in Creative Writing.

"In what other field," Betts asked in Atlanta, "is there the assumption that teaching destroys talent? Did Coach Dean Smith ruin Michael Jordan? What about music departments; do they ruin composers? Does a theater department destroy actors, an art studio prevent good painting, even a chemistry lab wreak havoc on future original research?"

Betts contends that in good workshops, "It's hard to find much to call ruinous. The good ones are more like an ongoing glossolalia, where each wordsmith tries to comprehend the languages of others with very different origins and histories while finding his or her own voice. . . . If we cultivate a faith that every student's writing can improve, it is because time and practice have kept improving our own. Even Eudora Welty had to grow: she once cited this opening sentence to one of her early stories: 'Monsieur Boule inserted a delicate dagger into Mademoiselle's left side and departed with a poised immediacy.'"*

Now try to imagine what happens in poultry science when it's time to revise.

(**AWP Chronicle*, September, 1996) 🍀

From the Chair: Back to the Future

Bill Gruber

30 September 1999: turned on my car radio this morning (permanently tuned to the single station it's capable of receiving) and there heard a voice ask listeners to call in if they could identify "the ATT turning point of last night's Braves game." This is apparently a daily contest. Recollect the game, identify the turning point, make the call, and win a prize. To win the contest it's not enough to have seen or heard the game. You have to have understood its course in a particular way, and you have to have been looking for a particular ordering of events. You have to know what a "turning point" is and why certain sequences of actions have them, and if you know that—whether you realize it or not—you know Aristotle's discourse on tragic drama, *The Poetics*.

It's nothing new to me, finding in a game of baseball the same framework for emotion as in a tragic drama. Growing up in eastern Pennsylvania, each summer I hoped against hope that the Phillies, the team that by actual count has lost more games than any other team in the history of baseball, would win the pennant. Baseball, like tragic drama, can break your heart. But what is even more interesting about the radio broadcast is that it reveals the subtle way that literature has wormed itself into one of the central events of our cultural lives. Aristotle had never seen a baseball game, but he knew why and how humans respond to drama. And we enjoy ball games the way we do in part because we've learned to read them for the kinds of meaning literature taught us to find there in the first place.

Of so rich an inheritance, of so much concentrated wisdom and beauty, we normally perceive only a tiny part. Literature's effect on us is like the famous unseen eight-ninths of the iceberg; most of the time you don't know it's there. I uncovered another bit of this pervasiveness three years ago on some of the language arts worksheets my son brought home from third grade. My first reaction was negative. It was mindless stuff, dumbed-down even for third graders. The "stories" they were reading consisted of things like this: "Jason wanted to surprise his mother with a birthday cake. He got a cake mix and added water and eggs. Then he put it in a pan and cooked it. The cake was on the table when Mother came home."

I read the rest of the so-called stories (by comparison, the one about Jason and the cake was pretty exciting), and then I turned my attention to the lesson sheets. I was prepared to be dismayed and outraged, but I discovered to my surprise and satisfaction that the lessons, unlike the stories, were tough-minded reading. The kids were learning sophisticated stuff: these nine-year-olds were required to answer questions about things like implicit and explicit main ideas, about cause and effect, the sequencing of events, rising and falling actions, and even crises. True, there were concessions made to the age and interests of young children—they learned about "rising action," not the *epitasis*, about the "falling action," not the *catastrophe*. But the lessons themselves could have been taught by Aristotle to the young Alexander. My favorite was the worksheet called "the plot parade." "A parade," it read, "is an orderly procession down the street, while a plot is an orderly procession through a book." I like that metaphor; it has a beautiful simplicity to it, clear and incisive. It's exactly what Aristotle meant when he called plot the "soul" of tragedy and what Paul Ricoeur meant when, much later, he called plot "the intelligible whole that governs a succession of events in any story." Most important, at the end of every story the nascent scholars were asked to answer two questions about what they had just read: "what did you like about this story?" and "what did you learn from it?"

In an economic way people who teach literature have never been worse off, but over the long

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When she turns fifty

Connie Monson

it's not the bones she worries
might turn brittle and break
she listens to the slow tick
of tap and sink each drop
blossoming rust on white each
the moment she has waited

she after all never matter wholly
but music something more
and less the first articulate
thrum of cello and hush
just after what is heard then
a chord the harmonics of there

and not there she turns fifty
learns to fix the roof she learns
Dvorák not too late what love is
angels who smash crockery
against her ribcage when we say
the heart soars does it mean

this unexpected opening drawing back
a door on its squeaky hinge
drawing the bow across a rising
crescendo drawing open the curtain
resolutely closed the act itself always an
imagination of the act itself

as if she were a kind of fruit then
as if in the mind it were not
incongruous and she almost torn
like an orange carefully separated
tender ligaments ligatures coming
apart music made that tangible

to the listener who holds the fragile
structure
of cello as material idea its touch there
and there against the thigh scattered
waves
measurable and immeasurable but
turning she
turns fifty suffused in sound now
certain the string that breaks can be
mended

Following in the Footsteps of Fluff

Chris Vilmar (Graduate Student)

When Holly first asked me to write fluff for *Loose Canons*, I was understandably skittish. After all, the Wandlessian manner is an inimitable one, filled with mallowy wafts of flowing fluff. But I soon recovered my hard-won philosophical equanimity with the consolation that, after all, much of Bill's contribution to departmental culture—that is, the culture of the pot luck and the pic-a-nic—was a quiet and almost unacknowledged pilfering from the bakery section of a local Harris Teeter. Once in possession of this important and enabling truth, my hypocrisy knew no bounds. I, too, could be a master of the fluff—perhaps of the humbler and more pedestrian Publix kind, but true, genuine, if slightly off-brand, fluff.

In addition to my almost non-existent other qualifications, I also consoled my beleaguered ego with fond reminiscences of the many talks that Bill and I had carried on within the otherwise uninhabited graduate computer lab over the summer. Perhaps even at that early stage, Bill had an uncanny premonition concerning the teleology of the fluff—I should not be one to cast aspersions on his fortune-telling abilities, not after our adventures to some Andean caves (site of invisible-ink manuscripts of the world's few remaining unpublished eighteenth-century alien poets, a literary interest Bill and I share) over the summer, where I saw him accurately predict a rain-shower, simply by observing cloud formations and color, at least five entire minutes before the deluge.

But I digress. In addition to being a fluff-maestro, Bill had offered timely logical analyses of some of the most paradoxical conundrums and ontological riddles of our time. In the oldest tradition of gentlemanly-scholarship, Bill allowed me to draw my own conclusions—which may mean that he had no answers to offer, if one chooses to be cynical and theoretical about it, which I do not. I queried. Bill obfuscated. I queried again. Bill grunted wryly but said little. I queried with rising anger. Bill cryptically advised me to consult the first three books on the shelf which caught my attention, to look randomly therein, discovering my answer, but if (and only if) I chanted in D minor mixolydian.

[Of course, Bill might recount these events somewhat differently, but I can swear to you on everything that I hold sacred—at present, a battered and oft played cassette copy of AC/DC's *Highway to Hell*, so oft played that its tape is becoming distinctly translucent—that this account is almost true.]

So home I went. The bookshelf I consulted. Pleasants' *The Agony of Modern Music* offered up the following sentence: "It rarely occurs to the contemporary composer that the blame for his estrangement from the serious music audience might lie with himself." Add to that Carlyle's famous dictum from *Sartor Resartus*, "Loving my own life and senses as I do, no power shall induce me, as a private individual, to open another Fashionable Novel." And as if the gods had not spoken clearly enough, the final passage that I culled, from Anthony Burgess's *But Do Blondes Prefer Gentlemen?*, leaves no room for doubt: "Smollett became the type of the worst kind of Englishman abroad—full of spleen, dyspepsia, insularity, xenophobia, longing for a good cup of tea and a clean toilet." Leaving me bereft of all my usual hermeneutic trickery, the divine mind had spoken with a clarity usually reserved for Puritans and Beatles. I was deprived of all my usual irony—so much so that as I slumped to the floor, awestruck, my copy of Humphry Clinker nearly ruined by the Earl Grey that spilled all over it, I never noticed that Cage's 4:33 was continuing along in all its usual glaring silence.

Such timely advice seems to indicate that Bill was privy to one of the most massive

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run the arts are likely to prove as important to us as to civilization always. The future of the profession is reasonably secure, I figure, if in 1996 the kids in the DeKalb County School System were still being taught the same things about literature that Horace (65-5 B.C.) taught the Piso family: "The aim of the poet," he says, "is to inform or delight, or to combine together both pleasure and applicability to life." 🌟

Fluff continued

conspiracies of the Western binary metaphysical colonizing oppressive tyranny ever known to humankind—which was, of course, the conspiracy to turn over the *Loose Canons* fluff to yet another white male possessed of a distinctive (within departmental confines) hairstyle. But whereas Bill's closely-shorn head revealed none of the inherent contradictions of the power elite, perhaps a mass of tangled curls offers hope that the entirety of the system shall collapse under its own weight?

We shall no doubt be entangled in such fruitless disputations when this column is published. 🌟

This issue of *Loose Canons* is the last to be produced under the editorship of Holly Bergstrom. Holly was responsible for getting the newsletter off the ground—or perhaps a better metaphor would be to say that she cast, primed, and loaded our "Canon." She leaves us to pursue her career in gerontology at Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta, where we wish her much success.

Jackie Aly, Office Manager, will be coordinating the Spring issue of *Loose Canons* while Holly's replacement is hired. There will be no break in the production cycle, and you are encouraged to submit news and articles to Jackie (jaly@emory.edu).