

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH NEWSLETTER

Fall 2015



Standing-room only at the celebration of 150 years of Dalhousie's Department of English.

TRADITIONS AND COLLECTIVE TALENTS: THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AT 150

Dalhousie's Department of English turns 150 years young this year! The theme of this installment of our newsletter, "Traditions and Collective Talents," is therefore less homage to T. S. Eliot's famous essay than a celebration of our department's history and its future. I'm not usually one to quote Eliot at length, but his meditation on tradition seems appropriate to this event. He writes, "if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a ... timid adherence to its successes, 'tradition' should positively be discouraged."

Eliot's intent is debatable, but his essay seems to insist both on a very limited notion of the literary canon, and on the necessity of a narrowly aesthetic or formalist critical approach to poetry (both of which, it turns out, somehow led to an appreciation of poetry a lot like Eliot's own—odd coincidence, that). But, still, the sentiment of this one line echoes in the department's hallways these days. We've found

ourselves looking both backward and forward, to echo Utopian writer Edward Bellamy, as we celebrate our sesquicentennial and make plans for our immediate and more distant futures.

The main celebration of our anniversary took place during Dalhousie's homecoming. Faculty members, alumni, administrators, and current undergraduate and graduate students gathered at the university faculty club for an afternoon of performances and conversations that gestured to the past only to set the stage for the future.

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The ceremonies were officiated by Dr. Melissa Furrow, who quizzed a few faculty members using an exam from 1869 (see page 5). Drs. Bruce Greenfield and Leonard Diepeveen were granted passing—but not stellar—marks on a few questions, while yours truly attempted to skip the test altogether.

This cruel examination was followed by two readings that showed both the continuing traditions of the department and those that have hopefully been relegated to the past, as well as some gestures to a better future. Both readings were of material written by James DeMille, arguably the first English professor at Dalhousie, and a noted writer (and the person who wrote the exam). The first consisted of Dr. William Barker reading a portion of a convocation speech delivered by DeMille in 1878 (below; see pages 3-4 for a selection from the address).



In this address, we see many of the traditions that continue in the Department of English today: a recognition of the intersections between the humanities and the natural sciences; an insistence on the importance of literary and cultural analysis to the development of an engaged citizenry; and, of course, a lament for the lack of financial support offered to the department and the university as a whole. The second was a more jarring reading: a poem by DeMille that he intended, one suspects, to invoke humour by twisting settler-Canadians' tongues in a rhyming rehearsal of both extant and reworked or fictional Indigenous place names. When transformed into a contemporary reading, it becomes, one hopes, a call for a recognition of the need for reconciliation and respect. This call was echoed at the conclusion of the event when Len

Diepeveen announced that the department was establishing a bursary for Indigenous and Black Canadian students, to be funded through continuing donations by department members.

From the reflection on the department's earliest days, we then turned to a more nuanced remembrance of our many traditions. Our new colleague, Shauntay Grant (right; see page 7), performed a musical spoken word piece, "Back In The Day," that explored nostalgia in all its many complexities. This moment signaled the celebration's movement from tradition to the future, when we turned to the announcement of the winners of our student contest on "Evolving English": winners



included Mady Gillespie, Jade Nauss, and Courtney Sharpe. Congratulations all! (You can read more about the prizes and the event in the [*Dalhousie Gazette*](#).)

While the celebration of our 150th year may come at another moment when we echo DeMille's fears regarding the general support for the humanities both within and outside of our university, it is refreshing to see how we are moving forward, and how both the department and English studies as a whole are constantly developing, in large part due to our many critical appraisals of the past.

This issue of the newsletter attempts to further those discussions by looking to the department's collective strength, built on the foundation of our individual and group accomplishments. Below, you'll learn about the successes of our students, faculty, and alumni in the English and the Creative Writing programs. We end with a special essay written by Sharon Hamilton for this newsletter. In it, she explores two generations of Dalhousie graduates, recalling the best of our past 150 years and invoking the hopes for our next.

—Jason Haslam

JAMES DEMILLE, 1878 CONVOCATION ADDRESS

James DeMill (also spelled DeMille) began his career at Dalhousie in the fall of 1865 as Professor of Rhetoric and History. It is from his instruction in rhetoric that the Department of English takes its foundation. On November 13, 1878, Professor DeMill addressed the Convocation of Dalhousie College. At this event, at 3 o'clock precisely, the students having taken their seats, in came Chancellor Hill and Vice Chancellor Stairs of the University of Halifax, His Honour Lieutenant Governor Archibald, the Principal of the College, and Hon. Sir William Young, Chief Justice. After a prayer from the Principal, the Very Reverend Ross, Professor DeMill read the inaugural address. He spoke for 55 minutes. Professor William Barker, who read this speech to the department at our 150th birthday party, managed to get the speech down to 5 minutes, though there were about 55 people at the event (approximately the size of Dalhousie back in 1878 – a year before it staved off financial ruin thanks to donations from George Munro).

What follows is the much reduced and somewhat modified version of DeMill's address; the full address is available online on DalSpace, in the Dalhousie Gazette of [23 November](#) and [7 December](#), 1878 (it was spread over two issues because it was too long to fit in one). The portion of the excerpt read by Dr. Barker appears below.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The present session has opened under encouraging circumstances. Since the last convocation, various changes have been made which we hope will add to the efficiency of the College. The department of Physics has been enlarged by the establishment of a regular course of study, looking toward a degree in Science, which shall be relatively as valuable as a degree in Arts.

In the cities of Europe and America the presence of a University is a mark of distinction, regarded by its possessors with gratified pride, and by their neighbours with a certain respectful envy. In Halifax, however, the existence of this University is not a thing over which the city is in the habit of greatly felicitating

itself. ... In some quarters the character and aim of our College are not apprehended.

What is Dalhousie College, really? I have sometimes suspected that this misapprehension of our character is after all due to its many-sidedness, for if on the one hand people find it difficult to understand *what we are*, on the other hand they may perhaps find it equally difficult to understand *what we are not*.

At the present day, the question regarding [our] education is somewhat perplexing; although formerly it was easy enough, for it answered itself. ... [But times have changed.] Never in the history of the world has there been anything more triumphant than the march of natural science into the domain of human knowledge. It has opened up the unknown; it has brought in its train inventions and discoveries without number.

[We have therefore reached a crossroads] – of the old learning and the new learning.

The advocates of the old learning contend that it concerns the higher use, rather than the lower utility. If you tell them that the first question of every man is – how shall I get a living? they reply that man cannot live by bread alone. ... Our old learning cannot help you to grow rich. There is no money in it. But we claim that it will make your life (once granted that bread and butter) broader, deeper.

In a liberal education there are two great ends – first, discipline, and second, culture. Those who advocate the old learning uphold the study of mathematics not because it is good for calculations in trade, in navigation, in engineering, but for its own good; ... I study Greek, says an advocate of the old learning, because it is *not* of particular utility.

But the advocates of the new learning prize utility. The immense importance of the physical sciences cannot be exaggerated.

[Must we then make a choice between the old learning and the new?] Can we not recognize the good that is in each? A true education may be given in more ways than one.

[Dalhousie must join together the old and the new.] Among us the old learning will continue to be appreciated and taught, but we have also found a place for the new learning, and to those who have not the time or the taste for philosophy, or the ancient classics, we offer the discipline of the modern sciences, the culture of modern literature. . . . Every man who pretends to be educated ought therefore to have a general acquaintance with the physical sciences, their modes of thought and expression.

Our chief drawback [in bringing together the two kinds of learning] is the lack of means wherewith to carry out our plans. We are not a wealthy college. We have never experienced the enervating effects of riches, but [we have] rather [enjoyed] the wholesome discipline of honest poverty.

Let me end with this question. What *are* the benefits of a liberal education? It is beneficial in two ways, first to the individual, and second to the nation. To the individual there results a love of study for its own sake without reference to any utilitarian end whatsoever. This love is an antidote to misfortune.

It also has a higher purpose than that of conferring happiness. Above all things, men should be thinkers, and have the broadest possible mental horizon.

This age is too given up to mere money getting, and is beginning to find this out. Its King, Mammon, devours ourselves and our children. We see around us too much *high living and low thinking*. To this an antidote is found in *plain living and high thinking*.

Can a young country afford to let its best intellects give themselves up to these higher studies in science, philosophy, or literature? This, I reply, is the best thing that the best intellects can do in any country.

Professor De Mill's speech was received enthusiastically, as was Professor Barker's reconstruction.



Drs. Marjorie Stone, William Barker (as James DeMille), and Melissa Furrow

How well would you have done on James DeMill(e)'s exam, which students wrote in 1869?

DALHOUSIE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY, HALIFAX.

SESSIONAL EXAMINATIONS, 1869.

TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 9 A. M.—1 P. M.

R H E T O R I C.

PROFESSOR DEMILL, M. A. *Examiner.*

1. Give the derivation of the word "Rhetoric," together with its earliest application; and show how it was afterwards modified. Define and illustrate Grammatical Propriety;—Style Periodique;—Style Coupe. Give examples of good and faulty use of Parentheses.

2. Criticise the following passage:—

"Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested;—that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only on the less important arguments, and in the meaner sort of books; else, distilled books are like common distilled waters,—flashy things."

3. Give an example from any author of faulty Repetition. State the relative importance of Strength of Expression; to what department of Style it belongs; and why. Define and illustrate Interrogation, Exclamation, and Hyperbaton.

4. State the chief characteristics of the style of Clarendon, Emerson, and Macaulay. Give an example from each, with remarks.

5. Give a brief historical sketch of Satire. Define the Pathetic. Enumerate the writings most conspicuous for this quality in Ancient, Mediæval, and Modern times.

6. Enumerate the different divisions of Arguments. Explain and illustrate the Argument from Probability. Show the difference in the use of this in Argumentative works, and in works of Fiction. Illustrate the ambiguity in the use of the word "because" in statements expressing Cause, or Sign. Explain the difference between Analogy and Similarity,—Contraries and Dissimilarity.

7. Frame an analysis of the subject—The Rotundity of the Earth—so as to introduce the following arguments:—

- a. Induction.
- b. Undesigned Testimony.
- c. Concurrent Testimony.
- d. Experience.

8. State the different theories respecting the probable language of Britain at the time of the Teutonic invasion. Give the divisions of the Celtic class of languages. Give examples of Celtic words which have been incorporated with English. Give dates of the following periods in the growth of the English language; and name the chief representatives of each period;—Anglo-Saxon,—Semi-Saxon,—Old English,—Middle English.

9. Enumerate the different classes of Alphabets and state to which class the English belongs. Explain and illustrate the different stages in the growth of Alphabets. Define and illustrate simple, complex, and compound sentences. Give Morrell's five fundamental laws of Syntax.

10. Mention all the known kinds of versification. State the different theories as to the origin of modern rhyming verses. Explain and illustrate the nomenclature of English metres. State generally the law of Rhyme.

RECENT DEPARTMENT EVENTS

Desire: An Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference

From August 21-23, the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students in English (DAGSE) hosted its annual interdisciplinary graduate student conference. This year's theme was desire. Like last year, the conference attracted a diverse crowd, with participants from a wide range of North American universities converging on Halifax to investigate the various origins, forms, and consequences of desire in literature, art, history, religion, popular culture, and politics.

On Friday, a stimulating keynote lecture by Dr. Elizabeth Edwards (University of King's College)—entitled “Aphanisis, or, Can Desire Fail?”—was followed by an evening of literary performance at the Dalhousie University Club. Halifax poet—and recent Dalhousie PhD graduate—Geordie Miller hosted the open mic section as well as the main event, which featured keynote performances by Carole Langille, Donna Morrissey, Charlotte Mendel, and El Jones.

Next, Dr. Jason Haslam (Dalhousie University) capped off a full Saturday of fabulous concurrent panels with

his keynote lecture “This Desire Called Dystopia: Lou Reed, Samuel R. Delany, and Utopia's Queer End.” But that was not the end of the evening, nor was the after-party at The Argyle Grill & Bar dystopian in any way. On the contrary, one might say that the whole affair—including the final day's offering of equally titillating papers—left little to be desired.

DAGSE would like to extend heartfelt thanks to Mary Beth MacIsaac for her extensive advice and administrative insight; to the graduate committee, Carrie Dawson, Lyn Bennett and Marjorie Stone; and to both our outgoing and incoming department chairs, David McNeil and Carrie Dawson. DAGSE also gratefully acknowledges the support and assistance of the following sponsors, without which this event would not have been possible: Dalhousie's President's Office, Vice President's Office, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, the Department of English, the Department of Classics, and the Department of History. Finally, we extend our warmest thanks to our keynote speakers, Elizabeth Edwards and Jason Haslam.

—*Graham Jensen (DAGSE Vice President)*

Recent PhD Defences

- Brad Congdon, “‘How to Be a Man’: American Masculinities, 1960-1989”
- Lynne Evans, “Flannery O'Connor, Tennessee Williams, and Shirley Jackson: Crafting Postwar Maternity as Cultural Nightmare”
- Adam Hutka, “Word, Image, and Vision: Cardio-sensory Sight and Cognition in the Work of the *Pearl*-poet”
- Geordie Miller, “An Allegory of Value: American Literature Within Neoliberalism”

The Honours Colloquium

On November 27th and 28th, the department enjoyed its now-annual Honours Colloquium, in which fourth-year students present their research to the department. Each panel included three students' papers, followed by discussion with the audience. We had six very well-attended panels, with papers that stretched from medieval verse to contemporary Canadian fiction, from postmodern elements in Renaissance drama to interrogations of stereotyping in Victorian fiction, and drew on contexts from visual art, silent film, cultural and political history, and philosophy. Families joined us at the panels, and at the lively reception where we celebrated our students' accomplishments this term.

—*Julia M. Wright*

CREATIVE WRITING

SHAUNTAY GRANT JOINS THE CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM



This Fall, Shauntay Grant joined the faculty as Lecturer in the Creative Writing Program. Shauntay is a writer and storyteller from Halifax, Nova Scotia. She publishes,

performs, and teaches in several literary genres, and as Halifax's third Poet Laureate (2009-11) she organized Canada's first national gathering of Canadian Poets Laureate.

A descendant of Black Loyalists, Black Refugees, and Jamaican Maroons who came to Canada during the 18th and 19th centuries, Shauntay's love of language stretches

back to her storytelling roots in Nova Scotia's historic Black communities. She is a multidisciplinary artist with professional degrees and training in creative writing, music, and theatre, and her homegrown artistic practice embraces African Nova Scotian folk tradition as well as contemporary approaches to literature and performance.

Shauntay is one of four Canadian authors selected by the Writers' Trust of Canada for its prestigious Berton House Writers Retreat (2015-16 cohort). Her awards and honours include a Best Atlantic-Published Book prize from the Atlantic Book Awards, a Poet of Honour prize from Spoken Word Canada, and a Joseph S. Stauffer Prize in Writing and Publishing from the Canada Council for the Arts.

For Shauntay's complete biography, as well as articles and reviews, event listings, and other information, please visit

ShauntayGrant.com.

SUE GOYETTE WINS 2015 LIEUTENANT MASTERWORKS ARTS AWARD

On November 7 of this year, we learned that Sue Goyette, who has also taught in our Creative Writing Program, had won the 2015 Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia Masterworks Arts Award for her book of poems, *Ocean*.

The Masterworks website [announcement](#) offers the jury's comments on this wonderful work: "How daring to take the ocean as a principal character—yet the characterization of the ocean is endlessly diverse! The original use of non-rhyming couplets is impressive, as is their repetitive, wave-like arrangement on the page. The richly varied levels of accessibility add to the poems' appeal."

Ocean is published by Gaspereau Press, and you can find it [on their website](#).



CONGRATULATIONS, SUE!

DAL ENGLISH GOES A WAYZ TO GO TO A WAYZGOOSE



Speaking of our friends at Gaspereau Press, some of our students and faculty recently attended the Press's "wayzgoose." (Pictured L to R: Julia Schabas, Clare Barrowman, Taylor Lemaire.)

What's a wayzgoose, you ask? Read on!

"In the early days of printing, the owner of a printing establishment would hold an annual dinner for his employees, to show his gratitude or his grandness, or both. The featured dish was traditionally a wayzgoose" (Gaspereau Press). So we read in Gaspereau Press's promotional material for their own wayzgoose. Modern wayzgooses are open-house gatherings and celebrations of print-making, publishing, and literary arts more generally. These days the festive goose is not served.

This past October 24th Professor Bill Barker drove Anders Jorgen, Taylor Lemaire, Julia Schabas and me down to Kentville for the Gaspereau wayzgoose. Gaspereau is an internationally known institution to those in the book world, famous for their design, and also the publisher of Sue Goyette and Carole Langille in our Creative Writing program.

When we arrived the open house was in full swing. Initially the format of the event seemed a bit chaotic. However, there was a strong sense of community in the crowd. The excitement and energy were contagious. After a few confused minutes we stumbled

into a cozy little room with walls entirely papered in bright multi-colour prints with kitschy phrases like, "Enjoy every sandwich!" and "Bluegrass Brunch." A printmaker in an ink-splattered apron was showing a small group of people how to print their own commemorative Wayzgoose prints: a series of stylized guitars in various shades of red, orange, yellow, and magenta. After she was done I asked if she could show me as well. We even got the chance to each try our hands at rolling the press.

The feeling of having to push down with all of my body weight to make a print gave me a real sense of the craft that goes into the books, posters, and signs that each artisan produces. As we were leaving, I purchased a beautiful illustrated novel. The ink that formed each word felt heavy on the thick, crisp pages, and it smelt just how books ought to smell.

As I continued to explore I met several other printers and artists. Everyone was incredibly friendly and welcoming. The lack of structure facilitated a feeling of informality and openness that was actually key to the integrity of the event. In those cozy, crowded spaces you couldn't help but feel a part of the excitement.

Attending the Gaspereau Press Wayzgoose gave me a sense of the aura and community that accompanies craft, the kind of feeling, it turns out, you have to be there to understand.

—Clare Barrowman (4th year Honours English)

MODERN WAYZGOOSES ARE OPEN-
HOUSE GATHERINGS AND
CELEBRATIONS OF PRINT-MAKING,
PUBLISHING, AND LITERARY ARTS MORE
GENERALLY. THESE DAYS THE FESTIVE
GOOSE IS NOT SERVED.

2015-16 FRIDAY SPEAKER SERIES

Fall Term

September 11 — "Romantic Suburbs," Kate Scarth, SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow

September 18 — "The Causes and Consequences of Theatrical Failure: *Sejanus*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *The White Devil*," Ron Huebert, Dalhousie University

September 25 — "Alice Illustrated by Tenniel: What do the Pictures Actually Do?," Bill Barker, Dalhousie University

October 2 — "Embattled Antiquity: Colonial and Postcolonial Inventions of the American Ancient Past" Gesa Mackenthun, Nordamerikanische Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft, Universität Rostock, Germany

Thursday October 8 — "Sounding the Scottish Diaspora in British North America" Jason Rudy, University of Maryland College Park

October 16 — Celebrating 150 years of Dal English!

Thursday October 22 — "The Orient and 'Great Books': The intersections of Ethiopian, Persian, Arabic, and Western Medieval Literature," Suzanne Akbari, University of Toronto.
The Department of English jointly with the King's FYP extra lectures series.

October 23 — "From Stability to Precarity: World-Ecology, Energy Regimes, and the Structure of Feeling of the Atlantic Fisheries," Michael Paye, School of English, Drama, and Film at the University College Dublin

October 30 — *Varmania*

November 6 — "The Knight's Quest in the *Wife of Bath's* Tale as Restorative Justice," Kathy Cawsey, Dalhousie University

November 13 — "Jane Austen and the Master Spy: The British Secret Service Controversy in

Georgian England" Sheryl Craig, University of Central Missouri, in a joint session with the Jane Austen Society of North America, Nova-Scotia chapter

November 20 — Panel Event, "Rethinking Gothic Graveyards," with papers by Laura Bohnert, Kala Hirtle, and Julia Wright, Dalhousie University

November 27 — Honours Capstone Colloquium

December 4 — PhD Colloquium, with papers by Brandi Estey-Burt and Rose Sneyd

Winter Term (Titles TBA)

8 January: Judith Thompson (English, Dalhousie)

15 January: Anna Stenport (Scandinavian, University of Illinois) and Scott MacKenzie (Film Studies, Queen's University)

22 January: Marjorie Stone (English, Dalhousie)

29 January: Herb Wyile (English, Acadia University)

12 February: Jennifer VanderBurgh (English, Saint Mary's)

26 February: Trevor Ross (English, Dalhousie)

4 March: Janine Rogers (English, Mount Allison University)

11 March: Rhiannon Purdie (English, University of St. Andrew's) -- special joint session with Department of History

18 March: Shauntay Grant (Creative Writing, Dalhousie)

1 April: Rob Dunbar (Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh)

We invite our alumni to join us at one of our Friday talks at 3:45pm in room 1198 of the McCain building. Stay after for a chat over the wine and cheese that follows.

TWO GENERATIONS OF DALHOUSIE WOMEN 60 YEARS APART

By Sharon Hamilton

A special essay in honour of our 150th anniversary



Two Generations of Dalhousie Women: Alice (Lewis) Hamilton, Dalhousie M.A. in English, 1936, and on her lap Sharon Hamilton, Dalhousie Ph.D. in English, 1999. (Photograph by Andrew Hamilton)

A few months ago, I reached out via email to the Dalhousie University library on a quest to learn what, if anything, they might possess concerning my grandmother, who completed her M.A. in English at Dalhousie in 1936 – just over 60 years before I earned a doctorate in English from the same school, in 1999.

I had no idea what to expect, but immediately received a friendly email telling me that they had located three documents concerning “Alice Lewis” and that, for a small fee, they could scan and send them as electronic documents. I thought they might have found a thesis. But no. She must have done a coursework M.A. The three documents came, instead, from an unexpected source: not from a shelf of thesis work, but from a box in the Dalhousie archives labelled “C. L. Bennet,” a teacher in the Department of English and First World War veteran (according to the note on his file) who had come to Dalhousie from Jesus College, Cambridge.

He’d written the letter! We’d all heard about it, of course. This letter, the document that had changed the course of my grandmother’s life – and that I found (much to my astonishment) a few days later, scanned and sitting in my inbox.



Two Generations

Alice Lewis, Dalhousie Graduation Photo, 1936



Life in a Seaside Hotel

"The three essays sent herewith should be taken as indicating Miss Lewis's scholarly interests while she was still an undergraduate. . . ."

My grandmother was born on October 8, 1913 in Bedford, Nova Scotia. Those who have Maritime roots will likely remember the exact house where she grew up, because it wasn't really a house, properly speaking, it was a hotel. Elsie Tolson, in her history of Bedford, says of the Lewis House that in the 1930s (when my grandmother attended Dalhousie) it cost \$11 per week for room and board, and the house could accommodate 20 guests. According to Tolson, the hotel's most famous guest was Arthur Lismer of Group of Seven fame, who had previously lived in Bedford when he taught at what is now the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.¹

Torn down (I understand) only recently, the Lewis House long dominated part of the shoreline as something of a Bedford fixture. It stood, a large looming building, beside the train tracks, with two prominent upper and lower verandas wrapping around the whole structure. My great-grandparents first opened it as a hotel in 1907. When I asked my uncle Andrew (my grandmother's middle child) if he remembered visits to the Lewis House after my grandparents moved back to Nova Scotia following the Second World War, he told me he remembered the house as having been "built on skids on the hillside." Every time a train went by, he remarked, it seemed a miracle it never slid down into the harbor. Much to his amazement, though, he said he never witnessed even "a crack in the horsehair-reinforced plaster!" He recalled that "the first night there was always an experience as the 3 a.m. train seemed to be coming right through the bedroom; but one quickly got used to all that."

In her history, Tolson says of the Lewis House that "visitors arrived in their best duds, hatted and gloved, and were met by John Willis Lewis (Bill) who carried their baggage the short distance to the hotel."² The "Bill" Tolson refers to was my grandmother's brother. According to my father (David, my grandmother's eldest), my great-uncle Bill cooked for the guests and also chopped the immense amount of wood needed to heat the house. Beneath the house, my uncle Andrew noted, "there was nothing at all except the wooden piers and hillside planks holding the whole thing up, and stacks upon stacks of firewood." My father remembers that Bill had been a cook on the racing schooner Bluenose before he took on this role at the Lewis House. My great-grandmother depended heavily on Bill to help in the running of the hotel resulting in the fact, unusual for the time, that among the four siblings, Bill, the only boy, was also the only one not to receive a higher education.

My grandmother's sisters, like her, each earned professional degrees. My great-aunt Isabel trained as a nurse and worked as an assistant superintendent of nursing at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montréal. Of my great-aunt Isabel, Tolson observes, "I hear many babies were named after her," a lovely fact and a fitting tribute. I never met her, as she

¹ For information on Lismer's time in Bedford and his paintings of local sites, see "Lismer's legacy" <http://nscad.ca/en/home/abouttheuniversity/news/lismer-061312.aspx>

² Elsie Tolson, *The Captain, the Colonel and Me: Bedford, Nova Scotia since 1503* (Bedford, N. S.: Fort Sackville Foundation Press, 1996).

died before I was born, but my relations have always described her to me a kind and generous woman who stayed single in order to care for her mother during her last years.

Frances Lewis, Graduation Photo, Dalhousie University, 1919



The eldest child, my great-aunt Frances, earned both her B.A. and Masters (1919) at Dalhousie, her graduate work done in Greek and Latin. I have a picture of her with the entire complement of students in front of her small school: girls of all ages with big bows on the tops of their heads and little boys, looking unexpectedly formal (to modern eyes), in long-sleeved shirts with ties. In the photo, Frances, who was not very tall, and then only twenty-one, appears barely indistinguishable from her students. “Frances Lewis,” my grandmother had written on the back, “principal at Lawrencetown School, N. S., 1921.”

One of the things that most impressed all of us about my great-aunt Frances concerned the fact that after a long, interesting, independent life she married for the first time, and for love, when she was in her early 70s. Her husband was Ralph Jeffery, a celebrated mathematics professor then retired from Queen’s, and after whom that institution named its “Jeffery Hall.”³ Jeffery, like my great-aunt, originated from the Maritimes, having been born in Overton, Nova Scotia in 1889. He taught at Acadia for several years before moving to Queen’s to Chair the Mathematics Department.⁴ My aunt Margaret, who saw them together, tells me Dr. Jeffery doted on my great-aunt and their marriage, by all accounts, was a very happy one.



England

“The play was not ‘set’ for special study, and the essay, completed with little help or guidance, was a self-imposed task suggested by a passing reference in a lecture. . . .”

There it is in his comments, isn't it? Exactly what professor Bennet saw about my grandmother from his side: a student who ran off to the library to research an unassigned paper (!) on *Love's Labour's Lost* because something Bennet had said in a lecture caught her interest – a paper written, and submitted to him, “with no expectation of credit.” What could you do with such a student, except, as is obvious from his own letter, marvel a bit. She never needed much help, just encouragement. If Bennet helped her to get there with his letter of recommendation – to what would prove a lifetime of scholarship and teaching – it also turns out that Dalhousie did more as an institution for her than I had realized before I started this research.

³ “A Brief History of Mathematics and Statistics at Queen's” <http://www.mast.queensu.ca/history/history.php>

⁴ “A Brief History of Mathematics at Acadia” <http://math.acadiau.ca/history.html>

Two Generations



*The marriage of Dr. Alice B. Lewis and The Rev. Kenneth M. Hamilton (July 13, 1943),
showing the Lord Mayor of York at the reception in the Castle Museum*

I always assumed the generous scholarship my grandmother obtained that allowed her to go to England for her Ph.D. came from the University of London. My assumption, though, about the money turned out to be mistaken. I found in a scrapbook kept by my great-aunt Isabel a clipping from a Nova Scotia paper about the scholarship Bennet's letter helped my grandmother to win: the "Eddy Travelling Fellowship for Women." I couldn't find anything on-line concerning the "Eddy Travelling Fellowship for Women," but I *did* find this reference on Dalhousie's own website: "Adele Vukic named Mrs. E. B. Eddy Professor (2012)."⁵ It seems more than coincidental that another Eddy scholarship still exists at Dalhousie, so the "Eddy Travelling Fellowship" likely originated at that school as well.

As a direct result of Bennet's letter and (it turns out) Dalhousie's money, my grandmother found herself at the University of London in 1936, enrolled in a doctoral programme on medieval literature. In the third year of her studies, in the Reading Room of the British Museum, she met a tall, lanky young man just beginning his Masters in English. They ran in similar circles but were acquaintances, not friends. Yet the lanky young man had something remarkable in common with Alice Lewis: he had also grown up in a seaside hotel!

In writing about his childhood in the resort town of Eastbourne, England this young man would later observe that "to grow up in a small hotel was to be enrolled in an extended course in human nature." As he recalled, "I soon came to form my own opinions of the guests and to recognize those who would be likely to complain about everything and those who would turn out to be affable and amusing." My grandmother left no written memoir concerning what her life had been like in the Lewis House, but one imagines her experiences must have resembled his.

Despite their mutual love of English literature, and oddly similar upbringings, the slight young man would apparently fail to make a positive impression on my grandmother for over a year. His first smooth move, as we often heard later, was to tell her that the belt she regularly wore did not suit her, and his second no less impressive gesture (on a visit to her after graduation) consisted of accepting and eating the precious wartime banana she had offered him, with no expectation he would do anything but politely refuse it. Once he had become an ordained minister, however, this same young man would become, notwithstanding his early missteps, Alice Lewis's husband, and my grandfather.

The wedding received news coverage on two continents – for an interesting reason. After her graduation from the University of London, my grandmother accepted a position as a lecturer and assistant curator at the Castle Museum in York. Since she had none of her Nova Scotia family members with her in England for the war-time marriage, the

⁵ "Adele Vukic named Mrs. E.B. Eddy Professor." http://www.dal.ca/faculty/healthprofessions/news-events/news/2012/12/04/adele_vukic_named_mrs_e_b_eddy_professor.html.

museum's co-founder, Alderman J. B. Morrell, agreed to give her away. His presence changed the tenor of the whole affair: it had abruptly become the kind of event the Lord Mayor of York himself would attend!

My grandfather noted in his memoir that the event trumped even royalty. He remembered that the “early edition of the York paper that day had on its front page a picture of the Princess Royal [our current Queen] stepping out of a train on an informal visit.” By the later edition, he noted, the picture of the princess “had been banished to the back page, while one of our wedding pictures was centre-front”! The wedding also received notice in Nova Scotia's newspapers. In my great-aunt Isabel's scrapbook, the headline for an article clipped from a local paper reads: “Former Bedford Girl Married in England”; the article observes that the bride was a “well-known Bedford girl and Dalhousie honor graduate.”



C. L. Bennet (Courtesy Dalhousie Archives)

The Teacher

“The distinction essay for English 5, A Detailed Investigation into the Sources of Tennyson's Idylls of the King is also enclosed. . . .”

My grandmother had begun her higher education at Dalhousie in the opening years of the 1930s, while I began my undergraduate education at the University of Alberta, in my hometown of Edmonton, in the early 1990s. When I started university, she sent me a letter explaining what her experience of being an undergraduate had been like. “I well remember when I was your age,” she wrote, “and realized that at the university I had found all the books that could open up the world to me, and how exciting life became. May it be so for you, too.”

I often received letters from her at that time, in her spidery handwriting – weak with cancer. My grandfather would prop her up in her hospital bed (she described this process; everything interested her) and she would remind me to enjoy all the good things life has to offer, and especially her favorites: concerts, art, books, and travel. She kept telling me “it's a grand world.” She hardly needed to convince *me* though. From the very start, we'd been much the same.



*Sharon Hamilton, Halifax, first year at Dalhousie University, 1994.
(Photograph by Dennis Cole)*

Of course, as she knew, what happens when you begin to do research except that you want to know more! So I wondered, C. L. Bennet, original owner of the papers in that box in the Dalhousie archives, the man who left us all the documentation we have of my grandmother's undergraduate education, what kind of man had he been? My father remembered him. Bennet had visited at Lewis House after the family emigrated from England following the war, so my grandfather could take up a position as a minister at a United Church in Elmsdale, Nova Scotia. My father had been a little boy then, so what did he remember? "As a child," he recalled, "I knew the Bennets as good friends of our family who visited together frequently when we went down to Bedford to the Lewis House, but Andrew and I were not part of the adult conversation." "The one thing I remember," he added, "was his prewar car that had a windshield which opened to let summer air in."

The note that accompanies his box in the Dalhousie archives says Charles L. ("Ben") Bennet was born in New Zealand in 1895 and came to Dalhousie to teach in the Department of English in 1922.⁶ He later became Head of the Department and George Munro Professor of English (1931-1958). My father remembers that Bennet had been an expert in the history of the English language, which makes sense considering that my grandmother specialized in her Ph.D. work on medieval literature. (I delighted to discover, in a footnote to her 1939 doctoral thesis, that my grandmother quoted, with approbation, work then being done on early English literature by J. R. R. Tolkien!)

It would turn out that Bennet's generosity extended beyond the writing of the letter that earned my grandmother the scholarship that allowed her to go to London for her Ph.D. As Head of the Department of English, Bennet also provided my grandmother with her first position as a university lecturer. About that period in her life, my grandfather remembered that Bennet "arranged for Alice to teach at Dal. over the winter months." During this time, her sister Isabel "took over the greater part of caring for the children since their mother was not only often absent during the day but also had lecture-preparation and papers to mark at night." My grandfather observed that this arrangement worked well for both women. Isabel was "a natural mother," and under her care my grandfather notes that my constitutionally slim uncle Andrew (then only two) "was so stuffed with food that he became fantastically overweight." My father remembered that by inviting her to teach, Bennet provided my grandmother with the opportunity to "develop the confidence that this could be a career."



⁶ "Fonds MS-2-486 - C. L. Bennet fonds," <http://findingaids.library.dal.ca/c-l-bennet-fonds>.



Portrait Window of Dr. Alice Hamilton and Dr. Kenneth Hamilton, Stained Glass by Robert McCausland Limited, Toronto. Gift of Robert McCausland Limited, Toronto to Alice Hamilton. (Photograph by Sharon Hamilton)

Adventures in Teaching and Research

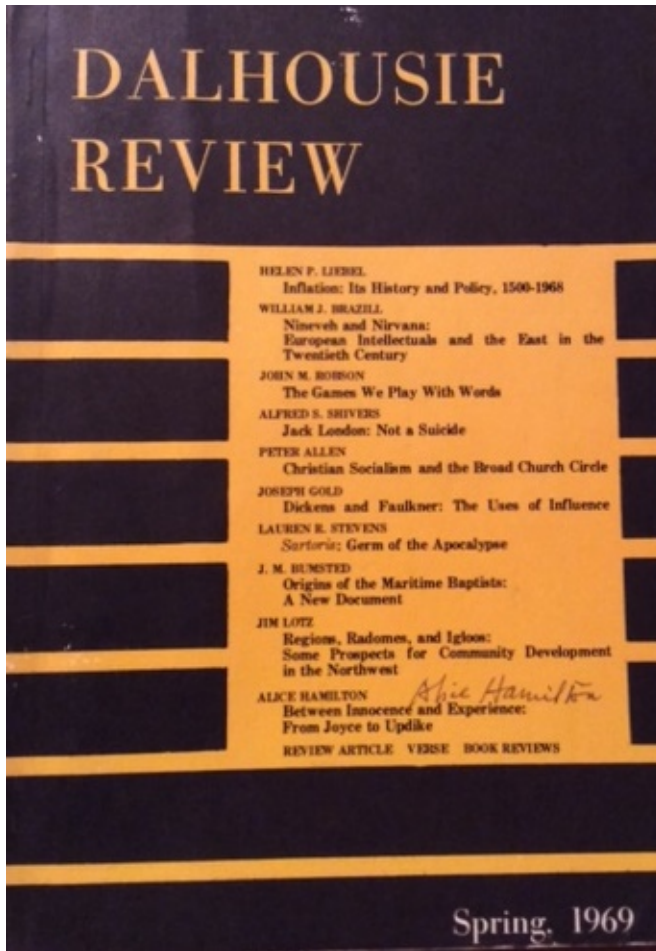
"In this year . . . she also won the Morse essay prize of one hundred dollars in open competition under a pseudonym."

I attended Dalhousie, like my grandmother before me, and after attaining my own doctorate, became, like her, a teacher and scholar. She died, though, while I was still an undergraduate – long before it became meaningful to me to know how she had acted within her chosen profession. What had she been like in the classroom? I asked a former professor of mine who, I knew, had been a student of hers at the University of Winnipeg. He sent a lovely, long email in reply.

He informed me that he mainly remembered her infectious laughter and her tendency to "launch into chatty stories about Richard and Joan and Geoffrey." "You would think," he explained, "that she was talking about friends of hers and their complicated and tangled lives, until it would gradually become clear that these were King Richard II, Joan the Queen Mother of Richard, and Geoffrey Chaucer, and that the events of which she was speaking did not happen last week but rather 600 years ago." "You had this sense," he added, "that these were contemporaries, familiar friends about whom she was gossiping in the most personal and enthusiastic manner."⁷

This book, published by a UK publisher in 1956, received strong reviews in the UK, US and Canada. My grandfather delighted especially in a review by an American in which the critic observed, "If this is the sort of theology to be found in Nova Scotia, we should all move up there." The success of *The Protestant Way* resulted in my grandfather being invited to join the faculty of United College in Winnipeg as a teacher of theology in 1958, and in 1959 my grandmother joined the English department of the same College. According to my father, "although the family moved west, they stayed in touch with C. L. Bennet, and returned from time to time to Nova Scotia."

⁷ My thanks to Dr. Stephen Reimer of the University of Alberta for sharing these memories with me.



Dalhousie Review, Spring 1969. C. L. Bennet, Editor. Essay on James Joyce and John Updike by Alice Hamilton, with her signature.

Both my grandparents, as faculty at what became the University of Winnipeg, continued to publish work in the *Dalhousie Review* throughout their professional lives. One of the most significant essays my grandmother published there appeared in the spring of 1969 ([read it on DalSpace](#)). In this essay she compared James Joyce's "Araby" with John Updike's "You'll Never Know, Dear, How Much I Love You." It was a paper that I think took courage for my grandmother to write and for Bennet (who, astoundingly, in 1969, still remained the journal's editor) to publish. Because in her comparison of two boys' coming-of-age experiences at a fair, my grandmother argued it wasn't the canonical modernist but the young American upstart who had treated the theme with more nuance.

In Updike's story a carnival barker calls out his false promise to an innocent boy. Play the wheel of fortune? "Hey, un winneh," he cried out, "everybody wins."

Updike's young protagonist plays and loses, thus leaving the fair disappointed, as Joyce's protagonist had been after the fair too. But my grandmother suggested that the conclusions of the stories differed in that Updike's story suggested that a false promise could reveal itself not to be entirely false. There are ways of losing that still bring gains: understanding, maturity, spiritual growth. A paradox. Even when you lose, you can win.⁸

From that *Dalhousie Review* essay onward, my grandparents kept writing about Updike, and *The Elements of John Updike* (1970), their first joint critical assessment of his work, appeared the following year. Out of curiosity, I looked it up on Amazon and was delighted to read the anonymous opinion of "A Customer" in 1999: "*The Elements of John Updike* is the best study of John Updike's fiction that I have yet read. It is profound and very different from other studies in the depth and attention it pays the author and his writing," adding, "I have yet to read another book that so perfectly integrates all the diverse elements of his nature, the poetry, the fiction, the nonfiction, the studious nature and development of his fierce intelligence."⁹

As far as I can tell, the spring 1969 issue of the *Dalhousie Review* may be the last time my grandmother's name and that of C. L. Bennet appear in the same document: the professor (who died in 1971) still in this way connected to his former student, more than thirty years after he had been her teacher.

⁸ Alice Hamilton, "Between Innocence and Experience: From Joyce to Updike" *Dalhousie Review* (Spring, 1969), 102-109.

⁹ "The Elements of John Updike Hardcover – 1970 by Alice Hamilton (Author), Kenneth Hamilton (Author)," <http://www.amazon.com/review/R2DXC2ZM0IXHDO>.



Close-up of “Blessed are the Meek” window, Our Lady of Lourdes church, Waterloo, Ontario, designed by Margaret Hamilton. Glass by Robert McCausland Limited, Toronto. (Photograph by Mark Fenske)

Adventures with Stained Glass

“As part of the work in a research course in Canadian History . . . Miss Lewis wrote an essay on the beginnings of Literature in Nova Scotia, 1752-1837.”

Why stained glass? I asked my aunt Margaret (my grandmother’s youngest child). She believes my grandmother developed her life-long love of stained glass when she saw the windows of York Cathedral up close, on the ground, after they had been removed for safekeeping during the war years. This is entirely possible. It’s also the case that for her doctoral dissertation, which concerned images of the devil in medieval literature, my grandmother had also examined the iconography in stained-glass windows.

Among the undergraduate essays Bennet included with his letter of recommendation, he enclosed an essay she had written on Nova Scotia literature for a class on Canadian history, taught by a provincial archivist. This essay was one of the ones he saved, and that Dalhousie scanned and sent to me. Later, my grandmother became a kind of archivist herself, noting in her book on Manitoba’s stained glass that after she had completed this project, she deposited over 1,500 slides, and more color and black-and-white negatives, with the University of Winnipeg, where she intended those photos to provide other researchers with a complete record of all the stained glass that had existed in the province at one time.

In her preface to *Manitoban Stained Glass* (1970) you can still hear the force of her character: the intrepid researcher at the core – not just in archives and libraries but out in the world! For this book, she and a team of photographers travelled “thousands of miles” and took pictures “at all hours of the day and night (even, one time, in utter darkness with two flash-lights mounted in the snow).”¹⁰

Her passion for stained glass directly affected her own family history – because my aunt, an artist, became a stained-glass designer. Her work appears in churches throughout Canada, and most spectacularly, in one instance, fills an

¹⁰ Alice Hamilton. *Manitoban Stained Glass*. David Fox, Barbara Rogers, Photographs. (Winnipeg: University of Winnipeg Press, 1970), 9.

Two Generations

entire sanctuary in a series of windows depicting the Beatitudes from Christ's Sermon on the Mount. As far as my aunt is aware, this series of Beatitude windows in Our Lady of Lourdes in Waterloo, Ontario may be the only sanctuary series depicting this theme in the world. My aunt has also proven an art historian in her own right, discovering that a stained-glass window in Hamilton had been designed by Group of Seven member Franklin Carmichael.¹¹



Adventures in Travel

"She also wrote several shorter technical studies of style and versification in Milton and in Browning and again won the Morse Essay Prize. . . ."



Sharon Hamilton, wearing Dalhousie academic robes, at a graduation ceremony for her students at the International University of Vienna, 2010. (Photograph by Mansi Liem)

When I told one of my Carleton professors, after completing my M.A. there in 1994, that I'd been accepted for Ph.D. work at Dalhousie, she laughed and said (knowing I had finished my undergraduate education in Edmonton), "you're using your education to see the country!" There was some truth to this. I, like my grandmother, have always had incredible wanderlust – partly, no doubt, because of her. She and my grandfather always traveled during the summer breaks from university teaching and so, as a child, I often received these wonderful postcards from far-flung places – and addressed directly to me, "Miss Sharon Hamilton"!

That my grandmother regularly fed me with her stories about exotic places no doubt influenced my own tastes and tendency to be drawn to anyone who could tell me interesting things about the greater world. This, anyway, would seem to have played a part in the fact that I ended up with a husband who, when I met him, had just returned from doing humanitarian work in Haiti and who has since taken me to live on diplomatic postings in Rome, Italy (3 years), Washington, D.C. (3 years), and Vienna, Austria (2 years).

In each of these places, I carried my Dalhousie education and useful, portable Ph.D. degree with me, teaching at universities in each of these countries. This work included memorable classes on the "Jazz Age and the Harlem Renaissance" at Georgetown University in Washington and on "Images of Italy in British and American Literature" at the American University in Rome. I also enjoyed a deanship at the International University of Vienna. I work now in Ottawa for the Canadian federal government as a researcher and writer, which resembles my grandmother's example as well, I suppose – at least in the way she always cultivated so many different interests and areas of expertise. So, in my own adventures in travel, teaching, and writing, I have continued to feel my grandmother's spirit very much with me.

¹¹ "Group of Seven Discovery: Stained Glass Window in Hamilton designed by Carmichael." *The Hamilton Spectator* (30 October 2003).



Everybody wins

Not long after I arrived in Halifax in the mid-1990s to begin my doctoral studies at Dalhousie with Dr. Len Diepeveen (currently George Munro Professor of English, like Professor Bennet before him), my grandfather mailed me a letter with exciting news. The University of Winnipeg had decided to honour my grandparents by naming a section of the library “The Hamilton Galleria.” This space houses rotating art exhibits and when I Googled it, while working on this article, I discovered the most recent show had consisted of pieces by a Winnipeg visual artist who embellishes antique handbags with embroidery and beadwork to transform them into “sculptural biographies” as tribute to female writers, artists, and literary figures.¹² It struck me as a more than appropriate confluence: this exhibit in the space named after my grandparents and this story I have just told you, about her, this extraordinary woman.

“Hey, uh winneh.” Well, wasn’t that true, in the end? The promise of Updike’s story hadn’t proven false, just as she said. “Everybody wins.” A 48-year-long deeply loving marriage, three children, five grandchildren, and significant work as a teacher, historian, and author. And all that connects back to her time as a student in the Dalhousie Department of English in the mid-1930s and to him, C. L. Bennet, the professor who saved copies of her undergraduate essays among his personal papers and who had sat down, one day, and written for her the letter that she always credited with having changed her life.

¹² “Willow Rector - Handing on History” (September 11 - November 8, 2014 Extended until March 15, 2015), <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/art-gallery/programming/2014-15/willow-rector---handing-on-history.html>.

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