

# DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH NEWSLETTER

Summer 2018



## CELEBRATING OUR FACULTY

Many of the faculty members who have been at the beating heart of The Department of English at Dalhousie are retiring after several decades of teaching. Over the past couple of years, Professor John Baxter, Professor Ronald Huebert, Professor Bruce Greenfield, and Professor William Barker have bid farewell to the classroom; in the next year, they will be joined by Professor Marjorie Stone and Professor Melissa Furrow. Although they will all no doubt continue to be active - both in scholarship and in life! - they won't be seen as often in the hallways they have haunted so long. So we decided not to let them go without setting some questions for those who have set questions for others for so many years. Our little questionnaire is based on a selection of so-called "Proust questions" to which nineteenth-century writer Marcel Proust supplied famous answers. When asked, for example, about his idea of perfect happiness, he responded, Cordelia-like: "I dare not speak it, I am afraid of destroying it by speaking it." English professors are not so fearful! Here are their answers to the first question:

### **Question 1: What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

**Bill Barker:** Lying on my back, looking up at clouds on a sunny summer day.

**Marjorie Stone:** Being surrounded by family and friends in a convivial setting.

**Bruce Greenfield:** Listening to a great opera singer.

**Melissa Furrow:** Feeling as if I am doing the one thing that I should be doing, and doing it well.

**John Baxter:** I have a couple of ideas. One is the harmonious integration of all aspects of my life, mind and body, thought and action, flesh and spirit, public and private. The other would be the satisfaction of knowing that I had won all the academic arguments I have ever engaged in. Failing these two possibilities, I'll settle for a cold beer in the warm sunshine, with an interlocutor who knows the difference between a conversation and a monologue and prefers the former.

*May our retirees have many convivial get-togethers in the sunshine with plenty of opera singers, cold beer and animated conversation on hand!*

*Below are each professor's additional answers to our quirky questions. Please note how English professors deconstruct or avoid answering the question. Also, find out which professors think which virtues are most overrated!*



Dr. Melissa Furrow

*What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?* Attending a hearing of the Senate Discipline Committee. I've been on the committee, and I've taken students before it when they have cheated. Like hell, it is without joy.

*What is your greatest extravagance?* A \$5700.00 pair of baubles for my ears that barely show. They make my hearing better, but not good enough. That's why they are an extravagance.

*What do you consider the most overrated virtue?* Chastity. Don't get me wrong, I very highly value faithfulness, readiness, mutual consent. But there's been a strange emphasis on sexual purity, of origins both religious and legal, and having to do with inheritance of property, that needs challenging.

*If you were to die and come back as a person or a thing, what would it be?* Probably a person

rather than a thing, though I can see the point in being a well-designed ice cream scoop, with good balance and a durable finish.

*If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?* Mmm, but I can change some things about myself. I'm going for becoming less judgemental, but to do that I have to leave a job that requires, every day and every way, for better and worse, the exercise of judgement.

*If you could choose just one book to take to a desert island, which one would it be?* *The Riverside Chaucer*. I'm still not tired of *Troilus and Criseyde* after 40-some years of teaching, but *The Canterbury Tales* offers more variety, and *The House of Fame* is partly set on a desert island. Lots of scope if I can just have all of what Chaucer wrote, conveniently gathered between two covers.

*If you could choose just one work of art to take to a desert island, which one would it be?* Something architectural. I know, the Halifax Central Library. That way, I get the shelter, I get the decorative scheme (including the Cliff Eyland cards), I get the comfy furniture in the living room upstairs, I get two coffee bars, and I get a lot of books and music, so I can cheat on the last question ("just one book") and the next question ("just one piece of music").

*If you could choose just one piece of music to take to a desert island, which one would it be?* One piece of music as the only option—I think that's a recipe for madness, and I'd rather take none than one. If I could have two, I'd alternate listening to Pachelbel's *Canon* and the Rolling Stones' *Gimme Shelter*.



Dr. John Baxter

*What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?* I think this is a dangerous question, and I decline to answer it: “To be worst, / The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune, / Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear.”

*What is your most treasured possession?* My grandchildren—and yes, I do know that “though I call them mine, they are not mine.”

*Which historical figure do you most identify with?* I’d like to be able to say Mark Antony, but it’s actually Enobarbus.

*What is your greatest extravagance?* I have no extravagances, just as I have no superfluous leisure (not even, to my surprise, in my retirement).

*What do you consider the most overrated virtue?* There is no such thing, abstractly considered, as a single overrated virtue; in practice, any virtue can be overrated, if it is pursued obsessively and without due regard for other balancing virtues or competing virtues.

*If you were to die and come back as a person or a thing, what would it be?* A person.

*If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?* Although I profess to enjoy the bald truth, and am known to indulge in bald statements (to baldly go where no man has gone before), I would prefer not to be bald. Not quite ‘give me hair or give me death,’ but within a whisker of that.

*If you could choose just one book to take to a desert island, which one would it be?* A notebook or maybe a MacBook.

*If you could choose just one work of art to take to a desert island, which one would it be?* Maybe something by Lawren Harris (for the sake of contrast); on the other hand, if it’s a tropical desert island, I’ll order something by Gauguin (as a sort of blueprint for how I would like to see it peopled).

*If you could choose just one piece of music to take to a desert island, which one would it be?* I assume this island is the same one referred to in the previous two questions, so I am going to smuggle in a copy of *The Tempest* inside my notebook in order to understand my particular role should the island be ruled by a magus. And I want to listen to those “sounds and sweet airs” that so took Caliban.



Johann Ramberg, *Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban dancing* (source: wikimedia.com)



sure what it is, but I have always wanted to move on.



*If you could choose just one book to take to a desert island, which one would it be? -- Just one? Then Tolstoy, *War and Peace*. (Can I add the novels of Smollett?)*

*If you could choose just one work of art to take to a desert island, which one would it be? Bruegel's *Return of the Hunters**

*If you could choose just one piece of music to take to a desert island, which one would it be? Bach's *Goldberg Variations**

Dr. William Barker

*What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?* Losing a child.

*What is your most treasured possession?* My books, which soon I must be getting rid of.

*Which historical figure do you most identify with?* Michel de Montaigne, he seems to have read me well.

*What is your greatest extravagance?* Books

*What do you consider the most overrated virtue?* Frugality

*If you were to die and come back as a person or a thing, what would it be?* A small stone

*If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?* Something holds me back, not



Bruegel's *Return of the Hunters* (source: wikimedia.com)



Dr. Marjorie Stone

*What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?* Being separated from all family and friends in an enclosed, plastic, sterile faux bourgeois environment with no access to nature or intellectual stimulation or hope for change or the future

*What is your most treasured possession?*

Everything I most treasure cannot be deemed a possession. Energy is eternal delight.

*Which historical figure do you most identify with?* (one might say possessed by?) EBB...EBB...EBB...EBB (Elizabeth Barrett Browning). Critics often refer to her as "Barrett Browning" to distinguish her from her poet-husband Robert Browning, but I am one of a group of EBB specialists who promote the use of "EBB" to refer to her instead, because her full maiden

name was "Elizabeth Barrett Barrett," she signed her letters and manuscripts with "EBB" (or "E.B.B.") both before and after her marriage, and I viewed "EBB" as her authorial mark. Both she and Robert were pleased with the fact that her initials would not change with her marriage. How fortunate that "Elizabeth Barrett Barrett" married a man with a last name beginning with "B"!

*What is your greatest extravagance?* I'm a "Montyholic" -- Monty's is a great second-hand store in Pugwash Nova Scotia. Frequenting Monty's in particular is my secret vice...

*What do you consider the most overrated virtue?* Prudence (as William Blake said, though he used a rather sexist analogy to characterize it as a "rich ugly old maid courted by incapacity").

*If you were to die and come back as a person or a thing, what would it be?* I would like to come back as a musician with a voice to sing with.

*If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?* I would like to be more decisive than I am.

*If you could choose just one book to take to a desert island, which one would it be?* I have avoided answering this question all of my life, and will avoid it again now, because I am so indecisive, I could never decide. And why foreclose on all of those wonderful options?

*If you could choose just one work of art to take to a desert island, which one would it be?* Ditto.

*If you could choose just one piece of music to take to a desert island, which one would it be?* Ditto.





Dr. Bruce Greenfield

*What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?* Having someone tell me he voted for Trump.

*What is your most treasured possession?* A free press.

*Which historical figure do you most identify with?* Middle class citizens of Germany circa 1930.

*What is your greatest extravagance?* Months in Rome.

*What do you consider the most overrated virtue?* Sincerity.

*If you were to die and come back as a person or a thing, what would it be?* A great singer.

*If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?* I'd have a better singing voice.

*If you could choose just one book to take to a desert island, which one would it be?* *Moby Dick* or *Paradise Lost*.

*If you could choose just one work of art to take to a desert island, which one would it be?* Caravaggio's *The Calling of Saint Matthew*.

*If you could choose just one piece of music to take to a desert island, which one would it be?* At the moment, Mozart's Clarinet concerto.

\*NOTE: I've never been able to indulge this thought with any energy because the idea of being alone on an island seems incompatible with any enjoyment of anything, no matter how wonderful. Alone on an island the great works of art, literature and music would be lifeless.



Bruce with partner Boris at his retirement party

## STUDENT MEMORIES:

Dr. John Baxter:

“His wit and gift for memorization make his lectures as entertaining as they are instructive (I will never forget being welcomed back from winter break by his kicking open the door, brandishing imaginary weapons, and reciting Act I Scene I of *Hamlet*); but my favourite thing about his teaching style is how interested he always was in his students’ opinions. He created a classroom environment that encouraged participation and even speculation, and when, on a few occasions, I saw a scene from an angle he hadn’t thought of before, his enthusiasm for my perspective made me feel invincible. He was the first prof I had that made me think I could really be good at this.” (Helen Pinsent)

“As John’s Shakespeare TA, I twice witnessed him surprise his students into attention. On one occasion, he energetically began, “Hello, Canada! I’m your boyfriend, George Stroumboulopoulos!” On another, he burst without warning into song—an Early Modern rendition of one of Feste’s songs from *Twelfth Night*, I believe.” (Darren Dyck)

“In English Literature to 1800, Dr. Baxter leapt onto the desk and recited Elizabeth 1's "Speech to the Troops at Tilbury". Now this was no regular desk; in the Dunn Science building, the desks are actually counters for conducting experiments and are quite a bit higher than a desk. Needless to say, the class was hugely impressed.” (Janet Brush)

Dr. Marjorie Stone:

“Dr. Marjorie Stone may be the most generous-spirited teacher I have met during my time at universities both in New Zealand and in Canada. As a graduate student of hers, I was struck by her

animated engagement with our papers in the weekly seminars, and by the amazingly thorough feedback she provided on our written work. More recently, as her TA, I’ve also witnessed the enormous effort she invests in creating an accessible curriculum and engaging classes. So many memorable experiences, from being guided through the process of writing a conference-type paper on Clough and Giuseppe Mazzini that ended up being my first publication thanks to Dr. Stone’s good shepherding, to watching *The Piano* for the first time, as a New Zealander (!), in a Canadian classroom and being roused to a passionate denunciation of it during the vivacious discussion that followed, to the very fun final class of ENGL5424 in which we shared examples of a range of bizarre and hilarious post-colonial Victorianish pop culture productions.” (Rose Sneyd)

“During my colleagues’ presentations, Dr. Stone used to sit next to me, with every resource possible about the topic: every paper and book published about them. She knows those women very well, she is their advocate, she listened to their stories and took the responsibility to defend them and to carry their voices to the 21st century.” (Areej Alqowailly)

Dr. Melissa Farrow:

“Melissa has this way of conveying her extensive knowledge in a manner that does not intimidate the person she’s speaking with and she’s so passionate about her own research. She almost always has an awesome reference text on hand when you go to speak with her. Even if you walk into her office with a vague idea of what you want to argue, by the time you leave your topic will be well-defined and more interesting.” (Sam Lehman)

“There are not a lot of professors who will sit down and spend two and half hours walking a student through each and every sentence of their document. This is the kind of professor that Dr. Furrow is. She goes the extra mile to give the student’s their best shot at success.” (Brenna Duperron)

Dr. Ron Huebert:

“I remember one day when I took his Renaissance Drama class, we were talking about a play with a very complicated plot. We all walked into class that day asking one another “did you get it?” “No, did you?” “I had no idea what was going on!” and so forth. And when Dr. Huebert walked into the class, he put his things down and addressed us saying, “I’m guessing none of you have any idea what happened in the play?” and when we all nodded, he responded with “Good, because it’s a damn confusing play”. We were all set at ease after that.” (Payton Chapley)

“In the last Shakespeare class of the year, Ron decided that he and I (his TA) should read two speeches from *The Tempest* and then make our exit without saying another word. We both read the speeches, but somehow I missed the memo that our exit was to be dramatically immediate. While I fumbled to put my papers into my bag and grab my water bottle, Ron exited the class like a triumphant hero.” (Darren Dyck)

Dr. Bruce Greenfield:

“Dr. Greenfield taught the first university English class I attended. He was so open with his students, and made everything he taught memorable with a personal anecdote. He was always professional, but allowed for a relaxed environment. I remember he started his New York in Fiction seminar class with a reading from *Moby Dick*. As an ice-breaker joke, he made us think we had to read that incredibly long book in the first week. He was incredibly funny, and cared about students' success in, and outside the classroom.” (Sarah Boyle)

“I never actually took a literature course with Dr. Greenfield; I didn’t have him as a prof until the Honours Capstone in my last year of undergrad. I got to know him instead over the three years I attended the Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference with Dr. Greenfield as chaperone. He didn’t like that title – “chaperone”. He preferred to think of himself as representing the faculty in supporting Dal’s English students in their research and achievements, and he always treated us with collegial respect, never condescending or giving airs, despite his stature in the department and the discipline. He maintained this respect while guiding us through the Honours Capstone and through publishing our theses, which let him be a sorely needed calming presence during my hectic graduating year.” (Helen Pinsent)



## PROFESSOR ROHAN MAITZEN WINS PRESTIGIOUS FASS TEACHING AWARD



Dr. Maitzen and proud daughter Maddie Maitzen (photo: Marjorie Stone)

Her classes often fill to capacity in the first week of registration. Her teaching scores are consistently the highest in a department of excellent teachers. Her regular online posts on “This Week in my Classes” for Open Letters Monthly (now rohanmaitzen.com) register her passionate engagement with making her own teaching practice better, more engaging, more rigorous. For more than twenty years, Dr. Rohan Maitzen has been widely recognized as a stellar teacher; in May of this year, this recognition was formalized when she was awarded the prestigious Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Teaching Award and presented with a plaque and citation by Acting Dean Dr. Jure Gantar at a special reception.

But the most important tributes to Dr. Maitzen’s brilliance as a teacher come from her students. Their testimonials repeatedly speak to her inspiring lectures, impeccable organization, creative assignments, ability to stimulate intellectual exchange, one-on-one mentoring of students, and passion for her subject matter. Heralded by Carrie Hildebrand as the English department’s “brightest star,” and by Emma Peters and Kaitlyn Cleary as their “best professor,” Dr. Maitzen’s

classes have been transformative for many students. Allison Hill, for example, characterized the four courses she took with her as “the highlights of [her] university career,” explaining that Dr. Maitzen is “so clearly passionate about what she’s teaching that it’s impossible not to get excited about the works as well.” Daniel Bergman attests to her inclusive and engaging style in which “all genuine attempts to contribute to the conversation are welcomed,” and Nikki Little points to the combination of “rigour and gentleness” that characterizes her practice. A hallmark of her pedagogy is creative innovation: not only has she willingly expanded the standard format by turning conventional

essays into epistolary exchanges, but she has opened up her students to new media by using Twitter, wikis, and blogs as rich supplements to classroom discussion – thereby, according to Julie Crabbe, ensuring “that students emerge from her courses literate in the broadest sense of that term.” Moreover, as Julianne Stevenson points out, she has insisted on the inclusion of minority voices and non-canonical genres and authors in her curricula; indeed, she has worked on developing entirely new courses to expose students to new areas of inquiry: to Women in Detective Fiction, The Victorian ‘Woman Question,’ and The Somerville Novelists, for example. She has supervised no fewer than 4 PhD and 17 M.A. theses, and served as reader and examiner on many more. Sarah Emsley, her former PhD student, speaks to some of Dr. Maitzen’s special qualities: “I admire the way she hosts and participates in conversations, reaching out to students and readers to bring them into exciting conversations about nineteenth-century literature, contemporary literature, and what it means to be a reader, a writer, a teacher, an academic.”

Professor Maitzen, we are all so proud of you!

## DR. JULIA WRIGHT ELECTED AS FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

[By Michele Charlton; originally published in *Dal News*, 13 September 2017]

Julia Wright, a professor in the Department of English, has been elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Election into the academies is the highest honour a scholar can achieve in the arts, humanities and sciences.

An internationally recognized scholar, Dr. Wright focusses on British and Irish Romantic Literature, particularly in the context of European and transatlantic debates about nation, empire, and gender. More than any other scholar, Dr. Wright has been instrumental in laying the foundation for the field of Irish Romanticism by making a valuable array of Irish literary materials that have not been in print since the nineteenth century accessible, and comprehensible through her scholarly footnotes and introductions — her editions are widely used in undergraduate and graduate courses as well as cited in scholarship. Wright’s current research situates the Irish Romantic-era poet Thomas Moore in transatlantic context; her work in transatlantic studies includes co-editing a book



photos: Royal Society of Canada

series and co-founding the Social Sciences and Humanities Oceans Research and Education network of Dalhousie and Memorial University researchers.

“So many scholars I have long admired are in the Royal Society – it’s a great honour to join them, and a delight to see the important research in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences here at Dalhousie Recognized in this way,” says Dr. Wright.

Congratulations, Dr. Julia Wright!

## SELECTED ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWS

**John Baxter** (Professor Emeritus) gave 3 guest lectures: on Helen Pinkerton's civil war poems in Calgary (repeated in Halifax and in Dallas), on *Twelfth Night* in Pella, Iowa, and on *King Lear* in Worcester, Mass. He also took on a series of volunteer teaching assignments: on Milton's "Lycidas" in Calgary, on biblical type scenes in Iowa, on *Richard III* for Halifax Humanities 101, on *The Tempest* for Halifax Thinks, and on Shakespeare's Sonnets for the Clemente Program (associated with HH 101). He also organized Section 3: The Renaissance for HH 101.

**Lyn Bennett's** book, *Rhetoric, Medicine and the Woman Writer, 1600-1700*, was published by Cambridge University Press in February.

**Carrie Dawson** (former Chair) will be taking up a position as Visiting Fellow at Mansfield College, Oxford, for Michaelmas term (fall 2018).

**Brandi Estey-Burtt** was awarded the Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (CACLALS) Graduate Student Presentation Prize at ACCUTE for her essay, "Dancing Across the Divide: JM Coetzee's Postsecular Embodiment in *The Childhood of Jesus* and *The Schooldays of Jesus*."

**Shawna Guenther** presented a paper, "One-sex, Two-sex, Three-sex, More: Fitting Shakespeare along Today's Sex Spectrum," at the British Shakespeare Association in June, and another paper, "Fresh and Salty: What Early Modern Canadian Maritime Recipes Tell Us about Manufacturing," at the Atlantic Canadian Studies conference in May 2018.

**Ron Huebert** (Professor Emeritus) organized and chaired a panel on "Donne's First Readers" for the John Donne Society conference in Lausanne,

Switzerland, in June, in which he also gave his own paper on "Reading Through Friendship: Henry Wotton's Donne."

**Shauntay Grant's** play "The Bridge" was announced in February as part of Neptune Theatre's upcoming 2018-19 season. It will premiere in January on Neptune's mainstage, a co-production between Neptune Theatre and 2b theatre, in association with Obsidian theatre. Her children's picture book, *Africville*, will be released in September.

**Bruce Greenfield** presented his paper, "Old Age as Utopia in Sarah Orne Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs*" at the Croatian Association of American Studies conference in Zadar, Croatia on June 15. The theme of the conference was "Age and Ageing."

**Graham Jensen** published "It's Not Personal: Modernist Remediations of William James's 'Personal Religion'" in *Further Directions in William James and Literary Studies*, a special issue of *William James Studies*.

**Christina Luckyj** contributed a new Introduction and revised commentary to the New Cambridge *Othello*. She presented her paper, "Global *Othello*, Then and Now: the 2015 RSC Production in Context" at the British Shakespeare Association in June.

**Kaarina Mikalson** was recently welcomed as co-director of the SSHRC-funded Canada and the Spanish Civil War Project (co-directed with Emily Robins Sharpe and Bart Vautour) and she is now hosting a project-based podcast called "Listen In," which is available on iTunes.

**Sharon Vogel** presented her paper, "*Macbeth's* Weird Sisters in Contemporary Fantasy Narratives" at the British Shakespeare Association in June.





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