



FACULTY OF ARTS AND  
SOCIAL SCIENCES

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## STAY CONNECTED

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## CHAIR'S REMARKS



BY LYN BENNETT

The Chair's Remarks in the previous edition of our newsletter focused on new beginnings, welcoming our newer colleagues to our department and our classrooms. Our latest issue likewise focuses on beginnings, including the news that recent Honours and Creative Writing grad K. R. Byggdin has just published their debut novel, *Wonder World*, with Great Plains Books. Featured as well in this issue is continuing English and Psychology Major, Susanna Cupido. Susanna is an award-winning poet whose "Me against Jim Bailey" was this year listed for the CBC Short Story prize, and who will this coming year begin work on a dramatic adaptation of one of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Congratulations to both K.R. and Susanna, as well as to all the English and Creative Writing students who continue to amaze and inspire us every day.

It is also bittersweet to recognize new beginnings for Professors Christina Luckyj and Judith Thompson, both of whom have left or are leaving Dalhousie to what will surely be fulfilling and busy retirements. All of us owe profound

thanks to Christy and Judith for their many years of dedicated service and for the legacy they have left the department, the discipline, and the profession. They have taught both their students and colleagues a great deal, and for that we are most grateful.

We have also had some very sad news since our last newsletter. We all grieve for the beloved and brilliant son of our wonderful colleague, Professor Rohan Maitzen. Owen Maitzen was an exceptional talent and formidable intellect who left us far too soon, and we send our deepest condolences to the Maitzen family for their immeasurable loss. We also thank Professor Emerita Marjorie Stone for her tribute to Professor Patricia Monk, the first female Full Professor in our department and a ground-breaking colleague who in 2003 retired after thirty-three years of service.

You can read more about the many achievements of our instructors and our students in this issue. We hope that you enjoy learning about their successes, and we wish you all the best for a happy and healthy summer.

# STUDENT PROFILES

## K. R. BYGGDIN

Honours English and Creative writing student K. R. Byggdin recently launched their debut novel, *Wonder World* (Great Plains Books: <https://www.greatplains.mb.ca/product/wonder-world/>). They were also profiled by Dal News (<https://www.dal.ca/news/2022/04/27/wonder-ful-launch--fass-student-celebrates-debut-novel.html>). K. R. took some time to chat with us about their work.

**Editors:** Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

**K. R. Byggdin:** I grew up in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, mostly in small towns. My spouse is originally from Nova Scotia though, and in 2015 we decided to move out East. I've always loved to tell stories but in Halifax I connected with the Writers' Fed and their workshops gave me the confidence to start submitting my work for publication. I also have a career background in post-secondary administration (shout out to all the lovely, hardworking staff that keep universities running every day!), but when the pandemic hit the time felt right to go back to school and study creative writing full-time, so I applied to Dal and, thankfully, I was accepted!

**Editors:** Tell us about your new novel!

**KRB:** I've described it before as a complicated queer love letter to the Prairies and that's definitely true. It wasn't until I moved to the Maritimes that I started to appreciate just how unique and distinct the region I come from is. Missing all those little things about home led me to write about them, and eventually to my novel *Wonder World*, which follows twenty-seven-year-old Isaac Funk as he

reconnects with his family in Manitoba after a decade away in Halifax. Growing up as a queer and nonbinary kid in rural prairie communities before I even had language to describe myself was tough, but there's also a lot of humour and warmth to be found in small towns. I tried to capture all of those complex feelings in Isaac's story as well.



*K. R. Byggdin, photo from [greatplains.mb.ca](https://www.greatplains.mb.ca)*

**Editors:** If you had to pick an ideal reader or reviewer for your novel, from any point in history, who would it be and why?

**KRB:** I would absolutely lose it if Miriam Toews ever picked up my book and gave it a read. Her novel *A Complicated Kindness* is the reason I became serious about my own writing. It was such a shocking, fantastic thing to encounter her work at nineteen and instantly feel so seen and understood. I hope some day my work can do that for others too.

**Editors:** You recently won our Department's Foeshee prize for your story, "With Deepest Sympathy for Your Failures as a Father," which seems to tackle some similar themes as your novel. Is there a connection

**between them, or do they take a different approach, or both?**

**KRB:** I think it's fair to say that complex family relationships are present in a lot of my work, and I'm always seeking to expand 2SLGBTQ+ representation in my stories. But the approach I take for writing a short story is very different from a novel. With short fiction, I wait until I have both a hook to draw the reader in and a climax in mind before writing things down. With *Wonder World*, Isaac came first. Once I had a sense of who he was, it became a collaborative approach, writing in the direction I felt the character was leading.

**Editors:** have there been any courses or conversations at Dal or in our program that have helped you develop as a writer?

**KRB:** I've so appreciated the chance to workshop my stories this year alongside so many talented classmates in Advanced Fiction I and II with Dr. Heather Jessup. It's so beneficial to be around other writers each week, talking about our hopes and goals as writers and sharing our work with each other. I also have to give a special shout out to Dr. Bart Vautour for accepting me into his Poetry I and II section. I definitely would NOT describe myself as a poet, but I decided to take the class to challenge myself and broaden my creative skillset, and I definitely feel that's something I've achieved with Bart. He's very welcoming and engaging both as a professor and as a poet, and that's made the process of exploring a new genre that much easier and fun for me.

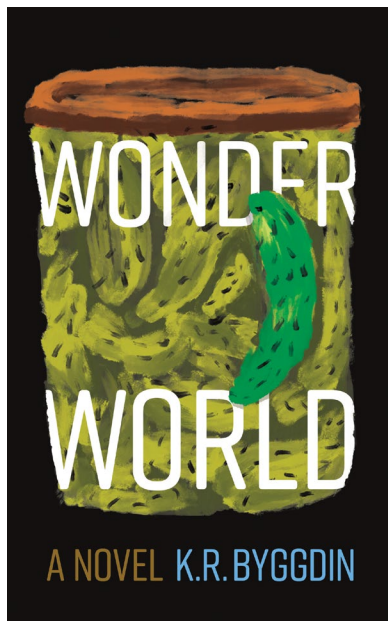
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**Editors:** You've clearly written a great book! Have you read any lately that you've been especially inspired by?

**KRB:** Sadly, my personal TBR pile is getting pretty tall these days, but I have read some great stuff for my classes this year including *Funny Boy* by Shyam Selvadurai and *A Dream of a Woman* by Casey Plett. I just picked up Sanna Wani's debut poetry collection *My Grief, the Sun* the other day at Bookmark. We were part of the same cohort for the Banff Centre's Emerging Writers Intensive and I can't wait to encounter more of her fabulous writing!

**Editors:** You're graduating soon, you have a new novel out... what's next for K. R.?

**KRB:** Well, at the moment I'm focussed on just that: finishing up my last assignments and starting my book tour! I do hope to go onto an MFA in Creative Writing in a year or two, but in the meantime, I have some ideas brewing for a new novel as well as a short story collection. We'll see where that takes me!



## SUSANNA CUPIDO

*Susanna is an English and Psychology major whose story, "Me Against Jim Bailey," was recently shortlisted for the 2022 CBC Short Story Prize. You can learn more, and read her story, on the CBC site: <https://www.cbc.ca/books/literaryprizes/me-against-jim-bailey-by-susanna-cupido-1.6414261>. Susanna was also kind enough to answer our questions and share her thoughts.*

**Editors:** Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

**Susanna Cupido:** I'm from Sackville, New Brunswick, but I've been going to school in Halifax for the last four years. I love reading and writing fiction, and I've also lately been really interested in psychology—particularly the study of psychotic disorders. I did the Foundation Year Program at King's, and then I've been working on a degree in English and Psychology through Dalhousie.

**Editors:** Tell us about your story?

**SC:** My story is about the relationship between two people who are both struggling with depression, and the strain that this inevitably puts on them. I think there's a perception that shared troubles invariably bring people closer together, but I don't think that's necessarily always the case—it can be very challenging to stay compassionate, sometimes, and you can easily lose sight of other people's pain and get lost in your own. I really wanted to explore this idea, to write from the perspective of someone who's become completely detached from everyone around them and has lost any kind of natural empathy. I ended up being a bit more brutal and cynical in the narration than I

meant to! When I found out the story was going to be published, I kept anxiously telling people that it definitely *wasn't* autobiographical, and that I'm not nearly as harsh as the narrator.

**Editors:** Where/when/how did you hear about being shortlisted for the CBC Short Story Prize? How did you react?

**SC:** I actually got the email from the CBC just before I was scheduled to write an online psychology exam. I really couldn't believe it—the first thing I did was call my dad, and he said I nearly gave him a heart attack because I was just so excited, I was yelling. We both danced around the house for a bit. I'd really been mentally preparing myself to *not* make the shortlist, trying to brace myself for the disappointment, so the news definitely surprised me. After that, I had a lot of trouble concentrating on my psych exam!

**Editors:** Your poem "The Door" won the Accenti Poetry Contest in 2021, now you have a short story listed for a national prize (and you won our Department's Valentine's Day 2020 Sonnet contest for your poem "Blank!"); do you prefer writing one form more than another?

**SC:** While I love them both, I *do* find it easier to write poetry than prose, because I like having the guidelines of the formal structure—for example, a sonnet or a villanelle—to work with. Writing a short story, you usually have to invent your own form, and I always find that more nerve wracking. You almost feel vulnerable, without having any rules to fall back on. There's no safety net.



**Editors:** have there been any courses or conversations at Dal or in our program that have helped you develop as a writer?

**SC:** Yes, there definitely have been! In particular, I found the Close Reading class (English 3000) really helpful, since it taught me to pay more attention to the mechanics of writing. Dr. Bennett, our professor, would put different extracts up on the board and ask us to pick out the words and phrases that caught our attention, and I absolutely loved that—I started looking at fiction in a whole new way. I still use the textbooks from the course while I'm writing, and they've definitely come in handy. More generally, I've really appreciated the courses that allowed me a creative option instead of a formal academic essay—for example, Contemporary Science Fiction (English 2232) and Canterbury Tales (English 3005). I really enjoyed writing my own stories inspired by the ones we read in class together, and I've found it a great way to engage more deeply with the material. The responses I got from the professors in those courses were also really helpful, giving me constructive feedback on my writing.

**Editors:** “Me Against Jim Bailey” is such a strong work. Have you read anything lately that you’ve been especially inspired by?

**SC:** Lately I've been reading a lot of stories by Muriel Spark, who's one of my absolute favorite writers. Her narration is always a little detached, a little wry, and she has a way of depicting reality with such brutal honesty. In particular, I really enjoyed ‘A Sad Tale's Best for Winter,’ which is a very poignant short story about the reflections of a man who lives next to a graveyard near Edinburgh. It's funny and



Susanna Cupido (photo by Robert Cupido)

haunting at the same time, and it's exactly the kind of story I'd love to be able to write one day. Another one of my favorites by her is ‘The Portobello Road,’ a very unconventional ghost story, told from the point of view of a ghost haunting the man who murdered her. Spark is amazingly versatile when it comes to writing from the perspective of different characters, all of them so unique, and that's something that I really aspire to.

**Editors:** What's next for Susanna?

**SC:** I'll hopefully be doing my honours project next year and have just arranged to work with Dr. Cawsey on a dramatic adaptation of one of the Canterbury Tales. I'm really excited for that—I've really been wanting to practice writing stage plays lately, and it's always such a treat to get to incorporate some creative writing into my courses. I also have a few other works in progress, just on the side, and after my honours year I hope to do an MA in English.

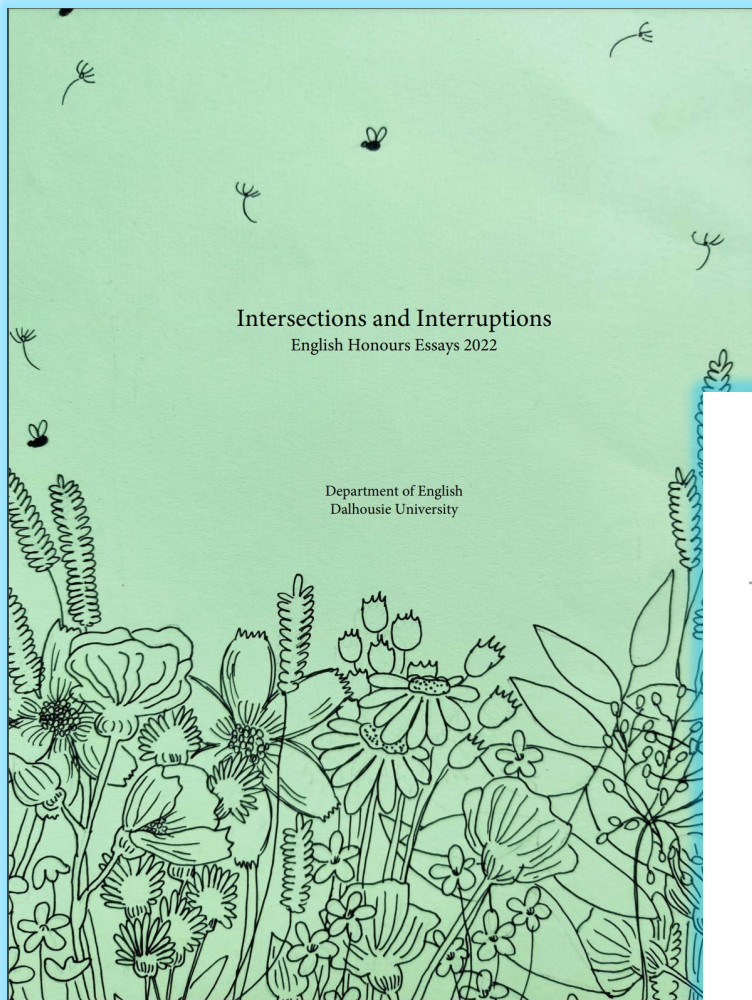
**Editors:** Is there a question you wish we'd asked you?

‘What book *haven't* you read that you wish you *had* read?’ The answer is *Ulysses*, by James Joyce. I've started it about three times since the pandemic began and I still can't get past the first hundred pages. I keep putting it down and forgetting it for months, then I pick it back up again and have to start all over from the beginning. It's a brilliant book, but it's a bit exhausting!



# ENGLISH HONOURS ESSAYS 2022

Students in the English Honours program complete the Honours Capstone course and thesis each year; this year, they published their honours essays in an online collection. You can see the cover and table of contents below. To read the collection as a PDF file, follow this link: <https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/faculty/arts/english/Honours%20Journal%202022%20FINAL.pdf>.



## Intersections and Interruptions English Honours Essays 2022

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# STUDENT AWARDS AND PRIZES

Every year the department recognizes students with prizes and awards, most nominated by faculty members. These students and their work—especially during the disruption of last few years—are inspiring! Congratulations to all!

## Avie Bennett Prize

(for best essay in Canadian Literature):

**Maya Schwartz**

## Bennett Chittick Prize

(for an outstanding student in a 1000-level English course):

**Miles Anton**

## Paul McIsaac Memorial Prize

(for a student in the second or third year of study in English who demonstrates an enquiring and original mind):

**Cormac Newman  
Gillian Owensby**

## Samantha Li Memorial Award

(established by family, friends, faculty, and students to honour the memory of Samantha Li, for a student who demonstrates intellectual reach and creativity, a passion for the exploration of literature and ideas, and generosity toward and engagement with fellow students and professors):

**K. R. Byggdin**

## Allan & Lura Bevan Scholarship

(a memorial scholarship established by colleagues and friends of the late Allan Bevan, awarded to a student in the Major program):

**Tasia King**

## Graham Creighton Prize

(awarded annually to students entering their 4th year of study in an English Major or Honours program who have demonstrated a high level of academic excellence):

**Sabina Willmott  
Emily MacPherson**

## Archibald MacMechan Scholarship

(granted to a graduating English student who has demonstrated special abilities at the Undergraduate level):

**K. R. Byggdin**

## Margaret Nicoll Pond Memorial Prize

(endowed by Mr. F.H. Pond of Halifax in memory of his wife, the late Margaret Nicoll Pond, a gifted teacher of English and a devoted alumna and governor of Dalhousie University. The prize is awarded to the woman graduating in English with the highest academic standing):

**Isabella MacKay**

## James W. Tupper Graduate Fellowship

(awarded to students selected on the criteria of the GPA of all English classes who are going on to do graduate work):

**Alex Affonso  
Sophie Lawall  
Maya Schwartz**

## Malcolm Ross Thesis Prize

(awarded to an outstanding MA or PhD thesis on Canadian Literature):

**Benjamin Sheppard**

## University Medal in English

**Hannah Whaley**

## University Medal in Creative Writing

**K. R. Byggdin**

## CREATIVE WRITING PRIZES

### Varma Prize for Gothic Literature

1st place: **Cassandra Burbine** for “Ode to Saint Agatha”

2nd place: **Kyle Hardy** for “Termination and Splicing”

3rd place: **K.R. Byggdin** for “Always Do the Reference Check”

Honourable Mentions: **Isabella MacKay** for “The People on The Other Side”; **Johanna Gysbertsen** for “Deteriorate”; and **Eva Abou-Samra** for “Dear Adam”

### Fooshee Prizes

Poetry:

1st place: **Noah Glenen** for “The Daylily Droops...”

2nd place: **Cassandra Burbine** for “Aggie”

3rd place: **Audrey Green** “Carnival”

Honourable mention: **Gillian Owensby** for “Bronchial Heartache”

Fiction:

1st place: **Emma Whaley** for “B52”

2nd place: **Sol Boden** for “Apartment Rats”

3rd place: **Anya Deady** for “Corpus”

Honourable Mentions: **Aidan Buhler** for “The Blueberry Man”; **Jolena Klymyshyn** for “Caught at the Drive-In”; and **Vivian Noguera** for “Perhaps”

## PhD SSHRC Success

The department was excited to learn that six PhD candidates received funding this year from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Talent program! They are:

Lindsay Church; Krista Collier-Jarvis; Gavin Foster (who was also awarded a Killam Fellowship this year); Helen Pinsent; Ella Ratz; Aiden Tait

Our PhD candidates continue to find significant success (over 90% receiving competitive external funding!), and we congratulate all of them!



# FACULTY PROFILES

## LESLEY CHOYCE

*On June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Lesley Choyce, Senior Instructor in the Creative Writing Program and the Transition Year Program, was awarded the Atlantic Legacy Award as part of the Atlantic Book Awards. Congratulations, and well-deserved, Lesley! The official announcement is below.*



<https://atlanticbookawards.ca/pioneer-award/>

"This award honours individuals who have made a lasting contribution to the development of the literary arts in Atlantic Canada, people who have gone above and beyond the call of duty and who have, through innovation, risk-taking, self-sacrifice, and/or creativity, provided opportunity or inspiration (or both) for those sharing Atlantic Canadian stories through writing and publishing. The recipient might be from the field of publishing, writing, bookselling, or literary arts organizations, but people from all occupations, trades, and walks of life may be nominated—the most important consideration is that the person has made an extraordinary contribution to the advancement and encouragement of Atlantic books and writers. Particular consideration will be given to trailblazers, individuals whose work has had (or will have) a lasting impact."

As was made clear at the event, Leslie's impact on writing in this region and beyond, including his founding of Pottersfield Press, has been profound—a fact our Creative Writing Program and Dalhousie more generally know well!

The event was livestreamed: to watch, you can click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lwjkPEawFQ>

Leslie's award and subsequent speech take place starting at 1:37:42.



Lesley Choyce (photo provided by Lesley Choyce)

## DR. CHRISTINA LUCKYJ

*Dr. Luckyj retires this summer, but took the time to sit down and reflect on her time at Dal with the editors*

**Editors:** When did you start in the English department at Dalhousie? What comes back to you most clearly when you think to your first years at Dal?

**Christina Luckyj:** I came to Dal on a Killam postdoc in May of 1988, never imagining that I would stay more than a couple of years!

But I found the most wonderful bunch of colleagues here (including my former housemate Judith Thompson) and fell in love with the Maritimes - so much so that I turned down two tenure-track jobs (at UBC and SFU) to take a two-year contract job at Dal! Looking back, I can see that was foolish - but it worked out.

I arrived at Dal with a toddler and my second child was born in my second year of teaching, so honestly my first years at Dal were spent in a blur of exhaustion. When I began teaching, we all taught a 3/3 load, and maternity leaves were limited to four months! Though English department colleagues were wonderfully supportive of young families, the institution itself was still quite rigid and unaccommodating in those days. I am very glad conditions for women faculty have improved since then.

My first years at Dal are associated with the cluster of decaying old Halifax homes on Henry and Seymour streets that housed the English department. It was a rabbit warren of offices infested with mice, but the lounge was a wonderful open space that opened onto a massive rhododendron garden where department functions were

held. I found teaching very challenging at first — I was making the transition from years of solitary thesis-writing to the performance art that is teaching, and it didn't always go smoothly. Fortunately, students are very generous, and I made some very good friends among them - especially among the MA students I supervised, one of whom I have visited several times where she lives in France. But it was hard going - in my first year of teaching I developed "walking pneumonia" (viral pneumonia) that lasted for months while I continued to teach. I remember identifying with as I acted out Everyman sinking into his grave. Things got better from there...

**Editors:** Woah! This answer addresses 30+ years of shifts--both good and, well, not so good--that define the experience of working as an English professor at Dalhousie. If you could reinforce any one thing about this department, something you admire or that that you think could guide it going forward, what would that be?

**CL:** What do I admire most about this department and would like to see going forward? Mutual respect despite differences of opinion has always been fundamental to the collegiality of the department. There are tales of the old days when there were terrible infighting, but since I arrived most colleagues have been able to disagree without holding any grudges. Also: have more parties (once COVID permits)! Even low-key casual gatherings that are inclusive have a positive effect on relations in the department



*Dr. Christina Luckyj (photo provided by Dr. Luckyj)*

**Editors:** Your turn to COVID here anticipates my next question: you've taught at Dal for 33 years. Developing a teaching style, a rapport with students, a way of reading your classrooms takes time and effort, but it gives a baseline for pedagogical work: you always can come back to established practices when teaching new texts or encountering unanticipated issues in the room... And then, for the last two years, you had to make this truly significant shift to online teaching. How did you find it? Did the 'pivot' confirm anything for you about your teaching practice?

(Continued next page)



**CL:** O boy.

No matter how many times I have taught something, I always return to it to find some fresh angle, no matter how small, to reinvigorate my sense of the possibilities of that text. That's the only way to keep one's teaching alive. So surprisingly the shift to online teaching actually opened up pedagogical opportunities for me, new ways of approaching a text with the students. The biggest struggle I always had in teaching was in balancing the communication of a coherent, distinctive vision of the text with openness to student-led pedagogy. The pandemic provided me with the opportunity to experiment with the "flipped classroom" - and I learned, after all these years, that I love this model. For my Shakespeare class I recorded shaped and (hopefully) coherent lectures that the students watched when convenient for them. Then two students in each group were tasked with preparing two good questions apiece and posting them the night before online discussion. When we met in smaller groups online, all the students had had an opportunity to think some thoughts in response to the questions - and they rose to the occasion beautifully. I served as moderator, but discussion was led by the two students, and it was so, so animated and thoughtful. I learned so much from listening to them, and they built on one another's observations, deepening their engagement with the text. It was a phenomenal success. So, in my final year of teaching, after 33 years, I changed and recharged my teaching practice.

**Editors:** It sounds like your online classes were so successful. There's this negative image of academics becoming inveterate with time, but your experience here shows that a scholar's development doesn't end with tenure or seniority; that said, remaining open to newness and learning (not just students' learning, but our own as well) is integral. To wit: you've just published your third monograph, *Liberty and the Politics of the Female Voice in Early Stuart England*. Your essay collection, *The Politics of Female Alliance in Early Modern England*, co-edited with Niamh J. O' Leary, won the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women Award for Best Collaborative Project. You've edited the text of *The White Devil* and an essay collection on *The Duchess of Malfi*. You've also written a critical introduction to *Othello* for the New Cambridge Shakespeare, with a new edition of *The Winter's Tale* forthcoming with them as well. All this research on top of numerous peer reviewed articles, conference papers, reviews...

It's cliché to list a scholar's achievements then immediately ask, 'so, what's next?' but research has been such a very big part of your life for so long, and I want to know: is there any one project you'd still like to do? Imagining no restrictions on your time or funding or archival resources, what would you study next?

**CL:** Apart from the edition of *Winter's Tale* (which is a gargantuan undertaking), I am super excited to be teaming up with Victoria Burke (U Ottawa) and Danielle Clarke (UC Dublin) to edit an early seventeenth-century woman poet, Anne Southwell, for the series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*. Southwell wrote only in manuscript, and her vast corpus is relatively unknown even to specialists (because no good edition), so I am thrilled to be participating in this project.

Thanks for asking!!

**Editors:** Two closing questions: what drive ultimately led you to literature scholarship, and, if you had to choose an alternative career, what would it have been?

**CL:** 1. A good answer to your question would no doubt require years of psychoanalysis. I grew up in with parents for whom literature was a secular religion - they met in Helen Gardner's seminar on the metaphysical poets, my father became a professor of Ukrainian literature and my mother was a poet and voracious reader. I got drunk on literature early on, and figuring out how it produced that sweet ecstasy became an obsession that I peddled into a career.

2. The only other thing in my life that produced that ecstasy was music; I played guitar and sang, and long ago had dreams of becoming a professional folk singer.

## DR. JUDITH THOMPSON

*Dr. Thompson retired during the many pandemic pivots, and so we didn't have a chance to celebrate her in person or print, but we're happy to do so here; posing the same questions to both our colleagues, with each answering some but not all, we see some similarities and differences in their memories of the department.*

**Editors:** When did you start in the English department at Dalhousie? What comes back to you most clearly when you think to your first years at Dal?

**Judith Thompson:** I came to Dal from U Alberta (where I'd been a sessional) in summer 1988. What I remember about the department then is mostly how slow-paced and homey it felt, compared to now but even compared to Alberta. A lot of that had to do with the space, which created a great sense of community. We were in the houses on Henry Street, and it almost felt like being roommates. There would always be a group of people having lunch together in the lounge (way bigger than the McCain cookie-cutter lounges), where we also had our weekly talks and dept. parties. Back then it seemed we weren't expected, or didn't need, to be working flat-out all the time. Around the millennium, when we moved to the McCain, it seems like the university as a whole started to change, to make the relatively independent, conversational, collegial routines more difficult. Everything became more managerial, bureaucratic, centralized, labour-intensive, and Kafkaesque, governed by the endlessly changing mission-statements and branding and brain-dead fashions in the latest administrative double-speak. The



Dr. Thompson as Thelwall, from *A Walk with John Thelwall* (2019)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljdDcaGCNgE>

department ball-teams (we used to have two, one just for English dept. faculty, the other for our grad students!) started tailing off around that time too. Not that it was perfect back then, but the level of stress was much less. Despite the old-boy's network (which god knows could be intrusive), there was a sense of equality and a general commitment to new ideas. I think we had one of the most gender-equal departments of English in the country at that time (not fully of course, and other forms of equality lagged behind, but we did make an effort for diversity even then). Within my first couple of years in the dept., a bunch of us had babies at roughly the same time, and there was this informal hand-me-down clothes and equipment network. Incredibly reassuring for a new female hire.

**Editors:** If you could reinforce any one thing about this department, something you admire or that that you think could guide it going forward, what would that be?

**JT:** Ok, the best thing about the department from day 1 was that it was consultative and collegial. Decisions were made collaboratively and through the cliché "full and frank discussion" ... but it was really true, and it worked. Of course, there were all kinds of schisms, disagreements, tensions, arguments, stubbornness (see "old-boys club" above) ... but we worked it out, no matter how much time it took, respectfully. We NEVER had a top-down managerial structure, with chairs parachuted in. It was ALWAYS democratic and inclusive (including sessionals, grad students, adjuncts, etc. and office staff involved in decision structures). When I talked to friends from U of T grad school who were teaching elsewhere, I was dismayed at how dysfunctional and hierarchical some of their departments were/are!! If there is any legacy from the past that guides the department going forward, it would be that. PLEASE!

(Continued next page)

**Editors:** You've taught at Dal through many changes to the department, the discipline, and the university, but one of the more challenging times must have been the last few years, with the "pivot" online due to COVID. Did you discover anything positive about teaching during this time?

**JT:** Hmmm, yeah, that's a hard one. Really difficult to find something positive under the circumstances, between the panic attacks and my pig-headed old-fart resistance to anything new. To paraphrase Stevie Smith, not pivoting but flailing. But I guess once it was all over, I was proud that I coped and even discovered something somewhat creative about putting together and recording the PowerPoints, even though I was too rushed (and also pig-headed, etc. etc.) to really exploit the medium. Also, the fact that it was all a one-off, and the sense that all this creativity would be lost as soon as delivered, hung over me like a pall. One of the best things was that I was SO F\*\*\*ING IMPRESSED by the students' creativity in engaging with the medium that I found so obstructive. Even though I did not have any opportunity to engage with them one on one, and I really regret that.

**Editors:** You've accomplished a lot over the years, but one of the major scholarly events was your discovery of previously unknown, significant work by John Thelwall. We know you continue to work on his material, so can we ask: what next?

**JT:** Well, I am deep in the writing of the first bio of *Citizen John, A Voice for the Voiceless*, about halfway through, and it is still hugely fun. Monomaniacal but revelatory. A hell of a story!

Fulfilling all the promise of that manuscript I found and then some. Still turning up exciting stuff every day. Breaking into a new world, like Keats' Cortez "silent upon a peak in Darien." It ought to do for Thelwall what another modest Canadian scholar did for William Blake ten years before I was born. Not that it will, under current circumstances. And not that I am in any way like Nory (though I do have the double-chin). To compare myself to him would be immodest therefore unCanadian.

After that, my plan is still to hang up my scholar's hat, put on the beret of the artist, and head down the road not taken 40+ years ago.

**Editors:** Two closing questions: what drive ultimately led you to literature scholarship, and, if you had to choose an alternative career, what would it have been?

**JT:** The drive to literature was/is fundamentally the same as the drive to art: my immense and often quite uncomfortable, multiform, eccentric creative energy. I never really thought of myself as a scholar; I always felt that whatever I success I had in that regard was just an outlet for my creativity. From before I could read, I loved literature as story, as imagination, as exploring new worlds in/as language. I discovered I was good at it and couldn't stop. More pragmatically, what led me to literature rather than art (the road not taken) was the petty fact that I applied for a scholarship at the end of first year undergrad for which you had to be an English honours student. When I got it, that decided me on doing the honours in English and the art as a minor (I'd chosen Western because it was good for both and I couldn't decide). And then I fell into the vortex of Romanticism (whereas visual arts at Western was not quite as inspiring; despite welding, which was cool, I was shit at printmaking and photography). Finally, I got a big graduation scholarship that kind of pointed to grad school in English. So, the art became a sideline.

Obviously, I came close to having an alternative career as an artist, and I often wonder what would have happened if I had taken that path.

After the book is done, I have some projects in mind, including uniting my own poetry (all unpublished, and pretty much unread by any but me) with printmaking (worth another try, eh?), and making like William Blake. A girl's gotta dream, right?



*Drs. Thompson (l.) and Luckyj (r.), 1982 (photo provided by Drs Luckyj and Thompson)*



# THE CANON AND ITS DISCONTENTS

## BY BRENNA DUPERRON

In 2015, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call for Actions (2015), specifically sections 45.i., 46. ii, 47 and 62, necessitated the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems into Canadian postsecondary institutions. In 2018, Lauren Beck, of Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, began a conversation at the Atlantic Medieval Association and the Atlantic Medieval and Early Modern Group, asking how to reconcile and decolonize pre-modern studies. It was here that I began my own journey with Lauren Beck and *The Canon and Its Discontents*, a multi-university research collective of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars looking at how instructors have incorporated reconciliatory, anticolonialist and antiracist perspectives and approaches into post-secondary school classrooms.

From conversations with scholars within the collective—including myself (Dalhousie University), Lisa Binkley (Dalhousie), Jordan Abel (University of Alberta), Barbara Belyea (University of Calgary), David Garneau (University of Regina), Susan Glover (Laurentian University), Rachel Hurst (Saint Francis Xavier University), Joëlle Papillon (McMaster University), Carolyn Podruchny (York University), Robbie Richardson (Princeton University) and Juan Sánchez (University of North Carolina)—*The Canon and Its Discontents* passed the original temporal and disciplinary

boundaries to consider the humanities classroom more broadly.

In *The Canon and Its Discontents*, we specifically consider how teaching literature and other media can be an act of colonization or reconciliation, depending in part on who is included in the syllabus or how the work is taught. The question of "how" is important to break down the misconception that analysing and teaching literature is an innocuous or objective act. We ask: how are instructors changing how they teach literature and visual mediums? How are they incorporating Indigenous knowledge into the classroom as an act of inclusion and decolonization? Our group seeks to understand how literature is used in the colonial project and how even Indigenous literature can be recolonized through certain teaching practices, including using Western perspectives and expectations in both judging and understanding works as well as the problems of tokenizing Indigenous authors or treating their work as an Other (i.e., separate from the mainstream).

The current focus of our collective is on gathering classroom materials to build a resource library for post-secondary educators interested in reclaiming, reconciling, and decolonizing our classrooms. As we grow, our collective hopes to become a community network for workshops, conferences, and other learning/sharing events.

## DAL ENGLISH IN CONVERSATION

A number of members of the Department have recently published in *The Conversation*, "an independent source of news and views, from the academic and research community, delivered direct to the public."

Michael Cameron, "The movie 'Finch' explores how dogs help us define humanity"

<https://theconversation.com/the-movie-finch-explores-how-dogs-help-us-define-humanity-173309>

Krista Collier-Jarvis, "The importance of Indigenous storytelling in tales of post-apocalyptic survival"

<https://theconversation.com/the-importance-of-indigenous-storytelling-in-tales-of-post-apocalyptic-survival-178284>

---. "Like the truck-machines in 'Mad Max,' the 'freedom convoy' relies on access to fuel"

<https://theconversation.com/like-the-truck-machines-in-mad-max-the-freedom-convoy-relies-on-access-to-fuel-176885>

Julia M. Wright, "How books, movies and TV help us understand the infodemic, anti-vax messages and conspiracy theories"

<https://theconversation.com/how-books-movies-and-tv-help-us-understand-the-infodemic-anti-vax-messages-and-conspiracy-theories-175492>

# IN MEMORIAM



## OWEN MAITZEN (1997 – 2021)

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We are very sad to report the death of Owen Maitzen on December 30, 2021. Owen was the beloved son of Rohan and Stephen Maitzen and a wonderful big brother to Maddie Maitzen. Owen was an exceptionally talented musician, mathematician, chess player, and programmer; he was also a passionate and thoughtful activist for environmental and social justice causes. He is greatly missed by his family and friends.

Owen's full obituary can be seen here: <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/halifax-ns/owen-maitzen-10510023>





## DR. PATRICIA MONK (1938 – 2021)

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Patricia Monk, who taught in the Department of English at Dalhousie University from 1970 until her retirement in 2003, passed away in Halifax on December 29, 2021, at the age of 83.

Born in Stockport near Manchester in the UK, Patricia was the daughter of the late Bill and Kay Monk, and is survived by her beloved sister, Kitty Monk, who lives in Auckland, New Zealand. Patricia obtained her undergraduate degree from Reading University (with her tuition, books and accommodation covered by the Stockport Education Committee), and then moved to Canada, obtaining her Masters degree from Carleton University and her PhD from Queen's University.

A specialist in the fields of Canadian Studies and of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Patricia was the first woman to be promoted to the rank of Full Professor in Dalhousie's English Department. In Canadian Literature, Patricia was known especially for her work on the Canadian writers Robertson Davies and James De Mille, through her books *The Smaller Infinity: Jungian Self in the Novels of Robertson Davies* (1982), *Mud and Magic Shows: Robertson Davies's Fifth Business* (1992), and *The Gilded Beaver: An Introduction to the Life and Work of James De Mille* (1991). She also published essays and articles on these authors, as well as on Thomas Keenelly, and subjects such as the image of Africa in Canadian literature, and Canadian Maritime poetry. At the time of her retirement, she donated her papers relating to De Mille to the Dalhousie Archives. As a Canadian Literature specialist, she taught many classes in the field during her years at Dalhousie, and also served on the supervisory committees of many Masters and PhD students.

Patricia combined her teaching and scholarship in Canadian Literature with path-breaking work in Science Fiction and in Fantasy literature, introducing classes in these fields at a time when they were often not yet incorporated in mainstream literary studies and the curriculum. In these fields, she also published numerous articles and essays, some focusing on the representation of the female hero, as well as her widely influential book *Alien Theory: The Alien as Archetype in the Science Fiction Short Story* (2006). As colleagues and friends will remember, Patricia's fascination with the representation of aliens and alien language in science fiction and fantasy was reflected in the button she regularly wore, inscribed "Just Visiting This Planet." Patricia continued to work on publications in sci fi and fantasy after her retirement, including an article on genetic engineering in science fiction in 2016, and most recently, in 2018, an article on George Martin's epic fantasy series *A Song of Fire and Ice*, the basis of the HBO series *Game of Thrones*. Published in the open-access journal *Mythlore* <<https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore>>, this incisive analysis of the dwarf Tyrion Lannister as the "fulcrum" of the series demonstrates Patricia's wide-ranging expertise. Fans of Tyrion will appreciate Patricia's exploration of his archetypal journey as hero and his capacity for independent thinking in a rigorously hierarchical feudal society – "as though he were a cat in a world of dogs." Patricia's academic bio in *Mythlore* ends with the words, "She is very fond of cats" and one of her articles is titled "Goddess of the Hearth: The Archetypal Significance of the Cat in Modern Fantasy." She remained a lifelong Manchester United soccer team fan. Contact: Marjorie Stone [mistone@dal.ca](mailto:mistone@dal.ca)





# DEPARTMENT UPDATES

**Alice Brittan**'s published [\*The Art of Astonishment: Reflections on Gifts and Grace\*](#) (Bloomsbury).

**Becca Babcock** is beginning her term as the Assistant Dean (Student Affairs) in the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences (taking over from David Matthias, who has spent thirteen years developing the role). Becca will also be teaching English and Creative Writing.

**Andrew Brown** published "[\*Ridiculous Subjects: Coriolanus, Popular Representation, and the Roman Tribunes in Early Modern Drama\*](#)" in *English Literary Renaissance* (52.2), and delivered an invited talk, "Public Office and the Weight of Personation in Samson Agonistes," at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Canada Milton Seminar, organized by the University of Toronto's Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies.

**Krista Collier-Jarvis** is the incoming President for the Graduate Student Caucus of the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English (ACCUTE), at whose 2022 conference she also delivered two papers. She just returned from Warsaw where she presented a paper on representations of residential schools as part of the Thinking through the Museum project. She has four blogs on Dalhousie's [OpenThink project](#) (two of which were cross-published with *The Conversation* (see page 10.)

**Brenna Duperron** was awarded the [Van Courtlandt Elliott Prize](#) by the Medieval Academy of America for her article, "Ghostly Consciousness in The Book of Margery Kempe," in [\*English Language Notes\*](#) (58.2). She also organized and facilitated Indigeneity in Medieval Studies: A Talking

Circle in Honour of Lee Maracle for the 2022 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society of Medievalists. The Talking Circle comprised of the voices and insights of celebrated scholars and thinkers, including Tarren Andrews (Yale University), Cord J. Whitaker (Wellesley College), Suzanne Conklin Akbari (Princeton University), Lehua Yim, Elder Ann LaBillois (Dalhousie Elder-in-Residence), Douglas Hayes (Lakehead University), Carmen Miedema (University of Manitoba), Sarah-Nelle Jackson (University of British Columbia), and Sarah LaVoy (Cornell University). Together, they discussed the role of premodern studies in reconciling and decolonizing scholarship. She has participated as a RaceB4Race Social Media Fellow in a workshop series focused on developing a digital safety plan for scholars engaged with public-facing scholarship through social media

**Gavin Foster** presented "Strange Sounds, Strange Scenes: Alliterative Metre and Personification in Tolkien's 'The Lay of the Children of Húrin'" at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, and is presenting "Riddling Earth-Halls: Examining the Interplay of Environmental and Rhetorical Borders in 'The Wife's Lament' and 'Wulf and Eadwacer'" at the International Medieval Congress.

**Shauntay Grant** published her play, [\*The Bridge\*](#) (Playwrights Canada, 2021). Her children's picture book, [\*My Fade Is Fresh\*](#), is forthcoming from Penguin Random House. She was commissioned by Against The Grain Theatre to write the text (as poet/librettist) for [\*Identity: A Song Cycle\*](#), which she's currently developing with composer Dinuk Wijeratne and baritone Elliot Madore. Her poem "[Bench Drum](#)" is published in

connection with Craft NB's Atlantic Vernacular Digital Exhibition, an online exhibition that invited Atlantic Canadian poets to interpret a curated selection of visual artworks through poetry. The poem responds to a visual artwork of the same name by [Tyshan Wright](#), who is the Atlantic region nominee shortlisted for the 2022 Sobey Art Awards—"and also," Shauntay adds, "my husband :)." Their first poetry/visual art collaboration—a mixed media work called 'Abeng'—is featured on the cover of the Summer 2022 edition of *Visual Arts News*, and in the article that [appears in the issue](#). Shauntay was also awarded Arts Nova Scotia's inaugural [Black Artist Recognition Award](#) in Fall 2021.

**Jason Haslam** published "The Call of Cthoilu: The Weird Subject of Cold Water Oil," in [\*Cold Water Oil: Offshore Petroleum Cultures\*](#), edited by Fiona Polack and Danine Farquharson (Routledge 2022).

**Asha Jeffers** published her poetry chapbook, [\*Mundane Majestic\*](#) (Anstruther, 2021), and "Facing the Future through Myth in David Chariandy's *Soucouyant*" in [\*Critical Perspectives on David Chariandy\*](#), edited by Rodolphe Solbiac (Lexington, 2021). She reviewed Souvankham Thammavongsa's *How to Pronounce Knife* in [\*Canadian Literature\*](#). She is also now literary editor for the journal [\*Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice\*](#).

**Tom Ue** edited *Reading Literature and Science Dossier* (developed out of his 1000-level course) for [\*Film Matters\*](#) (13.1) and will become co-editor of that journal in 2023. Among other pieces, he published "Toxic Economies: *Parasite*, Bong Joon Ho (2019)" (co-written with Alexander Wills) in [\*Toxic: A Companion\*](#), edited by Simon Bacon

(Lang, 2022); "Investment and Housing in Gissing's *The Unclassed* and Morrison's 'All That Messuage,'" in [Critical Essays on Arthur Morrison and the East End](#), edited by Diana Maltz (Routledge, 2022); and "In Love and War: Gogol's *Taras Bulba* and Gissing's *Veranilda*," in [Notes and Queries](#) (69.1). He also delivered the keynote address to the DePaul Pop Culture Conference (2022).

**Bart Vautour** has published "Personal Libraries of the State" in [Unpacking the Personal Library: The Public and Private Life of Books](#), edited by Jason Camlot and J.A. Weingarten (WLUP, 2022).

**Julia M. Wright, FRSC** has published the co-authored policy briefing, [Protecting Expert Advice for the Public: Promoting Safety and Improved Communications](#), and testified as a member of the Royal

Society of Canada COVID-19 Task Force to the [meeting of the Senate of Canada Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science, and Technology](#). As President of the Academy of the Arts and Humanities for the Royal Society of Canada, she co-authored a joint statement, "Support for the International Research Community is Crucial, Especially During Times of War" in the [Globe and Mail](#).

## WINTER SPEAKER SERIES

### OUR WEEKLY SPEAKER SERIES

continued in a "hybrid" form this term. In addition to the Double Date creative readings (see the article in the [previous newsletter](#)), we heard a set of fantastic critical papers. You can see the Fall 2022 Schedule, when it is ready, on our [website](#).

### February

11: *Double Date III*: Hannah Moscovich and Christian Barry (*online*)  
18 Jennifer Henderson, "Daughters of the North" (*online*)

### March

4: Seán Kennedy (Saint Mary's), "'First taste of the shit': Beckett's Regressive Aesthetic" (*online*)  
11: Andrew Brown (Dalhousie), "Pericles and the Sea of Things" (*Rowe 1009*)  
18: Joel Faflak (Western), "Educating the Imagination: Defending Shelley Defending" (*Rowe 1011*)  
25: Taeun Min (Chonnam National University, South Korea), "The Aesthetics of Trash in Joyce." (*McCain 1198*)

### April

1: *Double Date IV*: Truth Is... and Beth Anne Ellipsis (*Rowe 1011*)  
8: Tom Ue (Dalhousie), "Speculation, Investment, and Free Market Economy in George Gissing's *Will Warburton: A Romance of Real Life*" (*online*)

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