

English News

SPRING 2024



FACULTY OF ARTS AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

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STAY CONNECTED

Department of English
Dalhousie University
6135 University Avenue
PO Box 15000
Halifax, NS B3H 4R2

📞 902.494.3387

✉ englwww@dal.ca

🌐 english.dal.ca

📘 facebook.com/FASSDal

✂ twitter.com/DAL_FASS

📷 instagram.com/dal_fass

CHAIR'S REMARKS

GREETINGS TO ALL STUDENTS, As usual, we've had a very busy Fall Term in the Department of English. Way back in September, we welcomed Assistant Professors Dr. Brittany Kraus and Dr. Katie Turcotte, who have had a hectic but exciting term teaching courses ranging from Literature: A Global Perspective to Contemporary Canadian Literature to Nonsense Literature: Literature and the Other Arts. We are grateful for the energy, enthusiasm, and expertise they bring to our classrooms, and you can read more about their work in this issue. Also featured in this issue's Q & A are Dean Jennifer Andrews, who holds an academic appointment in our department and taught for us the first time this fall, and Dr. Sheheryar Sheikh, a creative writer and SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow who shares his considerable expertise in Introduction to Creative Writing. Welcome all!

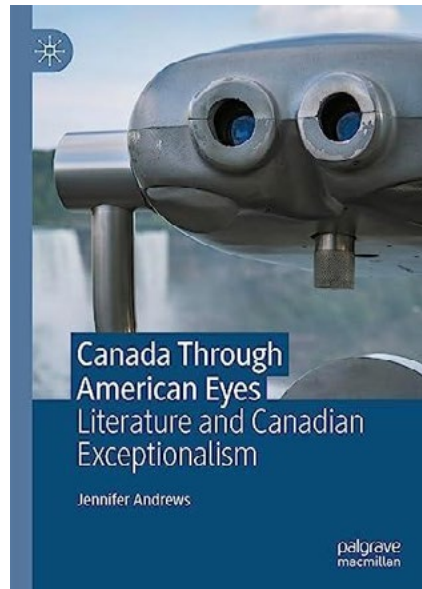


In this issue, you can also read about some of our very accomplished alumni, Dr. Susanne Marshall and Dr. Danae Dyck, as well as this year's very creative Varma Prize Winners. I'd be remiss not also to mention our eight Honours students who did such a fine job presenting their work at this year's Honours Colloquium. Thank you all for reminding us that our students and alumni make us proud every single day – and not least by lending hope to a future that sometimes looks desperately bleak.

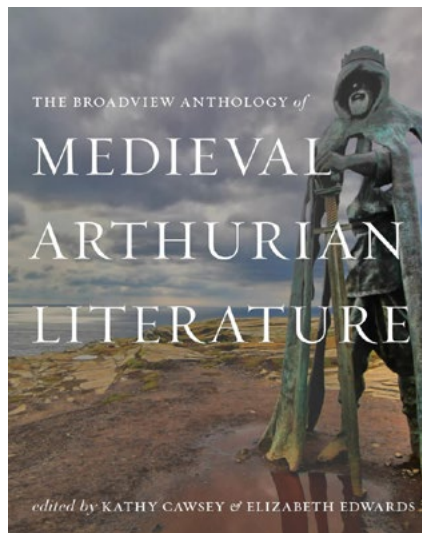
This past term, we also said goodbye to Dr. John Fraser, who taught in our department for many years and whose life is celebrated in the included obituary collated by Professor Emeritus Dr. John Baxter. Thank you, Drs. Fraser and Baxter for all you've contributed to the intellectual and cultural life of our department. For the legacy you've left, we are most grateful.

Lyn Bennett

DEPARTMENT UPDATES



Jennifer Andrews published *Canada Through American Eyes: Literature and Canadian Exceptionalism*. This book explores how Canada is imagined primarily by US writers, and what readers and scholars on both sides of the Canada-US border can learn from these recent depictions by examining a selection of US-authored fiction from 9/11 to the present. The novels — and occasionally paintings, films, and musicals — that are the subject of the book provide a deliberately varied set of case studies to probe how US texts, along with works of art produced on both sides of the Canada-US border,



uncover moments in Canadian historical and literary studies that have been buried or occluded to protect Canada's self-representation as an exceptional nation.

Andrew Brown published "Pericles and the Sea of Things" in *Shakespearean International Yearbook* and a review of Zachary Lesser's *Ghosts, Holes, Rips and Scrapes: Shakespeare in 1619*, *Bibliography in the Longue Durée* in *Journal of British Studies*.

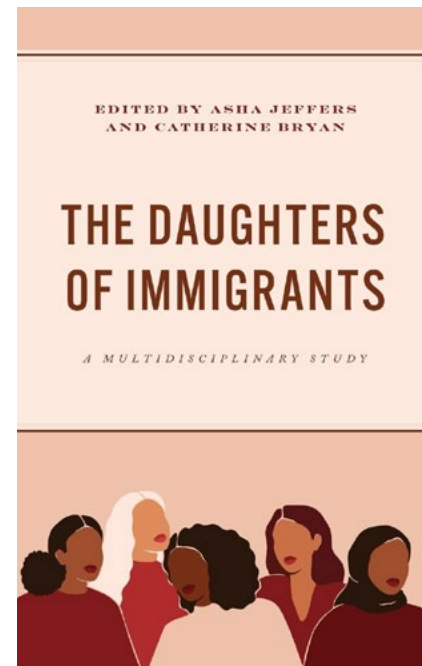
Kathy Cawsey and **Elizabeth Edwards** held a launch for the *Broadview Anthology of Medieval Arthurian Literature* which they edited.

Krista Collier-Jarvis received a Congress Graduate Merit Award for contributions to the Indigenous Literary Studies Association in 2023 and published "Danger: Children at Play": Uncanny Play in Stephen King's *Pet Sematary* in *Humanities: Gothic Adaptation: Intermedial and Intercultural Shape-Shifting*.

Brenna Duperron successfully defended her dissertation titled "Fear Not the Language of the World: Red Reading Literacy in The Book of Margery Kempe". Congratulations, Brenna!

Jason Haslam published the chapter "Science Fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century American Novel and Politics*, edited by Bryan M. Santin (Cambridge UP, 2023). Along with Julia M. Wright and Krista Collier-Jarvis, he also presented at Hal-Con on world-building, ecological justice, and early science fiction, based on research for his forthcoming *Broadview Anthology of Science Fiction*. This summer, he will be presenting a keynote address at the International Gothic Association Conference, here in Halifax.

Asha Jeffers' edited collection, *The Daughters of Immigrants: A Multidisciplinary Study*, co-edited with



Catherine Bryan, was published by Lexington Press this Fall. The book grows out of the virtual symposium she hosted in 2021 and includes contributions by literary and social science scholars. In August, she threw a much-belated in-person reading/launch party for her poetry chapbook, *Mundane Majestic*, in Toronto at Danu Social House.

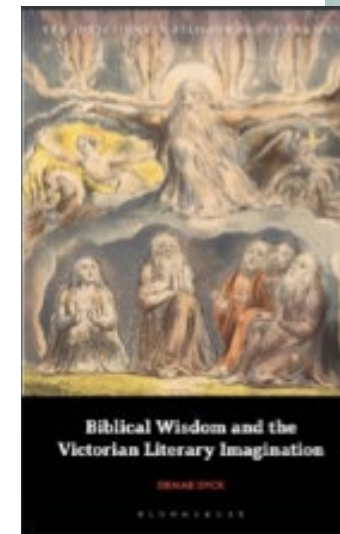
Julia M. Wright FRSC published her third co-authored and peer-reviewed policy briefing for the Royal Society of Canada Task Force on COVID-19, "The Humanities and Health Policy." The RSC and the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences are hosting a free webinar following up on the briefing on 18 January 2024 at 1pm EST, "Putting the Humanities to Work for Canadians' Health"; you can find details and register here. She also published "This Strange Horror": Irish Gothic Poetry in the Nineteenth Century" in the volume *Irish Gothic from Edinburgh University Press*. She served on SSHRC's Jury for this year's Impact Awards and has recently presented papers in Dresden, Dublin, Waterloo, and here in Halifax at Hal-Con. Her latest op-ed appeared in the *Calgary Herald*.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

ENGLISH M.A. ALUM DENAE DYCK PUBLISHES *BIBLICAL WISDOM AND THE VICTORIAN LITERARY IMAGINATION*

*English M.A. alum Denaë Dyck has a book coming out in February 2024 titled, *Biblical Wisdom and the Victorian Literary Imagination*. It is available for pre-order here: www.bloomsbury.com/us/biblical-wisdom-and-the-victorian-literary-imagination-9781350335387*

Dr. Dyck holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Victoria, an M.A. from Dalhousie University, and a B.A. from Ambrose University. Her publications include articles in *Victorian Poetry*, *Victorian Review*, *European Romantic Review*, *ARIEL*, and *Christianity and Literature*. *Biblical Wisdom and the Victorian Literary Imagination* considers how the challenges and interpretive potentials introduced by the advent of modern biblical criticism generated a creative recovery of wisdom literature. Her ongoing research focuses on late nineteenth-century women writers, alternative spiritualities, and periodical press networks.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

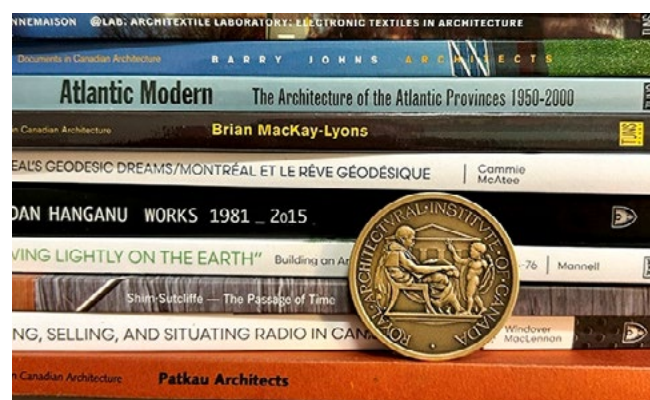
Do you have an interesting story to share? Know of a former classmate who is doing something exciting and newsworthy?

Email FASS Alumni Relations at fassalum@dal.ca or submit a Class Note at alumni.dal.ca/news-stories/class-notes

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CELEBRATING THE DALHOUSIE ARCHITECTURAL PRESS AND Q&A WITH ENGLISH PH.D. ALUM SUSANNE MARSHALL

Dalhousie Architectural Press has received the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) 2023 President's Award for Media in Architecture. English Ph.D. alum Dr. Susanne Marshall is the Publications Manager of Dalhousie Architectural Press in the Faculty of Architecture and Planning at Dalhousie University, in Kijikpuktuk/Halifax. As an academic editor, she works with architects and architectural historians to develop manuscripts for publication; as a project manager, she steers the book production process and runs the daily business of the Press. Her publishing background includes work with nonfiction, scholarly, and public-interest publishers. Marshall has taught literature, writing, and criticism in university classrooms and writing centres. Her research interests include representations of landscape, region, and globalization, and relationships of space and place with feminist and social justice issues. Susanne Marshall is the publications manager and generously shared some of her thoughts about working with DAP.



Q: Could you say more about your journey from Dal English to the Dal Architectural Press?

A: I taught literature and writing and continued to work freelance in publishing after finishing my PhD. I had had my first child, and was balancing work and parenthood. There were a lot of moving parts. When the DAP position came up, I realized that, barring the design component, I was very well suited to the job, and the chance to run a small academic press was very exciting. My early work in-house in academic publishing – I worked for Pearson in Toronto after my MA for a few years – was instrumental in building capacity to do this work.

Q: What is it like to be DAP publications manager? How would you describe your role?

A: Being the DAP publications manager means balancing academic editing and development, production-side issues through to distribution and promotion, meeting with Board members, running the daily business of the Press, supporting the Faculty with student advising and exhibitions, and even shipping boxes – we're a very small shop! I like the range and independence of it.

Q: What's your favorite thing about working at DAP?

A: My colleagues are wonderful. And I have great conversations with authors and students of architecture about a lot of the same issues I explored in my work in English.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add about DAP or your work?

A: We're always looking for good book proposals!

NEW FACES IN THE DEPARTMENT

JENNIFER ANDREWS

Dr. Jennifer Andrews is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) and a Professor in the Department of English. She was appointed in July of 2022. Prior to this appointment, she served as a Professor and Chair of the Department of English at UNB (2013-2016) and the President of the Association of Canadian College and University Chairs of English (2018-2020).

Her latest book, *Canada Through American Eyes: Literature of Canadian Exceptionalism* was published in 2023 by Palgrave Macmillan. She is most interested in how cross-border relationships have shaped literary and cultural studies in both Canada and the U.S. She has supervised MA and PhD theses on a wide array of academic topics including the poetry of Leonard Cohen, English-Canadian short fiction by women, Dionne Brand's poetry, Indigenous adaptations of Shakespearean drama, English-Canadian female fiction writers' use of humour, Douglas Coupland, depictions of female adolescence in Atlantic Canadian literature, the increasing conservatism of recent English-Canadian historical novels, body image in contemporary Canadian women's writing, healing in recent Indigenous women's literature, and the reformation of Northeastern literary relations. She has also supervised several creative writing theses (plays, poetry, and prose).



Q: Any new research or projects underway?

A: I am in the midst of drafting a book proposal for McGill-Queen's UP and applying for a SSHRC grant to workshop an edited collection about Canada-US relations which I'm hoping to host at Dalhousie next summer. I'm trying to come up with a catchy title: *Writing Across the Border: Canada-US Literary and Cultural Perspectives*.

Q: Any texts that you're teaching that you're excited about?

A: I just finished teaching a course called *Fashioning the Nation* which takes a comparative Canada-US perspective; I had an amazing group of students I most enjoyed watching students engage with issues of fast fashion especially as depicted in the CBC's documentary of the Fifth Estate about the Rana Plaza disaster, as well as examining American *Girl* and *Mapalea Dolls* (a Canadian brand) along with the Barbie movie. It is a great moment to think about how national identity and especially Canadian exceptionalism are forged through the seeming virtuosity attached to Canadian dolls and Canadian manufacturing practices.

Q: What's a book, series, or movie that keeps you cozy in Winter?

A: I am obsessed with *The Gilded Age*, Season 2 on Crave, which has some fascinating scenes set in Bloomingdale's department store and the most remarkable period costumes.

Q: What's something you're looking forward to in 2024?

A: I am looking forward to getting an article written and out for vetting—I'm working on an analysis of American author, Michelle Min Sterling's *Camp Zero*, which depicts a dystopian view of Canada that speaks to much of the work that I examined in my monograph which I completed last year. I love finishing articles because they take much less persistence than completing a whole book but are equally rewarding!

NEW FACES IN THE DEPARTMENT

SHEHERYAR SHEIKH

Sheheryar B. Sheikh (Shero) has an MFA from the University of Notre Dame ('07), and a PhD in post-9/11 American fiction from the University of Saskatchewan ('23). He has published two novels with HarperCollins India, *The Still Point of the Turning World* ('17) and *Call Me AI: The Hero's Ha-Ha Journey* ('19). Since September 2023 he has been teaching creative writing and working on world-building and immigrant fictions as a Donald Hill Family Postdoctoral Fellow at Dalhousie.



Q: Any new research or projects underway?

A: I'm researching for, and writing, a short story about "The Last TRC" about the ongoing Middle Eastern havoc, as seen from 515 years later, when an archive of documents is discovered, shedding new light on the event. This is part of my ongoing postdoctoral project of building and examining through stories a future ecumenopolis (world city) that is a science-future extension of our current technological, political and ecological trajectories.

Q: Any texts that you're teaching that you're excited about?

A: I just taught again (and better than last time) Sherman Alexie's short story "The Approximate Size of My Favorite Tumor". It is hilarious on surface, about the diagnosed person unable to react with anything but jokes to his condition, but the story has multiple layers of critique about colonialization, genocide, and despicable pop-culture tropes of Indigenous peoples of North America. It is my new favorite text to teach because of the generous amount of critical space for reflection it offers to readers.

Q: What's a book, series, or movie that keeps you cozy in Winter?

A: Either Alan Moore's *Jerusalem* (1,266 pages), or something just as massive. I've read the "Prelude" to Moore's work already, and the sentences are long and delicious, taking unexpected turns—it might just be the hot chocolate-armchair read for me this winter.

Q: What's something you're looking forward to in 2024?

A: I'll start 2024 off in vacation mode in Pakistan. I hope to bring good family-time energy and positive vibes to get fully immersed in work once back. Not being a newbie is something I'm looking forward to next semester and year—getting more into research, building more connections across disciplines, and visualizing completely my project's components, and by later in the year also proliferating my preliminary research at conferences.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT KEEPS FASS STUDENT'S FOCUS ON THE WRITE PATH

BY GENEVIEVE MACINTYRE | PHOTO BY NICK PEARCE

Ever since Cole Harbour-born-and-raised Destiny Renzelli was a child, she saw herself as a future Dalhousie University student. This was in large part thanks to the time she often spent around the Studley campus with her mother – a long-time Dal staff member at the Killam Library.

"I grew up being around the campus and imagining myself as one of the students someday," says Renzelli. But it wasn't until her grade 12 year, while reviewing the academic program offerings, that a nudge from her brother helped her decide what to study.

"He said to me, 'what about English? You've always been good at that!' And that was the moment it clicked," Renzelli explains. Soon after, she learned that she could study creative writing as well. "My first thought was, 'I can take that?' I had always been [creating] stories, even before I knew how to write, and the thought of being able to do that made me certain that was what I wanted to study."

Now in her fourth year of studies at Dal, Renzelli is moving closer to completing a Bachelor of Arts with a double major in [English](#) and [Creative Writing](#). She says her experience studying in the [Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences](#) has been great and she applauds her profs particularly from her first year, when all learning was online, and her second year, when the teachers and students had to move between online and in-person learning. Her third year was her first experience with fully on-campus classes. This shift allowed her to feel more connected to Dal, with more opportunities to connect with peers, like joining the Dalhousie English Society, and evolve her craft as a writer.

"The class that has been the greatest experience for me has been the poetry class I started taking this year," she says.



"I have always centered my writing around fiction pieces, of any genre, but I have found a new passion for poetry writing as well."

Support from donors helped her focus on student life

Like many other full-time students, Renzelli has felt the pressures of financing a post-secondary education while also living the new, exciting, and personally formative experiences of a university student. To help make ends meet, Renzelli, who is African Nova Scotian, applied for bursaries reserved for students from underrepresented populations. She received bursary support for the past three years.

Renzelli says that the funding she received through bursaries supported through the Dalhousie Fund has helped her manage the financial burden of things like textbooks and tuition statements. This alleviation of some of the financial stress has helped her focus on her schoolwork and excel in her classes.

"Without these bursaries, my student life wouldn't have been the same as it is now," adds Renzelli.

Many of the bursaries and scholarships available to Dalhousie students are [funded by annual gifts from alumni](#). With help from donors, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences is advancing its commitment to equity through important channels like scholarships for students from populations that have historically been underrepresented in higher education settings as a result of structural inequalities.

"I can't even begin to express my gratitude," says Renzelli, adding that she encourages other students to apply for any awards they might qualify for, because it can make a huge difference to your academic and student life.

With aspirations of a career that involves professional editorial work, writing and publishing fiction and poetry, Renzelli is proud to be the first person in her immediate family to complete a university degree. She is looking forward to her future convocation date when she'll finally get to cross a stage with her family – her greatest source of motivation – cheering her on from the audience.

VARMANIA

2023 WINNERS

The Varma Prize in Gothic Literature is awarded annually to recognize innovative, original, and unpublished student works of fiction or poetry that engage with the Gothic in fresh ways. The competition to select the Varma Prize winner is held annually and the short submissions must be at most 250 words. The Varma Prize is held in memory of Dr. Devendra Varma and generously supported by Bill Blakeney.

1ST PLACE:

Charlie Parsons
Halloween Town

2ND PLACE:

Celia Fournier
The Garden

3RD PLACE:

Tessie Doyle
There's a Man in my Bathtub

HONOURABLE MENTIONS:

Izabella McBride
Letters for Erica

Kali Reyno-Chiasson
Remaking

Owen MacPherson
Stepping Outside



Halloween Town
by Charlie Parsons

All of these leaves were once green in the trees
Now orange and aflame or brown in the mud
Brought to their death by a brisk autumn breeze
Red hues of maple or sinister blood

Wind howls like a wolf, for the moon grows high,
Vampires waltz as the scarecrows sing
Black cats roam the streets while the time draws nigh
Monsters lie in wait for the pumpkin king

The veil between worlds draws ever more thin
Crows circle low in the little town square
The horseman want heads, the mummies want skin
Ladies and gentlemen, hear this: beware!

Ghosts, ghouls, and goblins, gather all around
You're in for a fright in Halloween town!

MACKAY LECTURE SERIES

The MacKay Lecture Series is an annual event in which recognized scholars and speakers from across the globe give public talks on research relating to the Humanities and Arts, funded by the generous gift of Gladys MacKay in appreciation for the education that her husband, the Reverend Malcolm Ross MacKay, received at Dalhousie as a BA student in History.

This year the theme of the MacKay Lecture Series, organized by Bart Vautour and Erin Wunker, was entitled Our Aesthetic Possibilities: Lectures on Art-Making in the 21st Century. The three lectures explored academic and artistic perspectives on what cultural production means in our current moment. Taken as an umbrella term, "art-making" refers to cultural production from across multiple fields of practice, from literature to performance art, from music to painting, from screenwriting to memoir and the essay form. As the conditions for making art are continually shifting under the weight of different pressures, be they local or global, today's artists are also working under a changing mixture of technological, social, cultural, health, and economic conditions that are rapidly re-shaping the ways we make and consume art and culture. In these shifting conditions, space is needed to form and articulate our understandings of the politics and poetics of how cultural production comes to make meaning—how art makes incursions into the conditions of its own making. This lecture series explored cultural production in our current moment while allowing a forum for understanding the political and social implications of that production alongside an exploration of the role of art in our ever-complicating lives.

The first lecture was given on September 29th by Dr. Natalie Loveless, and was entitled "The Politics of Non-Relation: or, How the University Broke My Heart." Dr. Natalie Loveless is Professor of Contemporary Art and Theory in the Department of Art & Design at the University of Alberta, located in ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (Amiskwaciwāskahikan) on Treaty Six territory, where she also directs the Research-Creation and Social Justice CoLABoratory. She is a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (College of New Scholars, Artists, and Scientists) and the author of How to Make Art at the End

of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation (Duke UP 2019), editor of Knowings and Knots: Methodologies and Ecologies in Research-Creation (University of Alberta Press 2019), and co-editor of Responding to Site: The Performance Work of Marilyn Arsem (Intellect Press 2020).

The second lecture was given by Canisia Lubrin on October 20th, and was entitled "After This Sentence." Canisia Lubrin is a writer, editor and teacher, author of three books, including The Dyzgraphxst. Her work has received a 2021 Windham-Campbell Prize, the OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature and Griffin Poetry Prize, among others. Lubrin has held fellowships at the Banff Centre, Civitella Ranieri, Literature Colloquium, and several universities. She is Assistant Professor and the coordinator of the University of Guelph Creative Writing MFA in the School of English & Theatre Studies, Senior Research Associate at the Centre for the Study of Race, Gender & Class at University of Johannesburg, and poetry editor at M&S. Code Noir (Knopf, 2024) is her fiction debut.

The final lecture was given on December 1st by Hannah Moscovitch, and was entitled "Narrative Activism and Internet Fans: or, How I think about audiences now that they clap back." Hannah Moscovitch is an acclaimed playwright and TV-writer, based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Hannah has been described as "Canada's most prominent playwright" by the Globe & Mail, "the dark angel of Canadian theatre" by the Toronto Star, and "the wunderkind of Canadian theatre" by CBC. She has written sixteen plays and been honoured with numerous awards for her work, including Canada's highest literary honour the Governor General's Award, the Trillium Book Award, the Nova Scotia MasterWorks Arts Award and the prestigious international Windham-Campbell Prize



administered by the Beinecke Library at Yale University. In television, Hannah was the Co-Creator, Executive Producer and Head Writer of Little Bird alongside show runner Jennifer Podemski for Crave and APTN Lumi. Ahead of its premiere date, Little Bird won the Prix Public or Audience Award at the international TV festival, Series Mania, in Lille, France. Most recently, Hannah was Co-Executive Producer on season one and season two of AMC's hit series Interview With The Vampire.

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN FRASER

The Department of English is saddened to learn of the death of Professor John Fraser, who taught at Dalhousie for many years. Professor Fraser graduated from Balliol College, Oxford with a BA (1951) and an MA (1955). In between, he taught at Reali School, Haifa, Israel (1951-53). He studied briefly at Columbia University (1953), and then in 1955 he went to the University of Minnesota where he completed his PhD (1961). He was appointed Assistant Professor of English at Dalhousie University in 1961, Associate Professor in 1966, and Full Professor in 1972 before becoming Munro Professor of English at Dalhousie in the final stages of his teaching career (1985-93). In 1993, he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.



He was a celebrated and much-loved teacher, opening his own house on Oakland Road regularly to students, in a living room with walls decorated by the vivid paintings of the artist Carol Hoorn Fraser to further stimulate the discussions. John was also a reticent teacher, allowing students to find their own voice, waiting them out until they did, subduing his own for long periods in the process. Similarly, as a colleague, he was devoted to the democratic principle of self-administering departments and faculties. He was a workhorse on various committees, encouraging, illustrating, labouring mightily, but always with a certain reserve or modesty that could disguise the ambitious reach of his commitments. His work was instrumental in some of the most formative committees of his time, like the one establishing a PhD programme in English (1968-69) or the one designing the structure of the newly formed Faculty of Arts (1986).

In his critical writings he was an essayist in the great tradition of the essay. The range of his work was astonishingly wide: film and photography; the character and purpose of literary criticism; pornography and the erotic; Shakespeare, Huckleberry Finn, B. Traven; the organic community and the novels of Louis-Ferdinand Celine. His published books, *Violence and the Arts*, *America and the Patterns of Chivalry*, *The Name of Action* (Cambridge UP, 1974, 1982, and 1984) all deal with matters cultural, historical, and sociological—all enlivened and disciplined by his training in philosophy and literary criticism. His work was thoroughly interdisciplinary long before interdisciplinarity became fashionable.

Equally rich and original were the 1990 Alexander lectures delivered at the University of Toronto: *Nihilism, Modernism, and Value*. This piece was published, during his retirement, on the online website he modestly called “Jottings,” where it is joined by several other book-length studies including *Language, Truth, and Consequences*, a detailed commentary on *Thrillers*, various miscellaneous pieces, and *Voices in the Cave of Being*. The latter is a companion volume to the online poetry anthology, *A New Book of Verse*, which John worked over through most of his adult life and which offers over 600 poems, many accompanied by a rich array of visual illustrations and many perceptively annotated. The collection offers a cornucopia of English poetry, along with generous samplings of German and French poems as well (in the original and

in translation, often John’s own).

In addition to “Jottings,” in his long and productive post-retirement career, Professor Fraser also published a series of eleven e-books. Some of these extend the work of his website, a new anthology of 65 French poems, for example, or “A Bit of This and That About Poetry,” but others open new investigations, especially into photography and visual culture and, most importantly, on the drawings and paintings of his wife Carol. One side of the “Jottings” website is devoted to Carol’s work, and that together with the e-books and a wonderful essay on her career called “An Educated Imagination” on John’s side of the website (jottings.ca) testify to the powerful symbiosis of the partnership that was Carol and John.

Professor Fraser was a productive and insightful scholar, an erudite and valued colleague, and a dedicated and inspiring teacher who brought much to the Department and to Dalhousie. We extend our deepest sympathies to his family and to everyone who knew him.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Do you have an interesting story to share?
Know of a former classmate who is doing something exciting and newsworthy?

Email us at:
englwww@dal.ca

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English Department Chair:

Lyn Bennett
Lyn.Bennett@dal.ca

Newsletter Editors

Asha Jeffers
asha.jeffers@dal.ca

LiLi Johnson
lili.johnson@dal.ca

Manager, Communications, Marketing and Student Engagement

Genevieve MacIntyre
genevieve.macintyre@dal.ca

Manager, Alumni Engagement and Donor Relations

Mohammad Ashiq
mohammad.ashiq@dal.ca

[facebook.com/FASSDal](https://www.facebook.com/FASSDal)
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